

Microsoft unveils new mobile platform, Windows Phone 7 (Update)

October 11 2010, by Charlotte Raab



An employee presents the new operating system for mobile phones "Windows Phone" on a smartphone HD2 of mobile phone manufacturer HTC at the Microsoft stand at the CeBit 2010 exhibition in Hanover, March 2010. Microsoft unveiled a new mobile phone operating system as it seeks to regain ground lost to the iPhone, Blackberry and devices powered by Google's Android software.

Microsoft unveiled a new mobile phone operating system Monday in a bid to claw back lost market share from the iPhone, Blackberry and devices powered by Google's Android software.

Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer took the wraps off nine mobile phones powered by Windows Phone 7 (WP7) during an event held at a loft in New York's Chelsea neighborhood.

Ballmer said more than 60 mobile operators around the world will offer

the devices, made by South Korea's Samsung and LG Electronics, Taiwan's HTC and US computer giant Dell, in more than 30 countries.

"We have built a different kind of a phone," Ballmer said. "We set out to build a phone that was thoroughly modern."

Ballmer said Microsoft is emphasizing personalization and customization with WP7, the first significant update to its mobile operating system in 18 months

"We focused on the things that real people really want to use," he said. "We really put our energy into bringing together the things that you love."

Smartphones powered by WP7 will run email from various services -- not just Microsoft's Hotmail -- integrate calendars, contacts and social networks and allow for documents to be viewed, edited and shared using Microsoft Office.

WP7, which represents a shift for Microsoft from the enterprise market to the consumer, will also allow users to tap into Microsoft's Zune music player platform and to access mobile versions of Xbox 360 games.

Joe Belfiore, the Windows Phone corporate vice president, demonstrated how the WP7-powered phones integrate with Zune and Xbox Live.

"My phone is like a giant virtual jukebox," Belfiore said. "It's a killer experience."

He said videogame publisher Electronic Arts had signed on as a WP7 gaming partner and gave a short demonstration of a popular EA title, the "Sims."

Analysts generally praised the new Microsoft platform but had doubts about its potential for success in the highly competitive smartphone market.

WP7 represents a "substantial break from the past" for Microsoft, said IDC analyst William Stofega.

"There is a compelling enough difference in what it does to make it interesting."

Gartner analyst Van Baker said Microsoft "will face serious challenges in improving its market share in the smartphone business."

"The momentum is behind Android and (Apple's) iOS right now and I don't see Windows Phone 7 deflecting this," he added.

US telecom carrier AT&T showed off three devices -- the Samsung Focus, the LG Quantum and the HTC 7 Surround -- that will sell for around 200 dollars in the United States, about the same price as Apple's latest iPhone.

Another US carrier, T-Mobile, will offer two WP7-powered devices in November, the HTC HD7 and the HTC Mozart.

Some of the smartphones feature touchscreens like the iPhone, while others have keyboards like the Blackberry from Canada's Research In Motion.

Though mobile makes up only one percent of Microsoft's revenue, the smartphone market is growing by around 30 percent a year and the software behemoth is determined to remain a player in the sector.

According to Gartner, a technology research firm, Microsoft's share of

the global mobile operating system market will fall to 4.7 percent this year from 8.7 percent last year.

Microsoft shares were up 0.35 percent at 24.64 dollars in early afternoon trading in New York.

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