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Verizon to get iPhone

Apple reported ending exclusivity with AT&T

BY CHRIS UMPIERRE • CUMPIERRE@NEWS-PRESS.COM • MARCH 31, 2010

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1 | 2 Next Page

1:10 A.M. — Longtime Verizon Wireless user Caitlin McCall has shied away from purchasing Apple's iPhone because of the iconic gadget's exclusivity deal with AT&T.

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But now that Apple is reportedly ending its AT&T exclusivity agreement and working on an iPhone for Verizon, the nation's largest wireless carrier, McCall is changing her tune.

"I'd buy a Verizon iPhone because I've always thought Verizon gets better service than AT&T," the Estero resident said.

Apple will begin working on a Verizon iPhone later this year, according to the Wall Street Journal. It's unclear when the model will be available, but analysts say the potential deal could double the number of iPhone users in the U.S. and alter a smart phone landscape dominated by one carrier.

AT&T, which activated 3.1 million new iPhones in the fourth quarter of 2009, has 43 percent of all U.S. smart phone customers compared with 23 percent for Verizon, according to comScore Inc.

"The new competition from Verizon may cause AT&T to push even harder to increase their network's capability and reliability, so they may retain unhappy customers," said Bryan Gonzalez of the Entertainment Technology Center in Los Angeles.

"In the end, the increase in available phones across carriers will only help consumers see lower rates and higher quality products in the marketplace."

The iPhone could help Verizon's wireless unit gain as many as 3.5 million new contract customers in the first six months after its release, analyst Craig Moffett of Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. said.

Having smartphones on multiple carriers will also help smartphone makers increase the size of their audience, Gonzalez said.

(The associated Press)



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In 2009, iPhone sales globally rose 83 percent to 25.1 million, outpacing the 25 percent growth in smart-phone sales overall, according to Bernstein.

"This will only further spur competition in the multicarrier smartphone market," Gonzalez said. "For a long time, the smartphone manufacturers were at the will of the cell phone carriers. But as smartphones become more appealing and gain popularity, phone carriers must start to give in to smartphone maker's demands."

1 | 2 Next Page 




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Many iPhone customers have complained of poor service from AT&T, and the carrier has acknowledged that its data network has been slow during peak hours in cities with a high concentration of iPhone users such as San Francisco and New York.

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Davie resident Manuel Pascal, who was visiting his daughter at FGCU on Tuesday, said he'd purchase a Verizon iPhone because he's not pleased with AT&T's spotty coverage.

"Areas that you think wouldn't be bad like Atlanta, I get pretty poor service," Pascal said as he fiddled with his iPhone. "Service on the East Coast (of Florida) is bad, too."

Gonzalez said Apple, which declined comment on the Wall Street Journal's report, has heard user's complaints about the AT&T network.

"By offering the iPhone on multiple carriers it only helps to shield Apple and deflect complaints back to the cell phone carrier," Gonzalez said.

Naples resident Jayde Lippert, an 18-year-old who uses Verizon's Blackberry Storm, was excited that his favorite carrier was getting involved in iPhones.

"I'd get one just because of the service," he said.

(The associated Press)



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