

2 BlackBerry models try to answer iPhone

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Dec. 14, 2008 - [PRLog](#) -- For years, Research In Motion's BlackBerry was the smart phone of choice for the business set. It might not have been the prettiest device or the best for music and video, but it was sturdy, and its amazing keyboard let you e-mail and text with ease.

Then in 2007, a little gadget called the iPhone came along and changed everything. Those same corporate types who claimed they couldn't live without their BlackBerrys saw how much fun iPhone owners were having pinching Web pages, flicking through photos and watching videos. So they decided they wanted in on the action.

Some switched to the iPhone right away, while others stuck with the BlackBerry, presumably because they couldn't live without a physical keyboard or because their company only supported BlackBerrys.

Recently, RIM has released two new BlackBerrys aimed at those who want a device that blends the best of the iPhone with the best of a BlackBerry.

The BlackBerry Storm (\$200 with a two-year contract) from Verizon is the world's first touch-screen BlackBerry, which has a virtual keyboard and a large screen for videos and photos. Its big selling point is its "clickable" touchscreen, which means the screen actually depresses when you touch it, much like a real keyboard or computer mouse. The BlackBerry Bold (\$300 with a two-year contract), which is being offered by AT&T, the same carrier that sells the iPhone, has the BlackBerry's signature QWERTY keyboard, a bright, vibrant screen and an elegant design.

Both of these phones have standard headphone jacks, GPS, and memory-card slots to expand their storage capacity, and can record video. They both also have Web browsers that can display Web sites the way you see them on your computer, but it takes some menu changing to do this.

Since RIM has done so well making phones with keyboards, the Storm represents a step into uncharted territory. And like Michael Jordan trying to play baseball, RIM should probably stick it what it does best: making devices with first-rate keyboards such as the Bold.

In order for a touch-screen phone to be successful and not frustrate the user at every turn, the software and user interface have to be nearly flawless. It has to offer so many advantages and new features that the user doesn't miss a physical keyboard. This is not the case with the Storm.

I wasn't a big fan of the clickable touchscreen because I thought it felt cheap and didn't like hearing a click every time I touched it. It can also be a lot of work to type because if you don't press hard, your selection doesn't register.

However, I'm an iPhone user, which might skew my opinion somewhat. My wife, who doesn't use a smart phone and gets frustrated by the iPhone's virtual keyboard, said she thought the Storm's keyboard was easier to use. The other big annoyance about the Storm's keyboard is that when the phone is in a vertical

position, its keyboard isn't QWERTY -- so there are multiple letters on each key and the phone tries to predict what you are writing.

The most head-scratching thing about the Storm is that it lacks the ability to connect to wireless Internet networks. Yes, Verizon's network is vast and fast, but not as fast as Wi-Fi. No smart phones should be sold that do not have Wi-Fi capability.

The Web browser makes nice use of the touch screen by allowing you to tap twice to zoom in or your finger to scroll up and down.

I was impressed by the Storm's 3.2 megapixel camera, which has a flash and autofocus. Its 3.25-inch glass screen is just a little bit smaller than the iPhone's, so videos and photos looked really nice. Like the iPhone, there's also an accelerometer that changes the orientation of the screen when you turn the phone horizontally or vertically. And including an 8 GB memory card with the phone is a nice touch.

The Bold is the best BlackBerry yet. It has all of the features that have made BlackBerrys so popular, plus a high-resolution screen for video, Wi-Fi, a trackball and a classy design.

It is a little bulky and expensive, meaning it may probably appeal more to corporate users

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