New York Times drops BlackBerry app

Allison Martell, Reuters

(Reuters) - BlackBerry users can no longer use the official New York Times app to read news stories over their devices, in a fresh blow to Research In Motion, the maker of the smartphone once considered an essential tool for business professionals.

New York Times Co, which publishes the prestigious newspaper, said it had stopped supporting its applications for BlackBerry and the Palm Pre as of Monday, meaning the apps will no longer download news stories.

"It's a matter of usage of our apps, and we dedicate our resources where we think there's the highest level of usage," said New York Times spokeswoman Eileen Murphy. "We've seen a drop-off."

But Murphy said the company has not ruled out developing an app for devices that will run on RIM's new operating system, BlackBerry 10, due out early next year.

"That decision has not been made, and it's entirely possible that we might," she said.

Northern Securities analyst Sameet Kanade said he was not surprised by the move, given how much time is needed to build apps compatible with all the different BlackBerry phones.

"Will they come back to it when BlackBerry 10 is launched? My guess would be yes, but time will tell," he said.

Last week RIM updated the tools it is providing for independent developers to build applications for the twice-delayed BlackBerry 10.

A strong library of applications for the new platform is seen as crucial to its success, as RIM struggles to reverse years of slowing sales.

Its existing library of apps, many of which are incompatible with BlackBerry 10 in any case, is far smaller than rival offerings from Apple Inc and Google Inc.

BlackBerry users can still read the New York Times over their phones via the newspaper's website.

"Currently, our mobile website offers a more complete New York Times experience than the NYTimes app native to your device," said a notice to customers on the New York Times website.

RIM brought mobile email into the mainstream with its first BlackBerry devices more

than a decade ago, but its market share has evaporated as consumers flock to Apple's iPhone and devices based on Google's Android system.

The company's sales have flagged as customers switch to competing devices or put off upgrading ahead of the BlackBerry 10 launch.

The stock, down 1.7 percent on the Toronto Stock Exchange at C$6.96, has fallen more than 50 percent so far this year.

RIM, based in Waterloo, Ontario, could not immediately be reached for comment.

(Editing by Frank McGurty)

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