

Mozilla Preps Launch of Firefox Mobile OS

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Mozilla today confirmed plans to launch a new open mobile operating system based on HTML5 and it has the support of some big names in the industry, including Sprint, Telefonica and Deutsche Telekom.

The operating system will power the launch of smartphones built entirely to open Web standards, where all of the device's capabilities can be developed as HTML5 applications.

Mapping to key Firefox footprints around the globe, leading operators Deutsche Telekom, Etisalat, Smart, Sprint, Telecom Italia, Telefónica and Telenor are backing the open Firefox OS.

Fared Adib, product chief at Sprint, said in a statement that the new platform increases choice for both developers and consumers.

"Firefox Mobile OS can help us drive an HTML 5-based platform for creating lower cost smartphone options for prepaid, postpaid and wholesale customers," he said.

Device manufacturers TCL Communication Technology (under the Alcatel One Touch brand) and ZTE have announced their intentions to manufacture the first devices to feature the new Firefox OS. The devices will run on Snapdragon processors from Qualcomm.

"The large number of operators and manufacturers now supporting this effort will bring additional resources and diversity to our global offerings," Mozilla CEO Gary Kovacs said.

The project is built on Mozilla's "Boot to Gecko" project, which allows HTML5 applications to access phone features that had previously only been available to native applications.

The platform has been optimized for entry-level smartphones that target developing markets and the low end of the smartphone price range, Mozilla said in a press release.

If Mozilla can make good on a mobile platform entirely based on HTML5 it will have achieved something that until now has largely been pie in the sky. A browser-based smartphone environment would rely heavily on connectivity and the cloud, but it would also allow Web developers to write an application once and distribute it across any device, regardless of platform. Such a scenario would eliminate some of the fragmentation that has plagued Android since its inception.

The first Firefox-powered devices are expected to launch commercially in Brazil in

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