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### Critical Path Plans Context and Content-Based Mail Heuristics

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Messaging software developer Critical Path Inc is developing context- and content-based heuristics for the next release of its push email technology, enabling recipients to prioritize mail by what it's about, rather than just by who it's from.

The San Francisco, California-based ISV launched the Memova brand in February as an umbrella for its email (Memova Mobile), SMS and PIM (Memova Messaging), and security (Memova Anti-Abuse), offerings to network operators. The rationale behind Memova Mobile is to enable push email from any mailbox to any phone, said Critical Path CTO and EVP of marketing Mike Serbinis. "If a user has one or more mailboxes with an ISP, a portal or an ASP, they can get mail pushed to them without installing any additional software on their phone," he said. "It's a couple of clicks to push email."

Critical Path is targeting what Serbinis called "the non-BlackBerry market", which can be users at SMEs or larger organizations that don't want to spend money on an expensive handset but still require a degree of connectivity, at least to web and ISP mail, if not a corporate email server. Memova Mobile enables such users to receive an alert that they have mail, which they can then click to open, read and delete.

"Between 10% and 30% of such users tend to reply by email, the rest by SMS or MMS, so receiving is the really important function," said Serbinis. Memova Mobile also enables the text message to be transformed by the operator into an email back to the person that sent the original mail.

The emphasis on efficient reception of email is the reason Critical Path is honing its ability to prioritize what mail it pushes, moving from sender- to content- and context-based classification in the next release. Version 1.0 of Mobile already has a capability called Suggestive Priority whereby the operator can suggest which messages a user might like to prioritize, but this is currently restricted to who they come from, so the idea is to move to a more granular approach to prioritization.

Critical Path is a classic example of a boom-era company that held an IPO (in 1999) then grew by acquisition, moving well beyond its initial focus, and has now been obliged to concentrate again on its core competencies. However, at least some of the technology it picked up during the boom is still relevant. For example, Serbinis said its directory technology is of use in messaging deployments. "There is a need to integrate disparate management systems with our Meta Directory," he said.

By targeting the mass market for mobile email, Critical Path is avoiding futile attempts to claw market share away from Research In Motion Ltd with its BlackBerry service. However, it is by no means alone. Companies such as Visto and Seven are also moving down into the feature phone space with work on Java platforms, for example, and the likelihood is that there will be a lot more players hoping to address some of the 600 million mailboxes not yet mobilized by RIM and its high-end competitors.