

New 'Email Triage' Technology Helps Manage Urgent Issues on Mobile Devices (w/ Video)

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(PhysOrg.com) -- In a meeting with industry analysts today IBM unveiled a new research project that studies mobile device user behaviors to create a new application for managing mobile e-mail.

Current mobile email clients are often just smaller versions of desktop clients and assume a user will open, read and respond to a message in the same manner they would on a desktop or laptop. Though in studying the behaviors of mobile users, IBM scientists are finding that mobile email usage differs greatly because of the environment and context in which it typically takes place.

With mobile mail, researchers have found that users are focused on "triaging" what's in the inbox at that moment - scanning and quickly deciding what's new; what needs to be handled immediately; what can be deleted now and what can wait until back in the office. Since there is no easy way to distinguish the difference between "new," "unread," and marked for "follow up," users often have to make up ad hoc solutions and decide when to make the trade-off to a different device.

To help solve this common problem, computer scientists and sociologists at IBM Research - Almaden are engaged in an ongoing research effort to redefine the mobile email user experience to more closely reflect how people work today. A prototype technology that researchers have developed, called IBM Mail Triage project, rethinks the mobile email

experience by allowing users to quickly "triage" their email and identify what needs immediate action and what can be handled later.

"This project has grown out of ongoing research that attempts to understand how people use the technology devices in their lives - mobile phones, laptops, desktops, tablet computers, etc. -- and spread their computing time across them," said Jeff Pierce, manager, mobile computing research, IBM Research - Almaden. "Today, people use devices interchangeably and in context with other devices, so we have developed a prototype application for mail triage to reflect today's smartphone email experience."

The IBM Mail Triage project accounts for the behavioral differences in the way users address emails on a desktop computer versus email a mobile device. For messages that do not require immediate action, a user can indicate an intended action - such as handle next, defer for later or reference, as well as specify actions such as call this person, schedule a meeting, reply later, and so on. Users can easily access the created tasks via their mobile device or desktop through a cloud-based service and quickly resume their intended actions when they are on the best-suited device for a task.

In 2009 IBM Research announced its "Mobile Web Big Bet" and dedicated people resources and \$100 million to advance mobile services and capabilities for businesses and consumers worldwide. Since then, the company has kicked off a number of related Research initiatives, including an open source project with the National Institute of Design of India and Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, The University of Tokyo, to explore an open, common user interface for [mobile devices](#) to make them more accessible for those who are illiterate, blind, deaf, etc.

Currently, the IBM Mail Triage project is a prototype application, for

use by IBM employees, and as part of ongoing research, scientists plan to make the prototype available in beta form externally in the future.

More information: A paper on the Mobile Triage project is also available [here](#).

Source: IBM

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