

iPhone 3G worth every battery charge



John Deans

Just over a year ago I got the original Apple iPhone and fell in love with it. Two months after that purchase I sold my three Palm Treo smartphones on eBay since I was sold on the new iPhone.

Six months ago I bought the 16 GB version of the original iPhone and gave the original 8 GB one to my wife Beth since she liked using mine. They have worked flawlessly since the last iPhone software upgrade to 1.1.4 and we have been very happy with them.

The second week of July Apple debuted the new iPhone with a slight physical redesign and more capabilities. Of course I had to buy it to stay up on the latest technology. That's my story, and I'm sticking with it.

The 2.0 version of the new iPhone is called the "iPhone 3G." The name comes from the quicker Internet access running from the faster 3G network as primary and the older Edge network as the secondary.

The line of buyers was huge at the local AT&T store July 11 when the new iPhone 3G was released. Due to a limited amount of devices shipped from Apple they ran out of new 3G iPhones before noon.

Another problem was that the new iPhone 3G devices had to be activated in the stores rather than at home like before. This created a huge delay due to over-

loaded iTunes server farms at Apple, but Gary Rothermel and his crew at our AT&T store handled things well.

I bought the 16 GB black version of the iPhone 3G for \$299 and transferred the phone number from my old iPhone to the

new one. That's when I found out that the cellular plan was about \$15 to \$25 more expensive on the iPhone 3G depending on your text messaging usage. Luckily I was able to change my minutes limit and combine to the family plan to make that cost increase a wash.

After I left the store, my new iPhone was active and working, but I had to high tail it home to re-sync with iTunes so I could restore my contacts, calendar and the rest of my settings from the old iPhone.

Just before the iTunes sync I noticed that the new iPhone 3G did not fit into the original white iPhone cradle. So, I had to unplug the cable from the cradle and stick it directly into the iPhone. Using the Restore option under iTunes on my laptop during the sync, all settings and data were reloaded in less than 10 minutes.

That next day I got a chance to use the new iPhone 3G and quickly found out that the battery life was greatly decreased with the 3G networking enabled. The GPS is pretty cool with a moving blinking blue dot show-

ing me as I was driving down U.S. 290 towards Brenham, but it also drained the battery even faster.

If you think about it, there are about six radio functions that can be consuming power: the cellular phone voice conversations, 802.11 wireless, GPS, Edge, 3G and Bluetooth. That is a lot of things to be powered from a single battery source.

During the work week I could not make the full day after a night's battery charge with the 3G network option enabled. Just to make the day on a single charge up I had to disable the 3G wireless and just use the old Edge network.

So the downside issues with the new iPhone 3G includes the availability and cutover problems, plan cost increase, non-compatible cradle and decreased battery life due to GPS and 3G power consumption. Other than those numerous gotcha's, the new iPhone rocks — if you do not already have one.

On the positive side the new 2.0 software that comes with

the iPhone 3G is outstanding. My favorite improvement was the new search feature built into the Contacts application. Since I have over 1,100 contacts the scrolling got to be quite tedious.

Now I can start typing the first or last name of the person I'm trying to find and the search quickly floats the matching names to the top.

Also included in the 2.0 software is the App Store, which provides an initial treasure trove of over 800 small applications, some free and others costing a few dollars, that perform all sorts of handy tasks.

I immediately bought the Voice Recorder for 99 cents and the Where To application for \$2.99. The apps are purchased through your iTunes account, are quickly downloaded and installed directly onto your iPhone.

Other very useful improvements to the 2.0 iPhone software includes Microsoft Exchange ActiveSync, capabilities to link up with Cisco IPsec VPN and

WPA2 Enterprise support, and push email/contacts for quick updates to Outlook.

Another neat improvement is the better email management which vastly reduces the number of clicks to delete old mail and clean up the Inbox.

The calculator program now has a scientific version that is enabled by simply rotating the iPhone to the landscape position. E-mail can now show the PowerPoint attachments directly on the screen.

Other than the faster 3G Web surfing and the more precise GPS, the new iPhone is really made better by the new 2.0 software.

Guest what? You can upgrade your old iPhone to the new 2.0 software and get for free all those same software improvements that the new iPhone 3G has!

That same weekend of purchasing the iPhone 3G, I upgraded my wife's 8 GB iPhone from 1.1.4 to 2.0 and she also received those new software capabilities and applications. Just this weekend I upgraded my older 16 GB

iPhone to version 2.0 and sold it to a client of mine.

So, after a full week of using the new iPhone 3G I recommend you buy one if you do not already have the original iPhone.

If you did already have the older iPhone then sync it up with the latest version 7.7 of iTunes and download/install the new version 2.0 of the iPhone software to get those improvements.

Bottom line: If you already have the old iPhone, then just upgrade it to version 2.0 software and do not bother buying the new one just for 3G and GPS that burns the battery like a big dog.

If you are completely iPhone-less, they go out and get the new one, but just be energy efficient with those power-hungry features.

Next week's column: Financial Web sites.

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