Concept of Octotask — Multi-source Task Collector and Manager

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Abstract

"Getting Things Done" (GTD) is one of the most popular method of personal time management [1]. Its main goal is to increase personal productivity by unloading all the tasks from the person's mind into an external system (GTD-system) and using a special procedure to control them. All the tasks and task-related information are initially placed into the inbox folder. Afterwards they are sorted into other folders according to the procedure.

Although the GTD-method does not require any means of automatization, there is a plenty of applications for various platforms, which declare support for it. Nevertheless, there are several aspects which are not represented in existing software, such as automatical task collection, task chains and context organization. We suppose that implementing these features in software for mobile devices may give an additional value to the method and improve overall effectiveness of GTD.

So we started the project "Octotask" in order to develop a GTD-style task collector and manager having the following key features.

Location-aware contexts. In GTD a context is defined as a location and/or environment, required to get a task done (for instance, at home, at work, on the plane etc.). It is possible to have all the tasks in a mobile device and implement automatical context switching based, for example, on GPS/GSM information.

Task collection/synchronization. Nowadays there is a lot of task sources, such as e-mail, on-line calendars, bug trackers, GTD services etc. In GTD all tasks have to be put into the inbox and manually processed to get into the system. Meanwhile, lots of tasks originated from external systems can be transferred to the GTD-manager application automatically according to predefined scenarios. The other transfer is also possible: when we mark the task, coming from a bug tracker as done, the corresponding issue in the tracker will be closed, for example, via REST API.

Event-based task activation. Besides the tasks, the external system may provide events which will activate pending tasks. For example, an incoming e-mail from a grocery store can activate "Pay bill" task. This mechanism can also be used to create task flow when a task is activated on finish of another.

For now the project is in the initial phase. Octotask is developed as a cross-plaform application having support for various platforms. The use of C++ programming language and Qt Framework allows us to support MeeGo netbook and handset devices as well as Symbian-based smartphones.

Index Terms: GTD, task management, mobile devices.

REFERENCES

[1] D. Allen. "Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity," *Penguin Books*, 2001.