### The story of convergence

# UBUNTU PHONE

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On January 2, 2013, as most of us dove back into reality after the holidays, my team and I were hard at work. After a lot of planning and preparation, we announced Ubuntu for phones, a beautiful, integrated phone experience that looks and feels like Ubuntu but with a glimpse of the future [1].

Back in 2004 when we started this story, Ubuntu was explicitly focused on the Desktop. Our goal back then was to create the most desirable and powerful Linux desktop, and quickly Ubuntu became the choice of most Linux users. We then focused on the server, and then the cloud, and Ubuntu started developing a reputation for making technology simple whether on the client or the server.

It wasn't until 2010 that we really started thinking about true convergence: delivering a single ubiquitous operating system that runs across any form factor you might care about. Back then when we explored this vision, our dream was about Ubuntu on phones, tablets, TVs, and of course our familiar desktop and server platforms. Of course, dreams are simple; unfortunately, making dreams become reality can involve a lot of work and some gritted teeth.

Delivering this large convergence story really started with the introduction of Unity. Although controversial at first, Unity was designed from the outset to be a powerful interface across these different devices. The desktop was the first logical target, but the design and devel-opment of Unity was born with these other form factors in mind. While these other form factors were considered, the focus was still very much on the desktop and maturing both the design and implementation of Unity, which culminated in a rock-solid Ubuntu 12.04 LTS.

Things really started to get interesting when we introduced the TV and the world could see our idea of an Ubuntu TV. Interestingly, the convergence story started slotting into some folks; it was immediately obvious that Ubuntu for TVs was indeed Ubuntu. The design, color, and interaction models seemed intimately familiar if you had seen the Unity desktop before, but it was optimized for the TV viewing and interaction experience.

As someone who tends to spend a lot of time with our community, I was fascinated by the response to Ubuntu for TVs. Although people were definitely excited and some folks saw the convergence, the wider convergence vision was still not something that people were thinking about when we discussed Ubuntu. At least part of this was because we at Canonical were not doing the best job of explaining and presenting this vision, perhaps because the real beauty of the vision is in the nuances of it.

This all changed when we announced Ubuntu for phones. Much of the feedback, articles, and opinion we saw following the announcement highlighted the vision of Ubuntu across a range of devices, and how content, applications and other content is shared across these devices using Ubuntu One. Finally, things started to make sense for many onlookers, as well as for us. Although we were edging toward this dream, we were still adjusting and improving as we created new technology and exposed it to users.

A week or so after the Ubuntu phone announcement, I flew out to Las Vegas with a number of other Canonical staff to exhibit this convergence story at the huge Consumer Electronics Show (CES) [2]. There we spent four days deluged in interested visitors who wanted to see the phone in person after following the announcement buzz online. I spent all day every day at CES demonstrating the phone, doing interviews, and showcasing the phone within the context of the desktop and TV.

The response to the phone was absolutely mind-blowing. In my six and a half years working at Canonical, I have never seen the sheer level of interest and excitement that I have seen for the phone. There was not only interest at CES, but people genuinely seemed to like the look and feel of the phone, and the focus on content.

As the Ubuntu Community Manager, I am most excited that this convergence is opening up a world of opportunity for our community. We are increasingly focusing on app developers, and encouraging our community to participate in building Ubuntu across these different form factors.

These new opportunities bring new challenges and, as we have proven historically, we don't plan to settle for the status quo anytime soon. We need to push the envelope in terms of the end-user experience of Ubuntu as well as how we create Ubuntu in the first place. Meeting this challenge is only something we can do together as a community, though, and our convergence story is getting told all over the world. Now is a great time to explore these challenges for a bright new future. ■

### INFO

[1] Ubuntu for Phones: http://www. ubuntu.com/devices/phone

[2] CES: http://www.cesweb.org/

[3] BBC Video Interview with Canonical's Jane Silber: http://www.bbc.co. uk/programmes/p014tsfp