

When is a Phone just a Phone?

Wireless phone service isn't going away; in fact it only seems to grow in popularity year after year. I don't know what the exact percentage is, but the majority of American families seem to have at least one wireless phone and many families have multiple phones. I've even seen pre-teens walking around the mall with their parents talking on their "own" wireless phone. The school system seems to accept the inevitable fact that kids will have cell phones by outlining their appropriate use on school grounds. Well the point is wireless phones are mainstream and in many cases becoming more than just a phone.

Many people look for a wireless phone that does more than just answer calls. In fact you would be hard pressed to find a phone that simply made calls. Even the cheapest of phones will come with some sort of phone book, some simple games and a calendar. For the info geek in the family you can get a wireless phone with the works. It will normally include a full address book, Internet and e-mail, instant messaging capabilities, and applications might include Word and Excel viewers. That's right, suddenly a wireless phone starts looking a little bit like a laptop. Except that the keyboard only contains 12 keys.

I myself use to have a wireless phone that just made calls. Then my wife started making many business trips to San Diego and all of a sudden I realized that I needed a new wireless phone plan. And of course when you get a new phone plan that's a great excuse for getting a new phone as well. I had been with AT&T Wireless back when they were SunCom and have always been pleased with their TDMA wireless phone service so I decided to look at the new cheaper GSM service they are offering. I don't know the particulars but many of the wireless phone services are switching from their older TDMA and CDMA networks to a GSM network. From what I understand GSM is a more efficient network that will allow for greater data transmission, clearer calls and more signals in the future.

The drawback is that GSM is a relatively new network that does not have the traditional cell phone coverage that the older TDMA and CDMA networks have. Another drawback is that AT&T does not have a GSM phone that can fall back to the older TDMA network when a GSM signal is not available. This was the biggest reason I waited so long to switch. So when AT&T came out with their GSM National Plan I decided to switch. This plan allows you to roam on any United States GSM network for free and costs me less than the Regional TDMA plan I had before.

As for the phone, I picked the Nokia 6200. I have had many Nokia phones in the past and have always been happy with them, not to mention I already had plenty of extra car chargers and travel chargers. I picked this particular model because it was Internet capable, and also because you can attach the phone to your laptop and use it as a wireless modem.

The Internet on a 1.5-inch screen is not quite as robust as it is on a regular computer but it can still be very useful. I like to use it when we are out to see what's playing at the different movie theaters. Also if your traveling it has a neat feature that will find your location and then give you information about the area, like the surrounding restaurants complete with phone numbers and directions of how to get to them. This particular phone takes advantage of a feature called EDGE technology that will enable

you connect to the Internet with your laptop and download information at up to 80k, about twice as fast as a regular dial-up modem. This is a great feature for those times that you need to surf the Internet and no high speed WIFI network is available.

I'm sure other wireless phone companies offer similar features, be sure to check with them to get the best deal for you. If you have any technology-orientated questions be sure to call Thomas or Roger at Computer Depot, 947-0749 or e-mail Thomas at [sales@computerdepotonline.com](mailto:sales@computerdepotonline.com).