



Position Paper: What The New Google Sync Means to the Mobile Industry

Google recently announced an enhanced version of Google Sync that supports the iPhone, Windows Mobile and some SyncML devices. We believe this to be a great step forward for the mobile industry and a fantastic validation of the cloud sync market, which are very positive for Funambol's future.

Overview

Google Sync initially only synced contacts and calendars between Gmail/Google Calendar and BlackBerry devices. It has recently been enhanced to add contact and calendar syncing for iPhone and Windows Mobile using MS ActiveSync, and contacts syncing only for an initial set of SyncML devices.

Now that Google is performing SyncML-based synchronization, this validates and legitimizes the industry's need to support SyncML devices. It compels others in the industry to offer comparable capabilities. To paraphrase Funambol CEO Fabrizio Capobianco's blog:

Google is promoting a sync service that every player in the mobile industry must have as soon as possible. Not having mobile sync for a carrier, device manufacturer, portal or mobile operating system vendor is not an option anymore. They need to move now. Microsoft's 'My Phone' (which also performs SyncML-based sync) makes the case even more.¹

Google's decision to support SyncML will drive more usage of SyncML, which will motivate mobile device manufacturers to support it even more. This means there will be more SyncML devices on the market (beyond the one billion that already exist) that will work with Funambol's market-leading open source SyncML server.

It is clear from Google's device support (described below) that they are just getting started at SyncML-based synchronization. Funambol has been at it for eight years. This is a great opportunity for others in the mobile industry to benefit from our experience and to provide functionality that exceeds what Google and Microsoft are delivering.

The only capability that Google Sync supports that Funambol does not yet is syncing the iPhone calendar. Google Sync uses MS ActiveSync that is built into the iPhone. Apple allows it to access the iPhone calendar, since this is necessary for Exchange calendar support. Although our open source community has a solution to sync the calendar on jail-broken (hacked) iPhones, this is not sanctioned by Apple, so we must wait until Apple opens its iPhone calendar API to third parties not named Microsoft. As other leading devices such as BlackBerry, Symbian and Android enable their calendars to be accessed without proprietary protocols such as ActiveSync, market forces will compel Apple to do the same if it does not want to lose market share. We are confident this will happen in the next few months.



Funambol remains committed to 100% open source sync based on open standards. Although most end users do not care what protocol is used, history has proven that proprietary protocols such as ActiveSync lag market capabilities and device coverage. Only an open source approach that involves an active global open source developer community has shown that it can scale to keep pace with the latest mobile device technology.

Google Sync Device Support

For iPhone and Windows Mobile, Google Sync uses MS ActiveSync that is built into these devices to sync contacts and calendars. It comes with a warning that preexisting contacts and calendars on the device are erased when ActiveSync is set up. Users need to back these up to a PC or Mac before using Google Sync or they will lose them. The backup procedure depends on the device e.g. with iPhone, it uses iTunes.

For Nokia S60, Nokia 'standard' phones (S60 2nd edition feature pack 2+) and some Sony Ericsson phones, Google Sync syncs contacts *only*, no calendar, using SyncML.

For BlackBerry, Google Sync can sync Gmail contacts and Google Calendar, however, the latter is only pushed to a BlackBerry every 2 hours (sooner if the BlackBerry calendar is updated). Events in the BlackBerry calendar before Google Sync is installed are not synced.

Comparison

Google Sync is at an early stage of its evolution. Google's only advantage currently, relative to Funambol, is their ability to sync iPhone calendars. Other than this, Funambol is superior in every way. Funambol syncs more content (tasks, notes, photos), we do not have their notification or preexisting data limitations (no two hour delays, preexisting contacts/calendars are not deleted or ignored), we sync many more devices, backends and desktop/web apps, not just Gmail and Google Calendar, and we're based on open source. Our global community support and use of open standards (SyncML), as opposed to proprietary standards such as ActiveSync, enables Funambol to stay ahead of the sync curve and to benefit others in the mobile industry that need to provide comparable capabilities.

About Funambol

Funambol is the leading provider of open source push email and mobile sync worldwide. Funambol open source software has been downloaded three million times by 50,000 developers and project participants in 200 countries. The commercial version of Funambol has been deployed at service providers, mobile operators, portals, device manufacturers and ISVs including customers such as AOL, 1&1, Earthlink and CA, Inc. Funambol is headquartered in Redwood City, California with an R&D center in Italy. For more information, please visit www.funambol.com. You can also learn more about Funambol by following it on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/funambol>.

1. Funambol CEO blog: <http://www.funambol.com/blog/capo/2009/02/day-mobile-cloud-syncing-went.html>
2. Google Sync home page: <http://www.google.com/mobile/default/sync.html>

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