August 2011 - Volume 3

Bleeding Edge

Vicon Solutions

Special points of interest:

- Is RIM going to allow Android apps to run on all Blackberry devices?
- This years much anticipated Apple conference is whipping people into the usual frenzy
- Is Google's purchase of Motorola Mobility a stroke of genius or the ramblings of a mad-man
- Could Apple's iMessage finally tempt over the remaining Blackberry BBM users?
- Amazon releases the Kindle Reader as a Cloud Application
- 635 million new Windows 7 PCs with be purchased in 2011 alone

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News Snippets

Apart from a couple of major stories, it's been a pretty quiet August. Here's some news snippets from August.

Steve Jobs retires from Apple Inc after years of poor health. Steve transformed Apple into the worlds biggest technology company in just 15 years. The guy was a inspiration and his down to earth nonsense style will be sorely missed.

HP excepts a very quick defeat in the Tablet market by pulling the plug on it's WebOS based tablet in just 3 weeks! HP blamed Apples dominance for it's very quick demise. HP then fire-sells all the TouchPads in stock for a ridiculous $99 and they sell out within hours, the reason? Someone's worked out how to load Android on it. A $99 TouchPad with Android on it, yes please.

HP in a double shock announces it's doing an 'IBM' and selling off it's profitable PC business which is currently the worlds largest PC manufacturer. HP says it wants to concentrate on the Enterprise Services market and in the process bought out the UK's largest software company, Autonomy.

Finally, it's nearly Apple frenzy time again, their annual conference in September is when all it's new devices are revealed. This years rumours are the iPhone 5 and a mid-market iPhone 4s in an attempt to try and slow down the Android army. For fans of over hyped expensive toys there's apparently no iPad 3 this year I'm afraid. But who knows, they usually catch us out. ;)

Is RIM going to allow Android apps on all its Blackberry devices?

Rumours have it that RIM is not only going to allow Android applications to run on it's Playbook but they might also allow them to run on their other Blackberry devices too.

This would make great sense as Android is now by far the most popular SmartPhone OS (49% at last count) and would allow them to continue to run their own Blackberry Operating System (QNX) without developers having to rewrite their apps all over again.

This might also turn around Blackberry's hemorrhaging of users to Android and Apple as people look for more and more mobile applications.

It could also be a tactical move as Blackberry's last line of defence, encrypted messaging, is about to be matched by Apple in iOS 5.

Google to Acquire Motorola Mobility – Analysis

Google will acquire Motorola for approximately $40 per share in cash, or around $12.5 billion dollars, "a premium of 63% to the closing price of Motorola Mobility shares on Friday, August 12, 2011," according to Google's press release. This will make it the biggest ever tech acquisition (if approved) for any of the big players including both Apple and Microsoft.

"The combination of Google and Motorola will not only supercharge Android, but will also enhance competition and offer consumers accelerating innovation, greater choice, and wonderful user experiences" Google CEO Larry Page wrote in a post on the company's official blog.

What's included in the deal

- 17,000 patents with an additional 7,500 pending approval
- 20,000 employees around the world
- Circa $3bn annual profits from an $11bn turnover
- SmartPhone Hardware
- Tablet Hardware
- Set-top Box Hardware

Which all makes interesting reading, there's one thing for sure and that's the primary reason for this purchase is patents, especially as Google lost out on 6,000 Nortel patents bought by Apple, Microsoft & RIM back in July. These patents were clearly bought to defend Android and its partners from the increasingly popular sport of patent trolling.

It's the SmartPhone and Tablet hardware that is causing the most discussion though, Apple have very tight control over their hardware which allows them to provide their users with a tightly integrated (controlled?) environment. Microsoft have minimum design criteria's that all their hardware partners must adhere to, again this is to ensure certain aspects of all WinMo phones are the same. Google took a totally different approach by allowing its partners to do whatever they wanted, you could argue this breed's innovation but it can also make the Android experience across hardware platforms slightly different.

Either way, if I was one of Google's hardware partners (Samsung, HTC, etal) I'd be very nervous right now, they did all release a short statement in support of the acquisition but there was something not right, they seemed coerced and through gritted teeth. Surely if you were Google you'd release updates earlier on your own hardware therefore keeping it one step ahead? Google have said they intend to leave Mobility running as a separate business so we'll have to wait and see on this one, maybe they'll spin off the SmartPhone and Tablet divisions to pacify their partners. Let's face it, Motorola's phones haven't exactly set the world on fire, in fact I reckon I can count on one hand all the decent phones Motorola have put out since the fantastic StarTac back in 1996. Motorola's tablet division is a different story though, the Xoom Tablet being a very good device.

There is one hardware division that is very interesting though and that's the Set-top box division. Google has been trying to get into the TV market with Google TV for quite a while now. It took the same approach as with Android and let partners create the hardware, this hasn't really worked though (look at the recent Logitech debacle) as the price and quality just hasn't been there. This purchase gives Google direct access to the hardware and an already installed base of set-top boxes that I can see getting a Google TV makeover sometime soon.

Motorola's revenues have plummeted over the past four years, they've simply struggled to find a way to compete with the iPhone and the other SmartPhone manufacturers.

From a patent point of view, the recent Nortel Patents went for $750k per patent and Google bought Motorola's for $510k each, you could argue that Google got the better deal here. You could also argue that either way that's a ridiculous amount of money to pay for patents and I'd tend to agree. There is also a rumour that Motorola were going to use these patents to go on the attack against some of Google's partners, was this another driver behind the acquisition?

Conclusion

This is clearly a case of Google getting fed up with Apple using some ridiculous patent arguments to prevent and delay Google's partners from selling their wares. I kid you not, these are some of these arguments used by Apple in the current Samsung Tab case in Europe: -

- a rectangular product with four evenly rounded corners
- a flat, clear surface that covers the front of the product
- a visible metal frame around the flat, clear surface
- a display that is centred on the clear surface
- under the clear surface, a neutral margin around the sides of the display
- if the product is switched on, coloured icons within the display

It's frustrating to see this going on when the money could be more wisely spent on product improvements but there you go.

Full Story Here.

"The recent Nortel Patents went for $750k per patent and Google bought Motorola's for $510k each, you could argue that Google got the better deal"

Apple's iOS 5

Apple's much anticipated iOS5 upgrade should be with us soon. It brings with it a host of new features and finally those that should have been in there in the first place!

Notification Centre

Instead of annoying messages that just pop up and interrupt whatever you're doing, the new notification centre will give you a list of all the latest alerts from your apps in a friendly customisable list.

PC Free

The new iOS in conjunction with iCloud will allow you to finally free yourself of USB PC synchronisation. You will be able to setup your phone and perform upgrades all over the air. Syncing with the PC can also finally be performed over WiFi.

iMessage

In an assault on Blackberry's popular BBM application, Apple is releasing iMessage. It brings very similar functionality including, encryption, and unlimited texting with media content over WiFi or 3G instead of using up your valuable texting/mms limits.

Camera & Photo Editing

The cameras standard functionality has been improved to include pinch-zoom, grid's and a few other nifty features. You can also now perform basic photo editing directly on the device instead of using a 3rd party app.

Reminders

The new To-do application has some interesting features such as location based lists. You should also be capable of synchronising them with your Google Apps or Outlook/Exchange To-do lists.

Safari

The default browser has a feature that can cut out ad's on a website, has tabbed browsing and a synchronisation function via iCloud that allows you to carry bookmarks between devices plus some general speed improvements.

And that's just a few of the 200+ enhancements...

"Could Apple's iMessage finally tempt over the remaining Blackberry BBM users?"

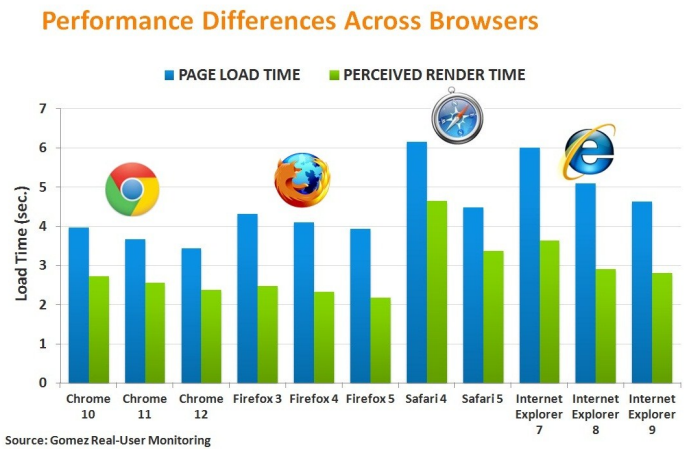
What's the Fastest Browser? – Chrome

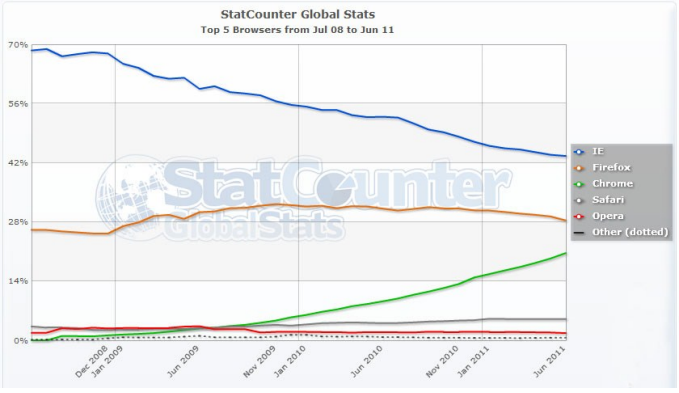
Real-world tests have finally confirmed what most of us thought anyway, and that is from an actual and perceived speed comparison point-of-view, Google's Chrome is the fastest browser for the Internet and Safari is the slowest of the main four.

On the graph, the blue bar represents the total page load time (i.e. after everything has loaded on the page including the hidden stuff) and the green bar represents when you actually believe the page is loaded (i.e. after all the visible parts of the page have loaded on your screen). The graph shows Chrome 12 which was replaced with an even faster version, Chrome 13.

One of the other reasons that Chrome is growing so rapidly is its clean and uncluttered interface and that it can be used across different operating systems, therefore giving a consistent experience across Windows, Mac and Linux.

View the full story here.





Amazon Kindle Now Available as a Cloud App

After Apple introduced their 30% commission fee to all in-app purchases on their devices, Amazon has been trying to find a way to prevent them from taking a slice of their pie whilst also trying to make their Kindle reader as ubiquitous across as many platforms as possible.

Apple have recently said that any purchases made from within an application on their devices must be subject to a commission rate of 30% which has upset a lot of developers including Amazon, why should Apple not only take a 30% fee for the application sale but also from subscriptions within the apps themselves? e.g. Buying a book or magazine from within the iPhone/iPad Kindle reader.

We all had our suspicions that this is just Apple trying to make their books cheaper than Kindles by forcing iPhone/iPad Kindle users to ultimately pay an additional 30% fee to cover the costs, which to many people seems a bit underhand and is a growing example of what happens in the IT industry when a single company takes too much control (PC Manufacturers and Windows debate anyone?). After Apple introduced this fee to its terms a few weeks back, Amazon released an update simply removing the buy book button from within the Kindle reader, users didn't really care as they can buy books via the Amazon Store, via the Kindle itself or from the PC application and then just sync the new purchase across to the iPhone/iPad. No great hardship but it does smack of Apple cutting off its nose to spite its face, isn't Apple's mantra all about ease-of-use?

First of all let's think about the costs and issues involved in providing the Kindle Reader for lots of devices: -

- Lots of developers creating lots of apps versions for different operating systems
- Lots of slightly different ways of interacting with the application because of the differences in the way each device works
- Multiple payment handling processes for each device, Apple's App Store and Androids Apps Store for example
- Different support teams capable of providing help depending on which operating system your using

To name but a few, the point is, lots of different applications trying to all behave the same but ultimately being expensive to support and of course all this increases the underlying cost of the service.

What would be better is a single application that is compatible with any operating system. What if they released a version of the Kindle Reader on the 'Cloud' instead? Well that's exactly what they've just done, you can find it here.

In order to ensure the application is as feature rich and as consistent across different platforms as possible, whilst also allowing your books to be read while you're offline, they've written it in the new standard HTML5 web format. HTML5 is set to revolutionise the way web applications work by allowing web developers to produce cloud applications that are as feature rich as local applications. It's also a faster and more stable solution to all the Flash problems, remember that Flash isn't supported on Apple devices but HTML5 is.

There is a small drawback though and that is that you'll need a web browser capable of supporting HTML5, if you're running Google Chrome or Apple's Safari you'll be fine, if not I'd strongly recommend you go to Chrome as it's the fastest and most stable browser available today.

If you have an Android or Apple device, simply go to the site via the devices browser, you can then read books online & offline and make purchases directly from within the App without anyone being able to take juicy cut. Genius.

"The Amazon Kindle Cloud App provides a very easy way to get at your books from any device, anywhere"

"635 million new Windows 7 PCs with be purchased in 2011 alone"

Gartner: Windows 7 on 42 percent of PCs by year's end

Two years after its official debut, Windows 7 will finally become the leading operating system around the world by the end of 2011, says a report out this month from Gartner.

After Microsoft announcement that it is dropping support from Windows XP in early 2014, the rush is on to get the aging operating system replaced before support ends.

Windows 7 is a vast improvement over both Windows XP and the awful Windows Vista giving greater stability and more importantly better protection against virus's and malware.

Before the year is over, the current flavour of Windows is expected to show up on 42% of all PCs globally. Further, Gartner's latest research shows that 94% of all new computers shipped this year will come with Windows 7, leading to almost 635 million new Windows 7 PCs in 2011 alone.

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If you're a new start-up, talk to us for free before you do anything. We will help you understand all the options available and ensure you avoid early and sometimes costly mistakes.

Simon Fice, Owner.

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