

BlackBerry wants SA app developers

BlackBerry is investigating opportunities to support local mobile software applications (apps) developers in Africa, in a bid to attract more customers and claw back market share, the local company claims.



In January, BlackBerry began its comeback bid in the smartphone market with the launch of a new operating system, BlackBerry 10 (BB10), and new smartphones including the BlackBerry Z10.

It currently has about 100,000 apps in its app store internationally.

The company has opened app developer laboratories in Cape Town and Pretoria in the past year in a bid to grow the local app market.

The labs provide local developers, including students, start-ups, entrepreneurs and others, with access to resources in development, marketing, sales and training to help them expand their ideas and business opportunities. BlackBerry plans to open labs in other countries on the continent including Nigeria and Egypt.

Lelany Sommers, BlackBerry's business development manager for the Middle East and Africa, said the company was investing in resources to provide a platform for developers, as apps are a key focus for the company.

She said the group would continue to investigate further opportunities in Africa to bring more app developers on board.

"There are some great apps coming out of SA's developers. There is lots of interest and passion. We have to ensure that BlackBerry provides the necessary tools," Sommers said.

In SA, BlackBerry had about 50 local apps at the launch of its BlackBerry Z10 but the number is believed to be growing. Worldwide more than 200m apps have been downloaded from BlackBerry apps stores.

The group has struggled with declining market share, losing ground to Apple, Samsung and other smartphone manufacturers around the world.

The BlackBerry Enterprise Service 10, which among other things allows companies to manage BlackBerry, Android and Apple devices on one platform, has is being used by 25 local organisations although about 100 others are said to be testing the new platform.

Source: *Business Day* via I-Net Bridge

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