

## To iPhone or not to iPhone?

Contributed by Dave Thorup  
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The iPhone 3G is now upon us and now the question for me is whether I really want one or not. Well, yes, I REALLY want one, I just don't want all the AT&T baggage that comes with it. I want the iPhone for many reasons, chief among them are that I'm a big Mac Geek and developer and I'd really like to write some software for the iPhone. The fact that it runs Mac OS X and has a built-in camera and GPS is just too cool for a software engineer to ignore. So I think that I won't be able to stay away from the iPhone for long, it's only a matter of time before the Mac lover in me gives in and I buy one.

That brings us to the AT&T baggage. The actual phone plans that are available from AT&T are nothing short of outrageous. They can get away with this because you have no other choice in the matter. If you want an iPhone then AT&T is your only choice so they can charge whatever they can get away with. So let's look at the cheapest plan and compare it to what I have now with Sprint. The base iPhone plan is \$70/month which is really a \$40 voice plan + \$30 for unlimited data. This gets you a measly 450 Anytime Minutes, 5000 Night & Weekend minutes, Unlimited Data and no Text Messaging. The plan I have right now from Sprint is only \$55/month for 1000 Anytime Minutes, Unlimited Night & Weekend minutes, Unlimited Data and also no Text Messaging. If I wanted to get the same service that I have now with Sprint from AT&T with the iPhone I'd have to go with their \$90/month plan which still only has 900 Anytime Minutes. That makes the iPhone 1.6x more expensive than the Treo 700p that I have now with Sprint. Such is the price of progress I suppose. Luckily I barely use any of the 1000 minutes I have now and the base 450 minute plan will be more than enough for me, that's still \$15 more than what I have now and includes a lot less.

And don't even get me started on Text Messaging rates. The fact that text messaging is extra when you have an Unlimited Data plan is mind boggling. Especially since it has virtually zero overhead for the Cell companies. It's basically a way for them to print money. The actual network overhead for a text message is less than pretty much any other service they provide on their network - less than voice calls, less than voicemail, less than data (internet) services - yet text messaging @ \$0.20 a message costs more than any other service. Not only that but each message is charged twice: once when it is sent and again when it is received, so that's really \$0.40 per message. It's quite possibly the most expensive form of communication ever invented. In fact, a professor recently concluded that text messaging is more expensive than communicating with the Hubble Space Telescope! Four times more expensive to be precise! Luckily I don't do much, if any, text messaging. If I did I think I might just go postal.

On top of all of that, AT&T also charges a \$36 activation fee for the privilege of becoming their customer. Yep, you get to pay them an extra \$36 for the honor of signing up to a two year contract that at minimum will cost you \$1680 over two years. A \$36 fee for the privilege of bending over and taking it for the next two years seems a little over the top, even for AT&T. But that is the price of progress.

Sadly I'll eventually give in and become a slave to AT&T, but that sure is one damn expensive phone.