CFUS information technology services since 1996

TURNING YOUR DATA INTO INFORMATION

The CFUS Corporation's NewsLetter

Technology and More

September 2008 Issue: X

Staff Augmentation * IT Consulting * Corporate Identity * Project-based Solutions

Meet CFUS

Joseph C. (Joe) Hibbitt
Principal, President
Los Angeles, California

Manny Mangahas
Principal, VP—East Coast Operations
Clifton, Virginia (Washington DC)

Burnie Reed
Principal, VP—Midwest Operations
Dallas, Texas

CFUS Update!

Industry: Healthcare **Service: Technical Staff Augmentation**
Technology : Oracle

Provided technical staff to support the data validation and verification processes, in order to facilitate data extraction for future system migration.

Industry: Government Agencies **Service: System Architecture**
Technology : Oracle

Delivered detailed specifications on server hardware and database requirements for security clearance tracking system. Led technical team to implement multiple server and database environments.

Coming Battle Over Open Source Phones

Forget the iPhone. The real battle in the mobile industry is over open-source software.

The latest salvo: **Nokia**'s (nyse: NOK - news - people) announcement this week that it would purchase London-based Symbian Ltd.--a cellphone operating system it co-owned with **Sony** (nyse: SNE - news - people), **Ericsson** (nasdaq: ERIC - news - people) and Samsung, among others--and distribute the once costly software for free.

To oversee that distribution, Symbian is establishing a non-profit alliance studded with other tech giants, such as **AT&T** (nyse: T - news - people), LG Electronics, Samsung Electronics, **STMicroelectronics** (nyse: STM - news - people), **Texas Instruments** (nyse: TXN - news - people) and **Vodafone** (nyse: VOD - news - people).

Together, foundation members will weave the various strains of Symbian into a single mobile platform. The foundation plans to release the software under a royalty-free public license so that as many developers, handset makers and carriers as possible will adopt it.

The move sparked comparisons to two other mobile consortia: **Google**'s (nasdaq: GOOG - news - people) Open Handset Alliance (OHA), a group of more than 30 tech companies that is building an open-source mobile platform called Android, and the LiMo Foundation, which has similar plans. With consumers demanding more advanced services on their cellphones, pundits speculated that Nokia (nyse: NOK - news - people) was trying to steal momentum--and developer talent--away from these competitors.

Forbes.com spoke to Morgan Gillis, executive director of the LiMo Foundation, about the Symbian news, the open-source trend and why Google may be LiMo's real rival.

Forbes.com: What was your reaction to the Symbian news?

Morgan Gillis: Directionally, it's exactly right for the industry. It is bringing open technology and open governance into the mobile sector so that applications developers and content providers can write much more efficiently for handsets. It will set off a wave of innovation. Philosophically, that is what LiMo believes too.

There has been a lot of discussion of 'How are you going to fight back?' We are offering the industry a platform everyone can be comfortable with. If someone else does that too, it's a powerful endorsement of what we're doing. And as long as they do a reasonably good job, it should unlock more innovation.

You don't see the Symbian Foundation as a competitor?

Our mechanics and goals are extremely similar, but the technology focus is different. The Symbian initiative is obviously focused on the Symbian platform, which is good and proven, but has a much smaller base. There are a couple hundred thousand Symbian developers in the world vs. five million or so Linux developers. We see a fabulous chance to engage a very large community of developers.

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The traditional point of difference--royalty rates--has dissolved for now, but other points of difference will emerge between the platforms. While both are open-source, LiMo uses the Linux kernel, which is the jewel in the crown of the open-source development world. There's deep familiarity there with our technology. The Symbian kernel has grown up as a proprietary item. The open-source community needs time to get familiar with that technology.

Do you think you'll compete with each other in terms of carrier support?

Mobile operators would not be comfortable with one platform. There's a debate currently about what the perfect number is, but it's a bigger number than one and probably bigger than two. I think we will see two to three platforms deployed very widely in the global industry. DoCoMo has focused on two. Vodafone and Orange have focused on three. LiMo and Symbian together will give the industry the best effect.

You've said you believe you have a head start over Google and the OHA. What did you think of the recent reports that Android is delayed?

We do have a timing advantage in respect to the technology within the platform. LiMo uses technology that has already been introduced to commercial handsets and proven, whereas Google is building a brand-new handset platform. We've started to see signs that Google is struggling to bring commercial [software] to market. I've been through this cycle myself personally. It's not something you can throw money at. You have to mature the software.

If you compare LiMo to the Symbian Foundation, we're probably two years ahead with our governance model and licensing model. The industry will likely need to see details of the Symbian approach--bylaws, documentation, that sort of thing--before deciding if it's something it can really engage with.

How important is governance compared with technology?

There is a naive view that open is always good and closed is always bad, but within the industry, the governance model and the licensing approach matter. We are pursuing a strategy [that] we call collaborative source. It's not quite the same as open source and definitely not proprietary. LiMo members are required to share fixes and optimizations they create individually. That's really important as a mechanism for removing fragmentation. In addition, companies working within LiMo agree not to assert patents against each other. This protects our smaller companies. Between our members, we have 300,000 patents currently.

It's not known yet whether Symbian's patent license contains all that. This is also distinct from Google's approach. Google's license does not require licensees to share anything with others.

How will consumers fare from these developments?

The move to a few platforms will allow innovation to flow through to consumers. Handsets today, in hardware terms, are actually very advanced. The processes are very fast, storage is very substantial and the cellular networks are high-speed. They're capable of doing extraordinary things for consumers but haven't delivered that much yet because of industry fragmentation.

LiMo announced Thursday that it would merge with another mobile Linux group, the Linux Phone Standards (LiPS) Forum. What was the rationale for that?

Defragmentation. It's about getting the whole industry on one platform. For developers, that's profoundly important. LiPS was more like an industry standards body. They would write specifications and other companies would create the technology, whereas LiMo really produces the software platform … everything you need to build a handset.

The deal will close in two weeks. Most of the existing LiPS companies will join LiMo, and its intellectual property will be transferred in as well. We will be able to use that straightaway.

Was the move in response to the formation of the Symbian Foundation?

That would be very aggressive. A number of LiPS companies joined LiMo at the beginning of the year. Once we got going, the opportunity to work in this faster mode seemed to resonate immediately.

So, what does the future look like for LiMo?

Robust. At the end of July, we will have more announcements. There will be a group of new members, another eight or 10 probably, and the next wave of handsets--up to 10 models.

Hackable Broadband Left Unpatched

On July 8, tech heavyweights including **Microsoft**, **Cisco Systems** and **Sun Microsystems** teamed up to fix a fundamental flaw in the Internet, one that could allow any Web user to be invisibly redirected to fraudulent sites designed to steal banking passwords or install malicious software on users' PCs.

So why, more than a week after those companies' software patches were publicly released, do millions of Internet users remain vulnerable to the attack?

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As of Thursday, Internet providers including **AT&T** (nyse: T - news - people), **Time Warner Cable** (nyse: TWC - news - people), **Cablevision** (nyse: CVC - news - people) and **EarthLink** (nasdaq: ELNK - news - people) had yet to install the software patch that would protect their customers from a cybercriminal exploit known as Domain Name System (DNS) Cache Poisoning, according to the findings of a Web-based analysis tool created by Dan Kaminsky, the security researcher who originally found the bug.

The security flaw, found in the DNS servers used by large companies and Internet service providers (ISPs), could allow cybercriminals to perform a new, undetectable form of "phishing," security analysts warn. Typical phishing tactics include sending fraudulent e-mails to lure users to look-a-like banking or government Web sites that convince them to give up their bank codes or other sensitive information. This exploit, however, could directly hijack a user's browsing. A user in a network with corrupted DNS servers who types "BankofAmerica.com" or "Wachovia.com" into an address bar, for instance, might be invisibly redirected to exact replicas of those sites that siphon data to identity thieves.

The trick could also be used to direct users to sites that install malicious software on their computers and could even intercept e-mail correspondence, Kaminsky says.

Kaminsky, a researcher with security firm IOactive, plays down the prospect that his bug is already being widely exploited by cybercriminals. In fact, security researchers have only a hazy idea of how much DNS-related cybercrime is actually occurring, though researchers at Georgia Tech published a study earlier this year claiming that 0.4% of checkable DNS servers were redirecting users to sites they didn't intend to visit. The researchers also dug up examples of DNS-based phishing scams.

Kaminsky, to his credit, has been careful to guard the details of the security flaw, though he's worked closely with software vendors since he discovered it in March. Nonetheless, he says that other researchers have independently engineered the DNS vulnerability, and he admits that the bug's public announcement may have attracted more attention--not all from innocent sources.

"Usually when a patch comes out, it's not long before people have an exploit," Kaminsky says. "When you fix something, you announce what's broken."

That means users of broadband providers that haven't patched their servers may be increasingly vulnerable. And some of those providers seem to be dragging their feet.

Using Kaminsky's Web-based tool for checking the DNS vulnerability, Forbes.com tested several major Internet service providers, and found that some customers of AT&T, Cablevision and Time Warner Cable had unpatched connections. **Verizon** (nyse: VZ - news - people) users appear to be safe from the bug. A **Comcast** (nasdaq: CMCSA - news - people) spokesman says the company patched its servers even before the public announcement of the flaw that Kaminsky found.

Users who want to test their own Internet provider can use the tool on Kaminsky's site: Doxpara.com. Add your findings in the Reader Comments section below.

While Cablevision didn't respond to requests for comment, AT&T responded in a statement that "security is of paramount importance" to the company. "The latest patch for this alert is currently being tested and will be deployed in the network as soon as its quality has been assured," the statement read.

Time Warner Cable spokesman Alex Dudley responded, "We do have a solution to the DNS issue that we feel works for us, and we're working on rolling it out as quickly as possible." He added, "We have to make sure it works and that it doesn't impact the system in any way."

In a statement, an EarthLink spokesman wrote only that the company "is in the process of implementing the patch on our servers."

Any provider is likely to be cautious about implementing a patch for fear of affecting its network's performance, says Alan Paller, director of the security-focused SANS Institute. But in this case, Paller argues that the ISPs are taking too long to protect their customers.

Hardware and software companies jumped quickly to fix the threat, Paller noted, underscoring that it is serious. Internet providers, by contrast, haven't shared that sense of urgency. "Nine days is not a long time on average to wait for a patch. But this time it's really important. … This puts the entire trust of the Internet at risk."

Kaminsky is giving broadband providers and other companies that use DNS servers until early August to patch the bug before revealing the details of his research at the Black Hat security conference in Las Vegas. Even then, he's not sure every company will have gotten around to fixing the flaw.

"I wish we could get everyone, but I don't think we will," he says. "At least we gave them all a chance."

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Cross Training Improves Fitness and Reduces Injury

You consider yourself to be in better than average shape. You run several times a week for health and fitness and maybe do an occasional fun run on the weekend. Some friends come into town for the holidays and you decide to go skiing. No problem, you're in great shape, right? Wrong. After a day on the slopes you feel like you've been run over by Santa's sleigh and all his reindeer. What's going on?

You may be in great shape, for the sort of exercise you do routinely. But if that's all you do, day after day, you may be setting yourself up for injury or mental burnout and that is not a good way to get fit. What can help prevent injury and burnout? Cross training.

Cross training is a great way to condition different muscle groups, develop a new set of skills, and reduce boredom that creeps in after months of the same exercise routines. Cross training also allows you the ability to vary the stress placed on specific muscles or even your cardiovascular system. After months of the same movements your body becomes extremely efficient performing those movements, and while that is great for competition, it limits the amount of overall fitness you possess and reduces the actual conditioning you get while training; rather than continuing to improve, you simply maintain a certain level of fitness. Cross training is also necessary to reduce the risk of injury from repetitive strain or overuse.

The term cross training refers to a training routine that involves several different forms of exercise. While it is necessary for an athlete to train specifically for their sport if they want to excel, for most exercisers cross training is a beneficial training method for maintaining a high level of overall fitness. For example, you may use both biking and swimming each week to improve your overall aerobic capacity, build overall muscle strength and reduce the chance of an overuse injury. Cross training limits the stress that occurs on a specific muscle group because different activities use muscles in slightly different ways.

Benefits of Cross Training

- Reduces exercise boredom
- Allows you to be flexible about you training needs and plans (if the pool is closed, you can go for a run instead).
- Produces a higher level of all around conditioning
- Conditions the entire body, not just specific muscle groups
- Reduces the risk of injury
- Work some muscles while others rest and recover
- Can continue to train while injured

Improves your skill, agility and balance

What exercises should make up a good cross training routine?

- **Cardiovascular Exercise** (Think about adding three different exercises from the list below):
- Running
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Rowing
- Stair Climbing
- Rope jumping
- Skating (inline or ice)
- Skiing
- Racquetball / basketball / other court sports

Strength Training

- Calisthenics (push ups and crunches and pull ups)
- Free Weights
- Machines
- Tubing and Bands
-
- **Flexibility** (stretching, yoga)
- **Speed, agility, and balance drills**

Circuit training, sprinting, plyometrics and other forms of skill conditioning

With cross training, you can do one form of exercise each day, or more than one in a day. If you do both on the same day, you can change the order in which you do them. You can easily tailor cross-training to your needs and interests; mix and match you sports and change your routine on a regular basis.

Exercise can strengthen the cardiovascular system, bones, muscles, joints, reduce body fat and improve flexibility, balance and coordination. But if you want to see all of these benefits, you'll need to start cross training. What better time to start than now? I hear your friends have taken up snowboarding.

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