

WeatherBug Ports Widget to S60 Platform



The WeatherBug widget on S60 3rd Edition devices gives consumers instant access to up-to-date weather information from more than 8,000 weather US stations, 50,000 worldwide points, plus radar and satellite information.

With Nokia's recent introduction of Web Run-Time (WRT) on S60 3rd Edition feature pack 1 devices, the world of widgets was introduced to the S60 platform. Eager to capitalize on the great marketing opportunity presented by this technological advance, WeatherBug, a part of AWS Convergence Technologies, Inc., of Germantown, Maryland, set out to convert the Dashboard version of its WeatherBug application into a WRT widget. The company was surprised and pleased at how easy the process turned out to be.

"Consumer studies show that, after email, a weather application is the thing that people most want to see on their mobile devices," says Chris Brozenick, vice president of product at WeatherBug. "When we put that fact together with Nokia's worldwide presence as about half of the smartphone market, we saw an opportunity to provide a great way for consumers to get quick access to their weather data every day.

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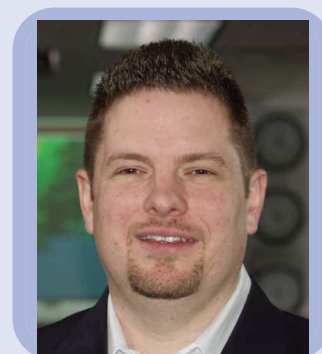
More than 8,000 weather stations, plus radar and satellite coverage

The WeatherBug widget provides live updates of weather conditions, forecasts, and warnings from a huge network of ground stations in the U.S., as well as additional stations in Canada and the United Kingdom, and weather services from around the world. Brozenick says that the company services over 20 million unique users every month, and has one of the top 5 news and information website in the world. "We have more than 8,000 weather stations of our own in the U.S., plus reports from 1,200 more through the U.S. National Weather Service," says Brozenick. In Canada, WeatherBug has 300 weather stations and growing, and is now building out a network in the United Kingdom that will top 100 stations by year end. "For the rest of the world, we aggregate data from 50,000 locations, including several hundred in Finland, several hundred in Germany, and other data from more than 150 countries worldwide."

WeatherBug began creating its network more than 15 years ago by selling station hardware to schools, and as a result, creating a substantial number of weather-monitoring stations. "Now, we are used by the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security, large commercial enterprises including energy companies, and our weather data is also carried on more than 80 broadcast stations on the ABC, NBC, and CBS TV networks," Brozenick says.



AWS Convergence Technologies, Inc.
Germantown, Maryland
www.weatherbug.com



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Looking ahead:

"For us, the areas of great new growth potential are in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific region," says Brozenick. "In the U.K., we are ramping up to have 100 new weather stations by the end of 2008. In the rest of the world, we have 50,000 data points in 150 countries. Although our WeatherBug product is largely language-independent, we have already created translated versions into the most popular 13-14 languages around the world, such as French, Spanish and German. Other languages will be added over time."

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Creating a widget on the S60 platform

Before creating the WeatherBug widget on the S60 platform, WeatherBug had already deployed its WeatherBug Dashboard widget on the PC, Mac, and other platforms. "Moving it onto the S60 was easy--it was one of our shortest release cycles for a widget," says Brozenick. WeatherBug assigned the task to one developer, who accomplished the port of the widget in just five days. "Our developer was able to reuse most of the widget's existing code, which is based upon JavaScript™ and an XML parsing library," he adds.

The port was straightforward, Brozenick says, because both Web Run-Time and Dashboard are based on WebKit (www.webkit.org), the powerful open-source browser engine. In fact, Web Run-Time is powered by the same feature-rich open-source environment used by the Web Browser for S60, providing developers with familiar standards-based Web technologies, including HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. Most of the WeatherBug porting efforts went into making the WeatherBug user interface (UI) appropriate for mobile devices. For example, the UI needed to be scaled to fit the smaller displays of S60 devices. WeatherBug also had to rethink the application's navigation, since mobile devices lack mice and full-size keyboards. Beyond that, WeatherBug encountered only a few minor problems involving the original widget code's OS X-specific dependencies, which were simply removed. Otherwise, the code remained essentially untouched.

"One of the factors that played into this was that we already had a widget on the Mac that worked with the Safari browser," says Brozenick. "There is great code compatibility between that browser and the one used on Nokia devices, so that part was fairly easy. On a scale of difficulty from one to ten, I would rate this as a three. We had to do little more than simply tweak the user interface portion."

"Nokia was a great partner in providing us with the tools and advice that we needed to create the widget on the S60." — Chris Brozenick

Business strategy: Monetize with ads

Turning to business strategy, Brozenick says that WeatherBug plans to monetize the WeatherBug widget with ad placements over time. "The goal is to have a small portion of the widget as an ad unit, perhaps 5% to 10% of the screen, where the application is sponsored by major brands. You just click on their ad and it takes you to their Web site."

WeatherBug's competitive advantage, Brozenick says, is its precision, accuracy and realtime updates. "On other weather applications, one is likely to get top-of-the-hour reports on otherwise static data. Ours gives you updates every couple of seconds. We give weather forecasts over the next 24 to 72 hours, along with such things as temperature, wind speed, and direction. You can look at it from the satellite's point of view, and then flip to live cameras in the area. For example, in the Washington DC area we have more than 650 stations deployed, many with cameras and you can pick the stations that are closest to you, which makes the data very local."

How Forum Nokia helps WeatherBug

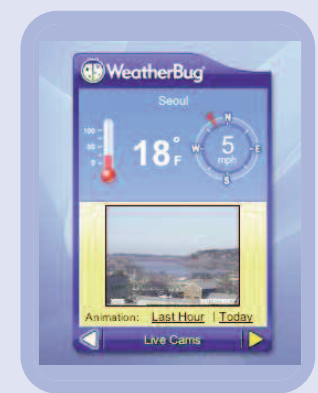
"Nokia was a great partner in providing us with the tools and advice that we needed to create the widget on the S60," says Brozenick. "The net result of having a widget was that it gave our application freedom from having to be a downloaded application. Porting to the S60 platform was really a no-brainer for us, given Nokia's market share of devices in the world. Having this widget on the S60 puts us in position to capture a significant market share. Also, with the S60 3rd Edition Feature pack 1 devices with Web RunTime, you get that full Web browser experience. I believe that with the S60 widget, we have established a great base here, one that will eventually reach the more general S40 device market."

For more information, go to:

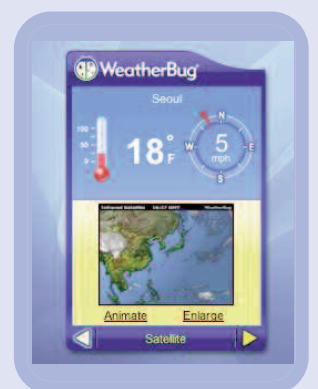
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...as well as from the satellite's point of view.

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