Ubuntu for smartphones to stir up CES

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(Phys.org)—Canonical's Ubuntu operating system will run on smartphones. Handsets featuring this Linux-based operating system could be a popular sight by next year. The user interface will incorporate edge gestures, a global search function, and support for voice and text commands. The newly announced Ubuntu smartphone will be a move that rounds out the vision of Canonical founder Mark Shuttleworth's to see Ubuntu become a single operating system in use, from phones, with its distilled version of desktop interface, to supercomputers. The company said it is offering OEMs and mobile operators the ability to

converge phone, PC and thin client into a single enterprise superphone, in Ubuntu.

Expanding on the smartphone announcement, Shuttleworth answered interviewers' questions on why customers might want an Ubuntu smartphone any more than an Android phone. His answer was that the Ubuntu phone could deliver a crisper, cleaner experience. Shuttleworth is also calling attention to the company's plan for a high-end device where you get a "full desktop" available.

Entry-level Ubuntu phones will require a 1Ghz Cortex A9 processor and between 512MB and 1GB of memory.

The phones will double for PCs when docked to monitors. "High-end smartphones have a brain as powerful as ultra-light laptops," according to Canonical's message for network operators, OEMs and ODMs.

"Ubuntu uniquely enables a new category of convergence device – phones that dock to become full PCs and thin clients – enabling enterprise IT departments to replace phones, thin clients and laptops with a single secure corporate device."

HTML5 will be fully supported but native apps can also be developed, using OpenGL and QML, with C or C++ and Javascript compiled for extra performance. The code will initially be released as a file which can be installed on Samsung's Galaxy Nexus phone.

Shuttleworth in interviews has made a special point of showing the Ubuntu smartphone's "edgy" features, where edges of the screen make the phone especially easy to use, in finding content and switching between applications. Adjectives such as "clean" and "spacious" in viewing the smartphone at work take on some meaning.

Phones running the software will be showcased at the upcoming Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas. Shuttleworth, said the BBC, was in talks with manufacturers for devices to be sold with the system pre-installed.

Canonical calls Ubuntu the world's favorite free operating system. Ubuntu is based on the open source Linux kernel. An estimated 20 million PCs use Ubuntu.

More information: www.ubuntu.com/devices/phone

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