Smartphones
What's the craze all about?

If you haven't heard of smartphones, we'd like to learn where you've been hiding all this time. Smartphones have been all over the news and chances are, you do know what they are - only you know them under a different name. Smartphones are mobile phones with computer like capabilities.

What's that? Aha! Yes, you've not only heard of them, you've probably seen them as well. Packed with Internet access, email capabilities, address books, and a whole lot more, cell phones have come a long way since their first debut. But be careful not to confuse these newest toys with sandbox devices.

Sandbox devices are tools that come pre-loaded with things like calendars, calculators, and a notepad. What differentiates them from smartphones is that users can add (download and install) additional programs to smartphones and they seemingly become mini portable computers for the people who use them. That - and the ability to edit the content that sits on them - is what makes these phones "smart."

Some of the more popular brand names include the Blackberry, PalmSource, Nokia, and Windows CE. Yet the craze is extending to even some off-brand company names. Today, it's hard to find a cell phone that doesn't offer some sort of "smart" technology because it's in such a high demand. The convenience of having information at our immediate access is phenomenal - so much so that thousands of programmers have jumped on the opportunity to build unique applications specific to these small machines.

As a result, you can find tons of games, databases, GPA systems, weather reporting programs, and even small encyclopedias on these things - each accessible not at the click of a mouse - but at a few presses of a free thumb. Of course a mini keyboard is available for the text-messaging fan or for the poor fellow who can't seem to get away from the office. In the latter case, don't be surprised if you find the entire Microsoft Office suite displayed within a screen no bigger than a matchbook.

Is this a phase? That's highly doubtful. The market for these devices extends from the highly technical and professional all the way to the pre-teen socialite. The product crosses all demographics and thanks to decreasing costs - it sees no economic boundaries as well. The Wikipedia encyclopedia claims that "Out of 1 billion camera phones to be shipped in 2008, Smartphones, the higher end of the market with full email support, will represent about 10% of the market or about 100 million units."

But what is it that makes smartphones so appealing? As mentioned, smartphones give us the ability to not only carry our data around with us where ever we go, it also gives us the ability to edit that data any place - any time. In today's "reality" based generation, we're always looking for the opportunity to capture and relive a moment. And we want to share that moment with others. At best, smart phones give us the opportunity to express ourselves impromptu with entertaining results.

Attempting to do the same with a bulky desktop computer or laptop is to cumbersome. Even some of the smallest peripherals (digicams, digital cameras, etc.) don't give us the same opportunities that smart phones do. Being able to carry around a device for communication, creation, recording, and editing simply compliments the need for today's generation to do more and then do it, faster!

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