

Will Feature Phones Become an Endangered Species?



There is no doubt that there will always be a set of consumers that only want their mobile phone to be, well, a phone. Voice calling is likely to remain the ‘killer app’ for the majority of consumers for a long time to come, and there will remain a sizeable section of the mobile phone market that will cater to this demand.

However, the market change to smartphones is undeniable, even in the last bastions of feature phone-centered markets such as Japan and South Korea, Android-based smartphones are rapidly winning market share at the high end of the device spectrum. Now, a second wave of the Android smartphone revolution is happening in many countries, and I am excited to say that Wind River mobile software solutions for Android are right in the thick of things, helping to drive this new wave of devices.

Today, we are taking the covers off a major new collaboration initiative with VIA Telecom called [Kunlun](#) [1]. Kunlun is a new, cost-effective reference platform based on Wind River Platform for Android (PFA), VIA EV-DOrA modem and TI OMAP application processor technologies. Initially focused on the Chinese market, Kunlun’s integration with the operator network was rapidly enabled based on a combination of using pre-developed “service builder” technology created by Wind River for the PFA platform, as well as a highly automated approach to software quality and performance testing using our Framework for Automated Software Test ([FAST](#) [2]) for Android product.

Every day, I pass a billboard that advertises a ‘fully-loaded Android device at a fraction of the price’ with service plans that used to be commonly associated with feature phones. Major US post-paid operators are now offering free Android based devices as part of a new 2-year contract. Most low-cost US pre-paid and no-contract operators’ device portfolios include Android devices as well. While it is encouraging to see these low cost Android devices gaining on traditional feature phones, there has been chatter in the blogosphere that while this class of Android device might be fully loaded, the price decreases have also sometimes resulted in a noticeable

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Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

reduction in performance and reliability of the Android stack on the device. With voice still being the killer app, it is simply not ok to expect a consumer to wait 10 seconds to display the dialer application in an Android phone.

[Wind River FAST for Android](#) [2], with its new memory, CPU and launch time profiler options, has proven to be a critical tool for the Wind River engineering team to create the new Kunlun platform - uniquely delivering high-end Android software performance on a cost-efficient hardware platform. And this combination of automated test tools, optimized Android platforms and rapid integration expertise is another nail in the coffin for the feature phone segment and its mobile operating systems.

S40, beware, Wind River powered Droids are coming.

Source URL (retrieved on 08/29/2014 - 4:44am):

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Links:

[1] <http://www.windriver.com/news/press/pr.html?ID=8661>

[2] <http://www.windriver.com/products/mobile-linux/fast.html>