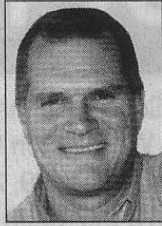


Business people sticking with Blackberry

Ten years ago I was wrapping up my last contract at the old Compaq Computer campus upgrading several hundred network switches with more memory and a higher version of the firmware. While walking by a fellow IT guy's office, I saw him



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tapping on cell phone's enlarged LCD screen with a stylus.

After asking him, "What the heck is that?," he proudly showed me his new "smart phone" called a Palm Phone. It was big, flat, and had a large black and white touch screen that blew me away. On the drive back to Brenham I bought one for several hundred dollars.

It was my first smart phone that could actually run applications, sync to MS Outlook and be operated with a touch screen. Over the next four years I have bought the following models of Palm Treos and then cut over to Apple iPhones in 2008. Some of my peers had Blackberries but I never got into them after fighting the small keyboards

and I just could not deal with not having a touch screen.

Since the iPhone came out I have been an ardent supporter by urging my clients to migrate to them. It was easy and it generated a good deal of business converting Blackberry users

to iPhone converts. For years now I have migrated dozens of people from other smart phones over to iPhones, but never from an iPhone back to a Blackberry.

That all changed this summer when a real estate client of mine tried for three months to adapt to an iPhone. I had strongly recommended it but out of her business requirements she had to bail back to a Blackberry. At first I felt like I had failed to deliver enough support for her initial iPhone conversion but that was not the case.

Nor was it a lack of effort on her part. She gave it her all trying to get used to the numerous physical differences. There was also some critical features lacking on the iPhone had that she

needed to do her complex and demanding job.

Shelly Moschak of Five Star Country Properties is one of the most hard-working real estate professionals I have ever met. She is constantly on her phone, the computer or showing property. Her level of expertise with all the Microsoft Office applications, smart phone feature utilization and web site management is amazing.

Since she can write a manuscript in under an hour typing away on those little keys of the Blackberry, it was physically impossible to maintain that same WPM (Word per Minute) rate tapping on the iPhone's touch screen keyboard even in landscape mode.

Due to the comprehensive nature of her real estate transactions especially when she has to deal with those dastardly lawyers, being able to reply to long emails or text wordy explanations to an antsy seller is critical.

The timing of the her Blackberry to iPhone conversion was off to a bad start with Apple having the dropped calls problem with the latest version due

to the idiot designer that put the antenna wrapped around the iPhone 4 where the sometimes sweaty hand can short out the contacts. It is no fun when a real estate agent gets dropped calls on the phone that you recommended.

Even after I got Shelly past some initial problems with syncing the iPhone's Calendar to and from Microsoft's Outlook, her frustration level was rising and the cost/benefit numbers were going out the door. Other features she used frequently on the Blackberry were just not there by default on the iPhone 4.

One was being able to send or forward calendar events to her clients and associates from the iPhone like she could on the Blackberry. Since she spends a ton of time on the road and out of the office, being able to perform time management tasks and arranging appointments via smart phones is absolutely critical for her business needs.

Another issue was not being able to edit and modify MS Word and Excel spreadsheets easily on the iPhone as she could with the native capabilities on the Blackberry. Then when the basic reliability of email became an issue between the emerging iPhone stability that has improved greatly over the past couple of years, it did not match up to the rock solid email delivery that Blackberry rightfully can claim.

With costly Apps and expensive consulting time, I could have configured her iPhone to mimic the numerous business level capabilities that the latest Blackberry Torch has, but at what price? Shelly had a steadfast and proven marriage to the Blackberry and with the latest version 6 of the operating system coupled with the new touch screen on the Blackberry Torch, she dumped her iPhone 4 and renewed her relationship with RIM's best smart phone ever.

The Blackberry Torch has an expandable memory slot that can support up to a 32 MB microSD card along with a slide out physical keyboard that so many

Blackberry users have become accustomed to over the years.

The touch screen has 'pinch and zoom' just like the iPhone and the multimedia area is covered by a 5 megapixel camera accompanied by an enhanced music player and integrated social feeds from LinkedIn and Facebook.

With nearly six hours of talk time, an ever-growing list of applications and fully graphical menus on the touch screen, Blackberry has almost caught up with Apple's iPhone. This is capitalism at its best because competition breeds excellence. The free market drives innovation from every vendor and the consumer wins in the end. No

silly government incentive program helped develop either one of these technical marvels.

Shelly needed a peak performance smart phone to help her survive in the brutal world of real estate that is going through a rough time.

Bottom line: iPhones are great, but some business-intense movers and shakers may need to still hang on to their Blackberries. Man, it hurt to say that ...

Next week's column: MS Office Kids.

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