

Where Did The Cell Phone Go?

The skeleton of this editorial/rant whatever opinion pieces are being called these days originated in an e-mail I sent to Jens Pressel my buddy at [OCinside](#) after writing the e-mail it occurred to me that it might also be of some interest to the readers of this site. Certainly I wasn't the only one having this problem.

At a little over two years old the battery on my cellphone was ready to be put out to pasture. Having lasted three or four days of occasional use when new, it now often fails to make it a single day without charging, even when I haven't talked on it at all. I really didn't see this as a problem, though, as we were for the most part satisfied with Sprint, our cellphone provider. I figured we would just call them and sign another two year agreement and get a pair of new free phones as we had in the past. It looks like I thought wrong.

Best I can tell after my research is that Sprint no longer seems to offer free phones. In their place they offered a 150 dollar credit on each new phone. This initially seemed fair until I got a look at the price of their new cellphones! Since this article wasn't meant as a rant on Sprint business policies I will gloss over the fact that although Sprint sells phones through its website, by phone, and in their retail stores, all of these methods charge different prices and seem to have different policies for the same item--none of which made sense, or were initially explained very well. After a quick trip to the Sprint store I determined that the nearest comparable phone to the model I had would set me back 80 bucks each (After our 150 dollar credit). It seems the current cellphones have a lot of extra features I don't want or care about that are driving up the price.

What I use a cellphone for is to make calls. Period. I am not looking for a phone that acts as a bad MP3 player, a second rate digital camera, a tiny screened wannabe PSP, or any myriad of other uses. What I want from a cellphone is good reception, a rugged frame that can stand rough use like being dropped occasionally, a front screen LCD so I can see who is calling before I answer, and last but not least--long battery life.

Don't get me wrong. If you read this website much you know that I am all about consumer choice. If you want to own a cell phone that costs nearly as much my car (600 dollars) is essentially a full-fledged Pocket PC like my Dell Axim, you don't mind carrying a boat anchor around on your person all day, and are flush with cash, then by all means knock yourself out. Me, I just want my plain old cell phone, which they don't seem to be making anymore. Or at least, if they are, Sprint doesn't seem to carry it. I guess this is just one more thing that coming up on forty makes me a dinosaur. I bet I am not alone, though.

After pondering this situation for a while longer I decided to just keep my old phones that I liked anyway and look into getting a couple new batteries. I called Sprint and they quoted me a price of 60 bucks each for a new battery, not much better than the 80 bucks each I can get new phones for (after the 150 buck credit). So I tried Radio Shack, since when I think of batteries they are usually one of the first places that springs to mind. Not to mention I have lots of fond memories of the giant flashlights they used to pass out for free when I was a kid for members of their battery club. They had them for 40 bucks each; better, but it still seemed steep for a cellphone battery. Later, after still more digging, I found them at Amazon for 20 bucks each. Sold!

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