# Will Microsoft Squish BlackBerry With Direct Push?

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### Sascha Segan - PC Magazine

**Feb. 13, 2006** - In a bid to compete with the ubiquitous BlackBerry, Microsoft rolled out its first true push e-mail service and paved the way for the cheapest ever Windows Mobile devices with announcements at the 3GSM wireless trade show today.

Cingular will be the first US carrier to offer Microsoft Direct Push e-mail, but the service will first be available in France, Germany and the UK, Microsoft said. The Blackberry challenger runs on Windows Mobile 5.0 devices, for customers with Microsoft Exchange 2003 SP2 servers. Existing Windows Mobile 5.0 gadgets will require a free software upgrade known as the Messaging and Security Feature Pack.

The arrival of Microsoft's Direct Push system, which ties into Exchange servers without the need for an additional server or middleware, has been leading pundits to say Microsoft is a particularly strong threat to Research in Motion (RIM)'s popular Blackberry handhelds. Competing push solutions, from RIM, Visto, Seven, Good and others, all require an additional server or middleware on top of an Exchange server.

T-Mobile may not be far behind Cingular. T-Mobile in the Netherlands "are already up and running with a full, hosted Exchange service" for small businesses, according to Knook.

"[Cingular] will have Direct Push tariff plans, and I believe it's this quarter that they will actually turn those plans on," said Microsoft senior vice president Pieter Knook.

Cingular said today that their 2125 and 8125 smartphones would get free upgrades to the new Push service. Device manufacturers Palm – and its Treo 700w -- and i-Mate also committed to releasing free upgrades to MSFP.

HP, HTC, ASUS, Gigabyte and Fujitsu all announced new Pocket PCs which will be Direct Push capable. The HP iPAQ hw6900 is scheduled to come out in the US soon, probably on Cingular; HTC's devices, meanwhile, are likely to show up under carrier branding in the US. (The Cingular 2125, T-Mobile MDA, T-Mobile SDA and Sprint PPC-6700 are all rebranded HTC devices.) Asus, Gigabyte and Fujitsu do not typically make phones for the US market.

Knook also said during Microsoft's press conference that new Motorola phones will come with Windows Media Player software, which will let them sync music with PCs and Windows Media compatible stores like Rhapsody and Yahoo!. Motorola has scheduled a press conference for later on Monday to announce its plans. Motorola phones such as the ROKR E1 and SLVR L7 already ship with Apple's competing iTunes software.

New Windows Mobile smartphones will also be able to run on a low-cost chipset from Texas Instruments, Microsoft said today. Amoi, HTC and Sagem are all developing phones based on an inexpensive single-core platform that's Windows Mobile compatible; previously, Windows Mobile phones generally required more expensive dual-core or higher-speed Intel processors. Of those three manufacturers, HTC is currently the only one who sells phones in the US.

The new low-cost Windows Mobile phones will arrive within 12 months, Knook said. "That's a collaboration we've undertaken with TI and three OEMs … [and] each one of those has their own schedule," he said.

In a separate announcement today, software company Intrinsyc said their new Soleus platform will bring Windows CE to inexpensive feature phones.