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## Developer's Diary 3: Disclaimers, Melting Snow—and Miracles!

*Joe Kerr and his partners continue their great adventure of starting a wireless software company. This month, they frantically try to finish their freestyle skiing game before the snow and their sponsorship melts, help the lawyers draft a disclaimer for the slow-witted, and check to see if QUALCOMM developer support can perform miracles...*

by "Joe Kerr"

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I walk into the study at home and find my 12-year-old playing computer games when he is supposed to be doing his homework. "Quit screwing around," I tell him, "and get back to work."

"At your office this is work," he says as he sends in his soldiers to lay siege to a medieval castle. I make a mental note to get right to work on a BREW version of his algebra textbook. We'll call it "Quadratic Warlord."

In truth, working for a wireless software company isn't all about playing games on a phone. Sometimes, for example, you have to use a Gameboy or, in extreme circumstances, make an emergency trip to Dave & Buster's. Or like a couple of weeks ago: I didn't even have time to work my thumbs. I was far too busy watching skiing videos and searching the Net for photos of someone performing a "daffy." The goal was to get the artwork of our Freestyle game to reasonably replicate what an actual freestyler does.

I'm now learning that was the easy part. Not so easy is getting our sponsor to sign off on the artwork and descriptors. For starters, there is a big gap between what we can do with a photo—say on a splash page, for example—and what we can reasonably insert into the game itself. We have to use all of our powers of diplomacy to assure them that we will make their product look as good as possible within the constraints of a 128x144-pixel, 200K application.

Once we set those expectations straight, the lawyers shove their way into the conversation.

First they say we have to change the commonly used names for some of the aerial maneuvers. We are incredulous. "But that's what everyone calls them," we argue.

"So what?" they counter. "Some of those moves are too closely associated with specific skiers and we don't want any threat of litigation."

*Whatever.*

The lawyers also insist that we insert a screen that reminds people that this is only a game and that they can get hurt if they try these moves at home. I offer four alternatives:

- "Since any or these aerial tricks might result in a major face-plant, do not attempt unless you are supremely ugly already."
- "Anyone stupid enough to think that a high score on this game will result in similar excellence on a ski slope is probably too stupid to understand the disclaimer we would use to discourage you from trying."
- "This is only a game. Were this really freestyle skiing you would be too numb to move your thumbs."
- "If you try any of these stunts with real skis on real snow you'll probably kill yourself—and it won't be our fault."

They say they appreciate my help but that they prefer to draft the language themselves.

Imagine that.

Meanwhile the programming proceeds apace. We have promised the sponsor that we will build the game for two key handsets before the ski season runs out, which means we're coding like mad and working off of assumptions—like that we'll be able to pull it off, for example. Ever the optimist, Craig reminds us that we've never missed a deadline before and we're not about to start now.

Mick isn't so sure. He hangs up the phone and announces that the coders are having a little trouble with one of the handsets: when the file system is full, the app crashes. (Note: Crash = Bad). Naturally, the code works just fine on the other handset. Other than that, they're about done. Plus, they need the artwork finalized. Oh, and the final text would help too.

He contacts QUALCOMM to see if Developer Relations or Tech Support can help with the file-system problem. They tell him that they'll try, but they'll have to see the code first. Like a nervous parent sending his only child off to reform school, Mick ships the code to QUALCOMM hoping for a miracle.

Their response is swift and straightforward:

```
<CODE>

In function AEEClsCreateInstance(); the if statement:
if (lineNavigate_InitAppData((IApplet*)*ppObj) == TRUE)
pMe = (lineNavigateApp *)*ppObj;
checks only if the return from lineNavigate_InitAppData is TRUE.
It should handle FALSE as follows:
if (lineNavigate_InitAppData((IApplet*)*ppObj) == TRUE)
{
pMe = (lineNavigateApp *)*ppObj;
HV_Init(&pMe->helpViewer);
return(AEE_SUCCESS);
}
/****following two lines added****/
else
return EFAILED;

</CODE>
```

Mick shakes his head, disappointed in himself for not having thought of that on his own. "I assumed you would have tried that already," I tell him. "Seems pretty obvious to me."

Mick isn't buying it. "You didn't understand a word of that explanation, did you?" he says.

Craig jumps in to rescue me. "We should have the file system problem fixed by morning. So once we can get final sign-off on artwork and legalese, we'll be set for testing. Right?"

Mick looks nervous. "Well, not exactly. There is one other minor problem." He pauses, making the rest of us fidget even more than usual. "You remember how we've been coding this for the T720 and the Z800? Well the Z800 is being discontinued . . . and the model that is replacing it is not yet available."

Oh, the sponsor's going to love this. We may need a disclaimer or two of our own. My guess is the conversation will go something like this:

Us: "We screwed up.

Them: "You idiots!"

Give or take a few exclamation points, you understand.

I say we let Craig do it. . . .

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*Joe Kerr is the pseudonym of a software engineer working for a real wireless software company that has just published several real products, including the one profiled in this series. [Email Joe Kerr.](#)*

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