Neda Communications, Inc.

and

WhiteBerry

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Even before being publicly announced, WhiteBerry is already in the news. In an extraordinarily prescient piece of journalistic reporting, Robert McMillan discovered us and published the following article in May 2002. Mr. McMillan's article is reprinted in its entirety. The article is also available on-line at http://www.oetrends.com/cgi-bin/page_display.cgi?52 and http://www.neda.com/Repub/110801.

Open Source Alternative to Blackberry's Wireless Messaging Debuts

by Robert McMillan

Can an open source alternative to the Blackberry messaging protocols open up those last wireless miles between the Internet and your PDA? That's what Mohsen Banan hopes to find out this month when he releases the code for the Whiteberry project he's been developing since 1997.

Banan, whose company Neda Communications, has been working with a number of other "small entities" to define the protocols and write the software that make up Whiteberry, says he believes that "an open and free alternative is needed" in the wireless messaging space. "While there have been a lot of mis-firings in the wireless domain," he continues, "the success of RIM's Blackberry makes it clear that in wide area wireless, mobile messaging (and not other applications) is the key value proposition."

Whiteberry will be based on a new set of wireless protocols, called LEAP (Lightweight & Efficient Application Protocols). Essentially an alternative to WAP, they are designed to provide transport and messaging services on existing wireless UDP/IP networks like Verizon or AT&T.

"This is the result of about six years of work," says Banan, who claims that Whiteberry has its origins in an AT&T two-way paging service called Personal Communication Networks. AT&T abandoned the service in 1997, but consented to the publication of the RFCs behind the paging service. Operation Whiteberry, says Banan, is a "continuation of that work, independent of AT&T, by Neda."

What Code is Available?

The LEAP protocol specifications have already been published on www.leapforum.org. Banan expects to release code for a Windows CE Whiteberry client this month, along with "incomplete" source code for Linux and PalmOS clients. On the server side, Banan expects to release binary-only code in June, with a GPL (General Public License) version coming a few months later. The initial code will be a LEAP-enabled server called EMSD-SA (Efficient Mail Submission and Delivery Server Agent), which will serve as a forwarder for a mail transfer agent like Qmail or Sendmail. EMSD-SA will run on Linux and Solaris. The final GPL'd code will be released in the form of a Qmail module.

The plan is to eventually release the entire code base under the GPL on the www.mailmeanywhere.org Web site. Neda Communications will also launch an initial set of integrated Web and email subscriber services available on the byname.com Web site, but Neda hopes that service providers and equipment makers will eventually rally around an open alternative to Blackberry and WAP. "We want to put in a framework that can generate a healthier wireless industry," he says. "I believe that wireless IP will follow more or less the same dynamics that the Internet followed," he continues. "Endorsement by any particular vendor is not crucial."

And don't expect the LEAP protocols to ever become IETF standards. [The base protocols have already been published as Informational RFC-2188 and RFC-2524.] Banan says LEAP's developers have no plans to submit the LEAP protocols as IETF RFCs. The market should decide whether or not to adopt LEAP, says Banan, not the IETF's steering group. "It is impossible to publish a controversial [IETF-blessed Standards Track] RFC nowadays," he says.