

My Email To An iPad User

Posted At : September 3, 2010 10:15 PM | Posted By : Stefan Richter

Related Categories: Flash Player, iOS

As some of you know, I offer a hosted collaboration tool called Scribblar which I built using some of my favourite technologies, namely Flex and FMS. Today I sent out a newsletter announcing a new feature and I received the following email from one of my users:

"Greetings. I was hoping to use Scribblar to serve as a communication tool between two ipads. However, scribblar uses flash and ipads only use java. Is there a way around this?"

I replied as follows:

Hi,

Unfortunately Apple's iDevices do not support Flash or Java or indeed any third party browser plug-ins. This is a purposely implemented limitation on Apple's part and I suggest you contact them, express your disappointment and request support for Flash and other well established browser plug-ins. We here at Scribblar - which is essentially a one man team - build web applications using Flash as a primary platform and have not got the resources to develop a completely separate version solely to accommodate a sub-section of Apple hardware. As you probably know, a 'normal' Apple Mac desktop machine or laptop runs Flash just fine, in fact Scribblar was built on a Mac and I'm writing this email on a Mac. My assumption is that Apple has limited support for third party runtimes on its iDevices based simply on business reasons as it gives users less choice about the apps and games they can use and consume, and encourages more purchases via the app Store instead. But that's just my personal guess.

Later this year there are a wide variety of tablet devices to be released which run on more open operating systems which fully support Flash as well as other established web technologies in addition to those supported by Apple.

Sorry not to be able to help any further on this occasion.

I'm not going to beat a dead horse any further here but isn't this a really sad state of affairs? I cannot help but feel that Apple is forcing the web back a few steps and it's not just the Scribblar user that's being left slightly disappointed here, it's also the Apple user. The undiluted web experience? Not quite. Instead this is a game in which everyone loses.

I'm just glad that you have choices *before* you buy an iDevice, but the email above also demonstrates that not all users are aware about what exactly these devices can and cannot do - this user thought his iPad could run Java, and likely also thought it would run Flash until he tried a few sites. It's left to me, the Flash developer, to educate him. In the future I should CC Apple support on such communications...