

BlackBerry announces new phones, services

February 25 2014, by Anick Jesdanun

(AP)—BlackBerry will release a low-cost phone in Indonesia in April and plans a broader release of a phone that restores a beloved row of control keys with a track pad.

The Indonesia phone, the Z3, will sell for less than \$200 without subsidies, the company said Tuesday. It will later expand to other markets in southeast Asia. BlackBerry Ltd. CEO John Chen said a version with faster, 4G connectivity is planned for the rest of the world "sometime in the future before I die."

It's the first phone made under a new five-year partnership with Foxconn, the Taiwanese company that assembles products in vast factories in China.

Meanwhile, Chen said it will restore the keys in a new [phone](#) he termed "Classic." He said the new Q20 is a response to lackluster sales of last year's Q10, which has a physical keyboard but lacks the track pad or keys for functions such as going back. He said the company got many complaints about that.

BlackBerry also announced plans to expand its services for businesses needing secure communications, particularly in regulated industries such as health care and financial services. There are plans, for instance, to go beyond securing just email and messaging.

It's part of the company's plan to focus on its strengths in business services. BlackBerry Ltd. strayed from that as it tried to lure consumers

with new devices.

The BlackBerry was the dominant smartphone for on-the-go business people and other consumers before Apple introduced the iPhone in 2007, showing that phones could handle much more than email and calls. BlackBerry was slow in modernizing its operating system, and once it did, the much-hyped system flopped.

Chen was brought in as CEO late last year after talks to sell the company collapsed. Although he has been credited with turning around Sybase, a data company that was sold to SAP in 2010, Chen has acknowledged that reviving BlackBerry will be his most "complicated" challenge.

In the latest quarter, ending Nov. 30, BlackBerry Ltd. reported a \$4.4 billion loss and a 56 percent drop in revenue. But the company said it had plenty of cash to engineer a turnaround.

The new partnership with Foxconn will help reduce much of BlackBerry's manufacturing costs. Foxconn, known for its manufacturing contract work on Apple's iPhones and iPads, will jointly design and manufacture most BlackBerry devices and manage inventory of the devices.

Chen said BlackBerry will now target the heavily regulated industries that require greater security. It will simplify its pricing and let people upgrade to the latest systems for free this year. It will also offer free services this year for companies that had left BlackBerry for rivals.

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