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Responsive to the Communication dated March 25, 2009

I. Amendments

1.1 Applicant submits, without prejudice, a new set of claims 1 to 18 as the basis for the further proceedings and to replace the claims currently on file.

1.2. In order to address the issue related to Art. 123(2) EPC, raised in points 2.1 and 2.2 of the Communication, where appropriate in all claims the feature "*electronic device*" was amended to now read "*portable electronic device*".

Also reference signs have been added to all claims where appropriate and the new independent claims 1 and 6 have been brought into two-

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part form. For new independent claim 18, which refers back to claims 1 to 5, a two-part form was not considered to be appropriate, since the characterizing portions of claim 18 are included in claims 1 to 5.

1.3 New method **claim 1** is based on previous claim 1. In order to address the clarity issues raised in point 5.2 of the Communication claim 1 has been amended as suggested by the examiner and is now directed to "*a computer implemented method of controlling a portable electronic device comprising a touch-sensitive display, comprising ...*".

New dependent method **claims 2 to 5** are based on previous independent claims 8, 12, 14 and 16 respectively and have been amended by turning them into claims depending from new claim 1 and by consequently deleting redundant features already included in new claim 1.

New independent apparatus **claim 6** is based on previous claim 2.

New dependent apparatus **claims 7 to 17** are based on previous claims 3 to 7, 9 to 11, 13, 15 and 17 respectively and have been amended by turning them into claims depending (directly or indirectly) from new claim 6 and by consequently deleting redundant features already included in new claim 6.

New independent apparatus **claim 18** is based on previous claim 20 and has been amended by adjusting the claim reference to new claim numbering.

1.4 Therefore applicant believes the subject matter of new claims 1 to 18 satisfies the requirements of Art. 84 and Art.123(2) EPC.

II. Novelty

2.1 Applicant agrees with the examiner that the previous claims were already novel in view of the cited prior art D1 to D4. Consequently, also the new independent claims 1 to 18 which contain the same features as previous independent claims 1, 2 and 20 respectively are novel.

2.2 Since all remaining new dependent claims 2 to 5 and 7 to 17 are directly or indirectly depending from either claim 1 or claim 6 and include all of their respective features they are therefore also novel.

III. Inventive step

3.1 In agreement with the examiner Document D1 is considered to present the closest prior art.

D1 discloses a method of deactivating a touch screen lock in a portable electronic device, comprising detecting touches on predetermined contact areas on the touch screen in a given order during touch screen lock and deactivating the touch screen lock once said touches on said predetermined contact areas are detected. Further in certain embodiments of D1 outlines of the contact areas or background images for facilitating the remembering of the predetermined contact areas may be displayed on the touch screen.

The difference between reference D1 and the invention of new claim 1, however, is at least the method step "*moving an unlock image along a predefined displayed path on the touch-sensitive display in accordance*

with the contact, wherein the unlock image is a graphical, interactive user-interface object with which a user interacts in order to unlock the device" of new claim 1.

D1 neither discloses:

(a) the use of any unlock image being moved (whether or not the unlock image is *a graphical, interactive user-interface object with which a user interacts in order to unlock the device)*;

(b) nor moving an unlock image respectively the contact along a displayed path on the touch-screen display.

Rather, D1 is directed to an unlocking method which is secured in that a specific predetermined sequence of contacts has to be input in order to unlock the device. The sequence of contacts is therefore kept secret and not made visible on the screen. Also in those embodiments of D1, where outlines or background images are shown to support the user in remembering the secret sequence and touching the contact areas, only the position of these contact areas is displayed, the order in which they have to be contacted and thus (for a gliding motion) the path leading to an unlocking to the device, however, are not displayed.

3.2 These differences lead to a number of drawbacks of the solution of D1. Particularly, the sequence of contact touches may be hard to perform, creating, memorizing and recalling the secret sequence or path can be quite burdensome. These drawbacks may reduce the ease of use of the unlocking process and, as a consequence, the ease of use of the device in general.

The objective problem solved by the present invention is therefore to provide more efficient, user friendly procedures for unlocking portable electronic devices, touch screens or applications and to provide a sensory feedback to the user regarding progress towards satisfaction of a user input condition that is required for the unlocking to occur.

The solution to this problem, i.e. a method comprising *moving an unlock image along a predefined displayed path on the touch-sensitive display in accordance with the contact, wherein the unlock image is a graphical, interactive user-interface object with which a user interacts in order to unlock the device*, is set out in claim 1.

In particular the unlock image signals to the user that the device is locked and at the same time indicates the contact point a user has to touch in order to start moving the unlock image for unlocking the device. The displayed path clearly indicates to the user how and where the unlock image has to be moved and the current position of the unlock images provides feedback to the user about the progress already made towards satisfaction of a user input condition that is required for the unlocking to occur.

3.3 D1 itself provides no hint at the form of the modification which might be required to solve this problem.

Applicant respectfully submits that the differentiating features identified in section 3.1 above are also not rendered obvious by combining D1 with Document D2:

Regarding feature (a) of new claim 1 as defined above, the user-interface unlocked state of the device of the present invention is in its normal operating state, detecting and responding to user input corresponding to interaction with the user interface. The unlocked device detects and responds to contact corresponding to activation or deactivation of function s through the screen (*cf. par.[0051] of the description*).

In contrast D2 discloses "*Computer users access and/or execute a selected restricted function on a computer using a graphical user interface by entering an iconic password that is defined by selecting two or more visual icons, called code icons, in a sequence called an iconic password sequence*" (*cf. D2, abstract*).

In D2 the computer is already in the user-interface unlock state when the iconic password sequence is entered to access and/or execute a selected function, while in the present invention the method of new claim 1 is directed to a process of transitioning the devices from a locked state to user-interface unlock state.

Unlocking the device, however, is not the same as unlocking a restricted function on the device. Indeed unlocking a restricted function in D2 occurs when the computer is already in an unlocked state. For example, see D2 at column 7, lines 34 to 44, which describe the need to distinguish entry of an iconic password from a drag-and-drop request used for other actions. Such other actions occur when the computer is in an unlocked state, not when the computer is in a locked state.

In addition, D2 also does not disclose the feature (b). Particularly, in D2 no path is displayed on the touch screen, along which the icon is to be

moved but rather, if at all, only a target area is show on the screen. A path to such area remains both undefined and undisplayed. Therefore, in the process of the current invention a contact which is not following the path is rapidly recognized as not meeting the unlock condition and thus does not lead to an unlocking of the device. Such deviation from the predefined path could for example occur due to an accidental, i.e. unintentional moving contact on the touch screen, which in line with the very objective of a device locking feature should not lead to an unlocking of the device. In D2, however, the path used for moving the icons to the target area is arbitrary and thus an unintentional or wrong contact cannot be recognized by detecting a deviation from the predetermined path as a deviation from the predefined gesture leading to the unlocking of the device.

Thus also D2 fails to disclose features (a) and (b) of new claim 1 as identified above.

3.4 The invention of new claim 1 is therefore not obvious over D1 and D2, either taken alone or in combination.

Further independent new claims 6 and 18 are directed to an apparatus respectively a computer program product corresponding to the method of new claim 1 and containing the same or similar features.

Therefore, also new claims 6 and 18 involve an inventive step.

IV.

It is respectfully requested to grant a patent on the basis of the new claims.

It is respectfully requested to be allowed to postpone the adaptation of the description until an allowable set of claims has been agreed upon.

Auxiliary, if there are still substantive objections with respect to the patentability of the present invention, it is requested to perform an informal interview and/or oral proceedings according to Article 116 EPC.

Johannes Lang
European Patent Attorney

Enclosures
New set of claims 1 to 18
The same new set of claims with amendments highlighted