

BlackBerry bets big on apps, touchscreens

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The long-promised platform was shown to software developers at the Canada-based company's annual BlackBerry World conference in

Florida.

RIM also released kits for tailoring programs for the new BlackBerry 10 platform and gave attendees slick prototype touchscreen smartphones on which to dabble with the software.

"BlackBerry 10 builds upon the core values and exceptional user experiences that have attracted more than 77 million BlackBerry customers around the world today," said RIM vice president of developer relations Alec Saunders.

"Developers building for BlackBerry 10 will be able to easily create the kind of cutting-edge apps that deliver truly engaging experiences and 'wow' customers."

Virtual keyboards in prototypes were seen as a bold move, since physical keyboards have been a strong selling point in the business market that has been RIM's stronghold.

BlackBerry has seen its share of the overall [smartphone](#) market eroded by iPhones and Android-powered devices that have been hits with consumers, who are increasingly using personal devices on the job.

Analysts agree that the success of smartphones is dictated more by the troves of videos, games, music and other digital content available than it is by impressive hardware.

Social game publisher Gameloft announced at the conference that it is working on a lineup of titles for BlackBerry 10 devices including "Shark Dash" and "Ice Age Village."

"BlackBerry 10 customers can look forward to a slew of high-quality games of all genres," said Gameloft vice president Ludovic Blondel.

Applications tailored for the BlackBerry 10 platform will also work on RIM's [PlayBook](#) tablets, which have failed to gain traction in a market dominated by iPads.

The first [BlackBerry](#) 10 smartphones are due out by the end of this year.

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