

Wireless solutions centre aims to smooth path from bright idea to successful product

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Most mobile and wireless developers in Hong Kong are small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The characteristics of these SMEs are that they are mostly run by young, innovative and energetic entrepreneurs. Indeed there are many innovative ideas from these young entrepreneurs but for an innovative idea to go from ideas to development, from deployment to hitting the market and be a success, there are many disjointed gaps in-between.

For mobile and wireless solutions, developers of solutions and contents cannot work on their products alone and sell them to the public as in common software products. Some need to develop the software and contents with the help of the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and launch their products with the MNOs' support. For without their support, they will have no way to charge and publish their contents and solutions. To complicate the issue further, as different phone handsets all have different screen resolutions, colour depth, sound capabilities and software APIs, software and content developers may have to develop contents and applications for different types of phone handsets.

Many innovative ideas will stop at the idea stage, as the cost and technical barriers of development is high. Even if some innovative products were successfully developed, they might never see the daylight because they did not make it to the MNOs. Most count themselves lucky to have their product launched in Hong Kong but certainly they will have no means to promote and market their products to other part of the world. Hong Kong local SME software and content developers will require assistance and support in development, deployment and marketing.

Hong Kong SAR government has earmarked "Creative and High-Tech Industries" to be one of the Core Industries in Hong Kong. As mentioned in the Budget announced in

early March, they embark on an initiative to set up a “Wireless Solutions Development Centre” at CyberPort. This plan has gained widespread support from all the local mobile operators, prominent handset manufacturers and IT companies. From WTIA’s point of view, the Government’s plan will just come in at a right time for the local SME developers and we offer our full support to it. Our Association has submitted that the Centre should provide to local developers technical assistances in terms of consultancy as well as a technical library. Developers of wireless contents and solutions could make use of the facilities in the centre in the form of the latest mobile phone, test network coverage and high-speed lease line connection to the gateways of the MNOs. In addition, we hope that the Centre would assist the SME developers to work with the MNOs in the deployment of their products. With a collection of the wireless products and contents, the Centre could also provide business-matching and marketing opportunities not only in Hong Kong but also to the other part of world, including China.

After the .COM era, many SME software developers are still lingering from the after shock of the .COM boom and bust. Many view the mobile and wireless solutions to be the saviour for the beleaguered software industry of Hong Kong. The government high profile initiative will no doubt help to define the landscape for the future development of the software development in Hong Kong. If Hong Kong is to be the Telecom and Information Hub of Asia, the success of the mobile and wireless industry will be of strategic importance. With an 80+% penetration of mobile phone and technically receptive population, Hong Kong is an ideal launching pad for the mobile and wireless products not only to China but also to the other regions of the world. In such a case, the Wireless Centre in CyberPort will no doubt work as the linchpin that focuses the mobile and wireless industry in Hong Kong on one hand, and on the other, be the fountain that churns out Hong Kong products and promote the mobile and wireless industry as a whole to the rest of the world! This centre will destined to be successful as this was built by, with and on the Hong Kong SME software developer community.