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RIM has frustrated users

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SMARTPHONES

RIM CIO Aims to Reassure Unhappy Users

RESearch IN MOTION CIO Robin Bienfait's last name means "well done" in French. She's hoping customers will agree that those words apply to the upcoming BlackBerry 10 smartphones that Waterloo, Ontario-based RIM is due to ship in the first quarter of 2013.

"We're committed to our customers and want to see them [be] successful," Bienfait said in an interview at the recent MobileCon trade show. She said that, since April, she has talked to 130 CIOs — mostly from the U.S. — who are RIM customers. Many said that they've grown frustrated after years of using BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES) and BlackBerry smartphones.

The outage affecting BlackBerry users on several continents for several days a year ago was a big concern of the CIOs, she said. But

they also expressed frustration at the slow rollout of new smartphones, including BlackBerry 7 devices in the U.S.

While noting that U.S. enterprise customers still back RIM, Bienfait added, "We've had some missteps, including not having [BlackBerry 7] devices in the carriers' hands."

Bienfait said that she and her team have offered input about features and security for the new BlackBerries, and about BES 10, due to ship at the same time as the new phones.

As RIM's CIO, she said she focuses mostly on software service and support as they pertain to BlackBerry 10 and other products. But her job also includes oversight of BlackBerry operations, the enterprise business unit and internal RIM IT.

— Matt Hamblen

NATIONAL SECURITY

High Court Nixes Appeal of AT&T, NSA Wiretap Case

The U.S. Supreme Court has refused to overturn a lower-court decision upholding legal immunity for telecommunications companies that allegedly participated in a National Security Agency surveillance program during the last decade.

The court, without comment, declined to review a December 2011 appeals court decision upholding legal immunity for AT&T in its effort to help the NSA monitor phone calls and Internet communications following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

The Electronic Frontier Foundation filed the class-action lawsuit, *Hepting v. AT&T*, in 2006. Congress in 2008 gave telecom carriers legal immunity for participating in the NSA program, and the EFF appealed a June 2009 dismissal of the case to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, but the appeals court let the immunity stand.

The EFF and other civil liberties groups accused AT&T of participating in an illegal surveillance program run by the NSA. Officials of President George W. Bush's administration said the program was necessary to fight terrorism.

Meanwhile, the EFF is pursuing a related case, *Jewel v. NSA*, according to EFF legal director Cindy Cohn.

"This program hasn't been seriously considered in the courts," she said. "We look forward to rectifying that."

— GRANT GROSS,
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