

Firefox OS Simulator offers playpen for primetime

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(Phys.org)—Mozilla is inviting developers to play around with its experimental [Firefox OS Simulator](#). The Firefox OS Simulator is a Firefox add-on for web developers who would be interested in building apps for Mozilla's coming mobile Firefox operating system. The simulator will make it easier for developers to stay current with future updates to Firefox OS. Mozilla has talked for a while about a mobile operating system of its own, Firefox OS, and in July this year boasted of growing global industry support behind such an idea of a fully open

mobile ecosystem based on HTML5. The advantage was seen by the likes of Deutsche Telekom, Etisalat, Smart, Sprint, Telecom Italia, Telefónica and Telenor who were backing the open Firefox OS as an "exciting new entrant" to the smartphone marketplace.

What's more, TCL [Communication Technology](#) and ZTE announced intentions to manufacture the first devices to feature the new Firefox OS, using Snapdragon processors from Qualcomm.

The Firefox OS for mobile devices is built on Mozilla's "Boot to Gecko project" which resolves limitations of web development for mobile computing, in that it allows HTML5 applications to access the capabilities of a phone that otherwise are only available to native applications. Standards-based [web technologies](#) (HTML, CSS, and JavaScript) are at play here and, as *Technology Review* commented, "the OS has Web DNA through and through."

Now Mozilla has made a prototype simulator available for developers, though technology bloggers note that it is definitely "early alpha."

No matter what downsides might be attached to an early-alpha experience, the history of Firefox and its historic role in the open source community is always seen as a winning factor for Mozilla, and will be a factor in raising developer interest for working with its mobile OS. This is an [open platform](#). Mozilla's Andreas Gal, speaking recently at a London event said, "The goal is not to lock people into our services, but to create a level playing field." Developers will use the web as a basis for apps, capable of building a single app that works on many platforms. Mozilla has said that its OS advantage is in the fact that it would be free from the encumbrances of the rules and restrictions of proprietary platforms.

Mozilla's initial market target will be an optimized platform for entry-

level smartphones. Rather than trying to win a race with iOS, Android, or any other mobile system, reports are that Mozilla's focus will be on an operating system to power the most affordable phones. The first Firefox OS devices are expected to go on sale in 2013. Alcatel and ZTE are the first manufacturers to climb on board.

More information: www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefoxos/

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