

Tech Talk: The Android invasion is moving fast

By **MJ Shoer**

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Several months ago I wrote about the changing landscape of the smartphone marketplace, specifically with the release of Google's Android mobile operating system. Since that time, the rate of new Android based smartphones being released has seemed to eclipse all others. Couple that with massive growth of available applications and you have a fast moving invasion, to borrow a line from the marketing folks at Verizon Wireless.

You may recall from my earlier column on this topic that I had tested the Motorola Droid. I was so impressed with the device that it has become my continual companion and my only smartphone. It still impresses me, on a nearly daily basis. The screen is amazingly crisp, but more importantly, it just plain works.

As you have probably noticed, with the large advertising campaigns that all the mobile carriers are running, there are now several Android phones on the market. Verizon Wireless seems to have the most marketing muscle behind this platform and has cleverly locked up the "Droid" moniker, by which nearly all of the Android phones have become known. Google itself has jumped into the handset business by selling its own NexusOne device.

Aside from being a very reliable phone, the growth of available applications in the Android Marketplace is fueling the rapid market penetration. At last report, there are 38,000-plus applications available for an Android based phone. This clearly has Apple worried. Today, nearly every application available for the iPhone is, or very shortly will be, available on the Android. This has really sparked speculation on whether carriers like Verizon Wireless will ever have the iPhone. It has been widely rumored that this would happen this year, but at least for now, Verizon Wireless seems to be quite happy with its Droids.

I have just wrapped up testing one of the newest of these devices, the Motorola Devour. This phone looks to be another winner as it's fast and reliable and sports some interesting features. For those of you who want a rugged device, this may be the right one for you. The case is metal and then screen slides up to reveal a keyboard. The feel and operation of the device and the slide are first rate. I would not be concerned about the quality of this device; it's excellent.

The most notable difference about the Devour is what Motorola calls MotoBlur. It's an overlay on the Android operating system that has a clear social media feel. Simply put, if you are a social media junky, or a marketing professional, you will probably love this phone. Leveraging the MotoBlur system, you can stay connected to real time updates from Twitter, Facebook and the like. You can monitor your friends, business associates or perhaps even your competitors. While this device has a distinctly consumer feel to it, I actually think there could be some viable business applications, specifically in the areas of sales and marketing.

Best of all, under the surface of the MotoBlur system, you have a standard Android smartphone, so you may easily connect it with your company mail server, use your calendar, etc. You will also be able to take advantage of the growing list of applications, not the least of which is SkypeMobile, which allows you to use the very popular Skype service to make and receive voice calls across the Internet.

The community support growing behind the mobile platforms like the iPhone and Android will continue to bring innovative new applications to both business and consumers. If these last few months of monitoring this space is any indication, this invasion is far from over and it's going to be fun to watch where it goes.

MJ Shoer is president and virtual chief technology officer of Jenaly Technology Group, a Portsmouth based outsourced IT services provider. He may be reached at mshoer@jenaly.com.