

By Debra Littlejohn Shinder, MCSE, MVP

Since its release June 29th, the iPhone has gotten more than its share of press. Love it or hate it, everyone's been talking about it. Even its detractors have to admit that it has shaken up the cell phone industry and influenced the expectations of consumers as to what they want in a mobile phone. Looking at its sleek, colorful interface, it's hard not to fall in love with it. But like most decisions based on emotion, buying one may not be the smartest thing to do—at least, not yet. Let's look at some of the top reasons to resist temptation and pass on the iPhone for now.

1 It costs too much

At \$499 for the 4-GB model and \$599 for the 8-GB model, the iPhone is expensive. It's not the most expensive cell phone on the market by any means (after all, the [Motorola SLVR Diamond](#) went for 75 grand (yes, that's 75 thousand dollars), and other phones have cost as much as [a million dollars](#). But those are toys for gazillionaires. For the rest of us, 500 bucks is a lot to pay for a phone. Many are willing to shell out that much, *if* the phone is really, really great. But as the following list illustrates, it may be just a bit too hefty for the iPhone in its current incarnation.

2 It doesn't fully support Exchange

Many business users get their mail via Exchange servers. iPhone proponents claim that the phone supports Exchange and it does—sort of. What it supports is IMAP (the Internet Message Access Protocol), a generic e-mail protocol for accessing mail on a remote server. You can enable IMAP on your Exchange server and get your mail, but you lose the "push mail" ability, wherein each message is sent to your device as it's received. Instead, the device checks the server at regular intervals ("pull" mail) to see if there's new mail, so you may not get your messages instantly.

Even more importantly, since the iPhone doesn't support Exchange ActiveSync, you don't get remote access to your calendar and contacts. That can be a deal breaker for business users. There are rumors floating around that [Apple has licensed ActiveSync](#) and will support it in a future version of the iPhone. That's all the more reason to wait on buying one.

3 User-unfriendly battery

A cell phone without a user-removable/replaceable battery? Surely you jest. But it's true; when the iPhone's battery dies, you have to send it back to Apple to get a new one (for a fee). Sending your iPod away for a few days to have the battery replaced is bad enough, but most people can manage without music for a short time. Being without your cell phone for days (or weeks) could pose a real problem, since many of us rely on them for business and safety reasons, and more and more people have ditched their landlines and use their mobiles as their only phone.

The iPhone's battery has a decent charge life, but what about those of us who like to plan for contingencies? With my Samsung i730, I can take an extra charged battery along with me and pop it in if I use up all the juice in the primary one. No such convenience for iPhone users.

I can't believe there won't be a lot of weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth when those batteries start to go bad. This seems like one of the top issues Apple should address in the next version; it's a deal-breaker for too many folks who otherwise like the iPhone.

4 Where's the keyboard?

As other PDA phone vendors strive to make their keyboards bigger and better (transitioning to side-slide keyboards with more usable keys), Apple went the other way and did away with the physical keyboard completely. The iPhone boasts a large on-screen keyboard, but a lot of folks out there started out with Blackberries and have become proficient at using their thumbs to key in information. That's going to mean learning a whole new way of keyboarding with the iPhone.

5 No third-party applications

Those of us who have been using Windows Mobile phones are used to being able to download and install the applications we want to add, just like with a "real computer." With the iPhone, you can't install third-party applications. Apple undoubtedly did this with the idea that it would prevent a lot of tech support problems and make the phone's operating system more stable, but I think it was a big mistake. People who shell out this much money for a phone expect it to be a full-fledged hand-held computer, too—and that means being able to add your own apps.

6 Stuck with AT&T

By limiting the iPhone offering to only one cell phone provider, Apple immediately took itself out of the market for the many people who believe Verizon's mantra that "It's the network." Loyal customers of Sprint likewise don't love the iPhone enough to switch carriers.

Of course, [T-Mobile folks may be able to do a workaround](#) now that there are reportedly hacks available to allow the iPhone to work on that network, but for the average user who isn't particular tech-savvy, it's not the ideal solution. And since the iPhone is a GSM phone, and Sprint and Verizon use CDMA technology, there's no way to make it work on those networks.

Even if you do hack your way off the AT&T network, you'll have to pay a \$175 early cancellation fee to get out of your AT&T contract.

7 The bleedingly slow EDGE

Not only are you stuck with AT&T's network, with the iPhone you don't even get to use its fastest network. Instead, you're limited to the slower EDGE network, whereas rumor has it that [the upcoming HTC Vogue](#) (a CDMA version of its Touch) will run on the super-fast EV-DO Rev A networks. People who buy Internet-enabled phones want high-speed Internet.

8 Smile! You're on iPhone camera

The built-in camera on the iPhone marks it as a consumer product, not a business-oriented one. Many business users don't want cameras on their cell phones because there are plenty of places where cameras are prohibited, and it's a pain to have to surrender your cell phone at the door or leave it in the car just to get in.

But even for those consumers who do want to take photos with their phones, the iPhone camera leaves a lot to be desired. Although it does have some cool features, like the ability to set a picture you've taken as wallpaper or assign them to your contacts, it's an adequate but not outstanding 2 megapixel model. There's no zoom and most important, there's no flash on the camera, so you'll have to do your picture-taking in well lit areas.

Admittedly, it's at least as good as the cameras on many other cell phones, but most other cell phones with cameras don't cost this much.

9 iTunes required to sync

Apple assumes that everyone has iTunes installed on their computers, but many of us Windows users don't. However, if you want to sync your iPhone with your computer, you'll have to install it because that's the mechanism the iPhone uses to sync files, contacts, calendar, e-mail accounts, etc.

Want to sync to your work computer but you're not allowed to install music programs like iTunes on it? Oops. I guess you're out of luck

10 The dead zone

There have been reports about a display problem on some iPhones that manifests as a "dead strip" that loses sensitivity to touch input. Since the iPhone is all about the touchscreen, this is not a good thing.

Even worse, some reports suggest that [more phones are likely to fall victim to this problem](#) as they're used more.

Summary

The iPhone looks cool, but if you're a serious business user, there are other, less expensive cell phones that provide better functionality. And even if you're not a business user, unless you have plenty of money lying around and absolutely must have the latest neat gadget as soon as it comes out, I'd recommend waiting for version 2 of the iPhone, which, we hope, will cost less and fix at least a few of these issues.



Debra Littlejohn Shinder is a technology consultant, trainer and writer who has authored a number of books on computer operating systems, networking, and security. These include *Scene of the Cybercrime: Computer Forensics Handbook*, published by Syngress, and *Computer Networking Essentials*, published by Cisco Press. She is co-author, with her husband, Dr. Thomas Shinder, of *Troubleshooting Windows 2000 TCP/IP*, the best-selling *Configuring ISA Server 2000*, and *ISA Server and Beyond*.

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