Key Milestones Reached in Mobile HTML5
May 10, 2012 - IDC Link
By: Scott Ellison

IDC has contributed important data points to a first of its kind infographic which highlights key milestones in the rapidly evolving mobile HTML5 space. In this infographic IDC notes that 79% of surveyed mobile developers stated that they plan to integrate HTML5 in the apps they plan to launch in 2012; there will be over 1 billion HTML5 mobile browsers in the market in 2013; and, by 2015 we forecast more than 80% of all mobile apps will be wholly or in part based upon HTML5.

The infographic also highlights current HTML5 mobile browser capabilities in supporting key mobile app types, with data point estimates that were jointly developed by IDC and Facebook. The mobile browser capabilities data points were in turn measured by Ringmark, which is the mobile browser testing suite of core browser capabilities that developers can use to build HTML5 mobile apps, and that has been developed in support of Coremob (discussed later in this Link). Ringmark is open source and freely available to anyone to use.

Huge Momentum for HTML5

The huge percentage of mobile developers planning to integrate HTML5 into their apps in the near future was uncovered in the *1Q2012 Appcelerator/IDC Mobile Developer Survey Report* and is a much higher percentage than many industry observers had expected as recently as 4Q2011. This is a very significant development because the mobile app space to date has been dominated by native apps—especially iOS and Android-based apps.

IDC also notes that the Appcelerator/IDC quarterly mobile developer survey report series has uncovered high and very steady interest in HTML5 among mobile developers, with 67%-68% of developers stating that they are "very interested" in developing apps for HTML5 over the last three quarters. This puts HTML5 as the third most favored platform behind iOS and Android, and is even more significant given that Android interest levels have noticeably dropped over the last several quarters.

Reduced App Development and Support Costs

One of the key appeals of HTML5 for mobile apps is not just a potentially better approach to dealing with fragmentation but the reduced app development and support costs that HTML5 may offer. Tweaking an HTML5 app for smooth operation on an iPhone versus an Android phone would likely take less effort than recompiling a native app to work on a different native OS. App iterations could be handled largely in the cloud rather than being downloaded and updated natively — and thereby smoother and more transparent to end users. Serious issues — like security holes — could be addressed immediately by the app developer without having to wait for the user to a turn on his/her device and accept a request to update a native app.

Key Mobile App Categories to Watch for Mobile HTML5 Evolution

IDC notes that games will likely be the key app category to watch in terms of HTML5 adoption in the short-to medium-term as representing both the single most vibrant app category and the app type that often places the most operational demands on mobile solutions.

Social will also be a major app category for HTML5 innovation in the near-term. Social apps as a category were the Number 1 app type under development in 1Q2012 according to the 1Q2012 Appcelerator/IDC

survey. And a key success factor in social apps is ability to reach large numbers of users with a consistent experience, which HTML5 is well-positioned to do.

IDC also notes that HTML5 and virtualization may play a key role in even broader enterprise mobile app deployment and adoption as potentially effective ways to address mobile security in addition to app development and support costs.

Central Role of Coremob and Ringmark in Mobile HTML5

The enormous momentum behind mobile HTML5 development is reflected in the Core Mobile Web Platform Community (Coremob). Coremob is a forum for the global mobile developer and IT community to focus and accelerate the evolution of the mobile web as a compelling platform for mobile applications, and was announced at Mobile World Congress in February 2012. Coremob is a "who's who" of many of the major mobile players ranging from Facebook to Google to Microsoft to Vodafone, who share a common belief in the role that HTML5 can play in the mobile space.

HTML5 Browser Fragmentation

Although HTML5 is a key solution to address OS fragmentation, one of the key challenges for HTML5 going forward is browser fragmentation. Mobile HTML5 browsers all have slightly different approaches to their HTML5 browsers and somewhat different technical implementations. Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer, Opera, and Firefox may often have much in common — such as WebKit rendering engines — but can be quite different in other ways. How browsers are architected and the technologies they do or do not integrate matters to any app developer — whose overriding concern is almost always ensuring that the app performs as intended for end users.

Ringmark as a Tool to Help Address Fragmentation

Mobile HTML5 browser testing and fragmentation is where Ringmark comes in. Ringmark is the mobile browser testing suite of core browser capabilities that developers can use to help build and test HTML5 mobile apps developed in support of Coremob; Ringmark is open source and freely available to anyone to use.

Ringmark is therefore an important tool providing mobile app developers the ability to test how well different mobile browsers support key app functionalities, allowing developers to strategize and code accordingly. IDC also notes that Coremob and Ringmark will also provide mobile browser providers and the IT industry invaluable insights into how to further develop HTML5 mobile browser capabilities to accelerate the already explosive growth of the mobile apps space.

Mobile HTML5 as the New Frontier for Mobile Innovation and Opportunity

Finally, IDC notes that HTML5's rapidly growing role in mobile provides new opportunities for the entrepreneurs who can develop solutions that help HTML5 even better meet the needs of the mobile ecosystem. Those solutions will likely include innovations in the areas of cacheing, data compression, memory, APIs, location, commerce, and analytics to name just a few. But what they will likely have in common is a demonstrable role in accelerating mobile HTML5 apps even further and faster.