

## Beauty Becomes a Beast

by Bruce McGregor, Director, PDMS



The iPhone, is it really just a very sexy mobile phone, a real eye catching 'beauty'? Or...., is it in reality about to become a true 'beast' of a mobile business device?

At Apples' recent iPhone roadmap announcement event (06/03/2008), Steve Jobs (Apple CEO) would certainly like us to think it's about to become the latter. Throughout the event he laid out a pretty significant software development roadmap for this already groundbreaking device. A mobile device which, since its launch 8 months ago as 'a mobile phone', has already cornered 28% of the USA's Smartphone market and a staggering 71% of mobile browser usage. A feat almost certainly facilitated by its stunning 'beauty' combined with its intuitive and groundbreaking multi-touch interface.

A key speaker at the event, John Doerr (Partner KPCB), defined Entrepreneurs as people who "do more than anyone thinks possible with less than anyone thinks possible", that they are the true risk takers and revolutionaries. He described Steve Jobs, as the "supreme commander of these business Rebel's" and "the world's greatest entrepreneur". Praise indeed, but do the milestones within Apple's roadmap justify such continued praise? It would appear, on first impressions, that many in the press were genuinely wowed by the announcements describing them as an 'aggressive plan to turn the iPhone and its sibling the iPod Touch into a true computing platform'. So, what is all the fuss about?

### **The Roadmap**

There were really four main areas to the announcements: 1) New and key Enterprise features to satisfy the hungriest business users 2) The release to the development community of a very powerful and flexible Software Development Kit (SDK) 3) Commercial access to all iPhone and iPod touch owners for software developers and their business entrepreneurs through a new Application Store 'The AppStore' and last but by no means least 4) A rather large financial 'carrot' in terms of an investment fund, the iFund, to help drive the whole thing along.

## **For the Enterprise**

What then, are these 'new' Enterprise features that will make such a difference? Which by their nature will help turn this 'Beauty' into a business 'Beast'? Phil Schiller, Apple's Senior Vice-President of worldwide product marketing, was delighted to announce the wide ranging list as: Push e-mail; Push Calendar; Push Contacts (with access to global address lists); in-built VPN types (including CISCO's ubiquitous IPSEC VPN protocol); 2 factor authentication with support for the use of certificates or password based multi-factor authentication; enterprise class WiFi and the ability to enforce security policies which will enable more enterprises to allow the iPhone to connect securely to their wireless infrastructure and finally the ability to remotely and securely wipe the iPhone device and therefore protect corporate data in the event of loss or theft. Many of these core features have been achieved by the provision of native support for Microsoft Exchange, on the device itself, with Apple becoming a full Microsoft ActiveSync licensee.

All these Enterprise features mean that it's now much more attractive to individual business users, however, it's relatively easy for one person, or even a family, to switch network providers it's not so straight forward for companies with hundreds or often thousands of network contract licenses to consider. Initially, a target market may be for Microsoft Exchange based organisations of which there are plenty, which have not yet chosen a mobile device.

Many feel that the vast majority of iPhone buyers are almost certainly consumers who would like to hook their phones and music players up with their work email and calendars as a convenience. Apple's new features allow them to do that and more.

## **How many applications would you like? The Software Development Kit (SDK) for developers**

Epocrates were one of the few companies who demonstrated during the roadmap event and have been working directly with Apple to create an application that can be stored directly on the device. This application will enable healthcare professionals to always have immediate access to vital clinical information wherever and whenever they need it, regardless of Internet connectivity. When a connection is established, the device will be automatically populated with updated drug and safety information and important medical news. "By putting so much computing power into such an elegant mobile device, Apple has opened up tremendous opportunities for application developers", said Kirk Loevner, Chairman and CEO of Epocrates, Inc.

## **Let's not forget the fun and Games**

Apple also gave gamers some genuinely ground-breaking news by highlighting the real gaming potential of the iPhone device in conjunction with what can be developed with the release of the new SDK. Apple called on some pretty heavyweight Games developing companies, not least, EA, developers of 'Spore' and SEGA developers of 'Super Monkey Ball' who demonstrated these 2 popular games and who will also be releasing these, amongst many of their other mega

popular console games, to the iPhone and iPod touch. With one of the gaming trailers stressing, "This is NOT a cellphone game. It's a console game, if anything, we underestimated what the iPhone was able to do from the start, we had to fly in another artist to scale up the art to match what the iPhone could actually output."

Many cannot wait to see what other third party and equally imaginative gaming developers will create via the SDK, particularly with access to the iPhone's powerful features, not least: access to the multi-touchscreen interface a feature key to early demand; access to the optimised animation technology; Open GL support; the location-aware features and finally the iPhone's powerful 3-way accelerometer which instead of playing games with a traditional thumb-pad and buttons, you can instead use this very intuitive feature to 'steer' using the iPhone's motion sensor.

### **How will all this future new software be delivered?**

iPhone software applications will be accessible through a new program called AppStore. Which is due to be included in the upcoming June software update and which will be installed directly on the device. Since the AppStore will be put on every single iPhone, it will mean software developers have access to every single individual and their iPhone and iPod Touch device! An appealing business attractor!

AppStore will display application categories including games, health, finance, lifestyle, just-added and top-picks that can be downloaded directly onto the device. This feature will also be added into iTunes but it's felt that most people will just use their iPhone device to do this. Developers, having used the SDK, will be able to independently add their applications to the AppStore and price them however they want (including free), with 30% of the revenue going to Apple as an overhead.

### **Will it all be such a big deal?**

John Doer (KPCB), described Steve Jobs' software roadmap announcements and the iPhone as, "a really big deal – bigger than the personal computer!" Praise indeed, and words which his company, KPCB, were prepared to back to the tune of \$100M with an aptly named investment 'iFund', enough to start a dozen Amazons or a few Googles. John Doer also referred to another early Apple fellow, Alan Kay's infamous quote, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it".

So, have Apple really invented the future with respect to a truly handheld mobile computer, have they turned what is already a true 'Beauty' into a 'Beast' of a device? We'll have to wait and see, but my gut feeling is that after this next feature-rich release in June they may just have!