GeeksPhone Reveals Firefox OS Phones for Developers

CNET

A small Spanish start-up called GeeksPhone [1] has started selling phones that let developers get a taste of Mozilla's new Firefox OS.

GeeksPhone announced two 3G phones for the browser-based operating system, the lower-end Keon and higher-end Peak. The phones, while geared for programmers rather than mainstream customers, make Mozilla's open-source mobile OS a lot more real, since programmers will be able to develop apps as well as to debug and advance the underlying operating system.

Firefox [2] OS is Mozilla's ambitious attempt to build an operating system that brings more openness to the walled gardens of Apple's iOS and Google's Android [3]. Although the latter is an open-source project, it's run in secrecy by Google and its corporate allies and is closely linked to Google's ecosystem of app distribution and online services. Apple's iOS is even more closely locked down, with proprietary source code and only Apple-approved apps on the app store.

Walled gardens or not, iOS and Android have been very popular for phones and tablets [4], and it's not clear whether the mass market truly wants an alternative even if it shuns lock-in. And even if some customers do value the openness, it won't be easy for Firefox OS to gain a competitive foothold.

But the GeeksPhone models at least make it possible for Mozilla and its allies -- Telefonica and Qualcomm, among others -- to try.

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