BlackBerry CEO Unveils 'Slim, Sleek' New Version

Kyle Hightower, Associated Press

ORLANDO, Florida (AP) — BlackBerry maker Research In Motion Ltd. unveiled a lower-cost BlackBerry aimed at consumers in emerging markets, stepping up its efforts to regain market share lost to Apple's iPhone and Android devices powered by Google's software.

CEO Thorsten Heins said Tuesday that the Q5 device will be available worldwide this summer. It is RIM's third smartphone to run the new BlackBerry 10 system. The Q5 will have a physical keyboard, something that sets RIM's devices apart from Apple's iPhone and most Android phones.

Heins said the "slim, sleek" device will be available in red, black, white and pink. He announced the phone to a packed ballroom to open RIM's annual three-day conference in Orlando, Florida.

RIM unveiled new BlackBerrys this year after delays allowed Apple and others to dominate.

Heins, who became RIM's CEO in January 2012, said the company has made a lot of progress in a short period of time, by moving a diverse collection of people into leadership positions.

He restated BlackBerry's committed to "mobile first" and took a subtle jab at industry predictions that he might not make it to this year's conference as CEO because of the competitive mobile landscape.

"I'm happy to say they were wrong," Heins said. "We are not only still here. We are firing on all cylinders as a company."

RIM's iconic BlackBerry device, introduced in 1999, was the dominant smartphone for on-the-go business people and consumers before the iPhone debuted in 2007. The device showed that phones could handle much more than email and calls.

Though RIM continues to do well in many overseas markets, the company faced numerous delays modernizing its operating system in an effort to compete with the iPhone and smartphones running Google's Android operating system.

RIM's stock fell 30 cents, or 1.9 percent, to $15.58 in morning trading Tuesday.

Heins said that RIM is "definitely in the race" and that he is excited about its outlook.

"The most successful year for BlackBerry is well under way," he said.

Grammy Award-winning singer Alicia Keys, who was named BlackBerry's global creative director in January, announced the company's new BlackBerry Scholars Program. The new initiative will begin this year and provide scholarships in science-based studies for students around the globe.

"I was inspired. I wanted to take this journey with BlackBerry," Keys said.

The scholarship program hopes to attract women, who Keys said make up more than half of mobile users.

"It's the beginning for a powerful network of women and a profound change in our culture," she said.

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