



BLACKBERRY RIM 957

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The BlackBerry RIM 957 uses the same pager network as the Palm i705, but the BlackBerry platform has been around longer and is currently a better corporate e-mail and messaging platform, though it loses points as a PDA. The RIM 957's monochrome display is crisp and very clear indoors and in sunlight, and the combination of a tiny physical keyboard, a side-mounted jog dial, and an Esc key (it takes you back to the previous menu or level) makes operating the RIM 957 a pleasure.

We tested the BlackBerry Enterprise Edition, which operates in two modes with two different enterprise e-mail systems, Lotus Notes and Microsoft Outlook Exchange. If you install the application to redirect your e-mail to the RIM 957 from your local machine, your mail will be automatically forwarded to and from the device. To senders and recipients of your e-mail, it appears that you're at your regular PC.

As long as your local machine is configured to work with your corporate e-mail, setting up the RIM 957 for redirection is quite simple; most of the setup is automatic when you run the install program. The downside is that you must leave your PC running and logged on to the network.

For you to use server-redirection mode, your IT department needs to configure your mail account to work via the BlackBerry system, which means your company needs to purchase, install, and support the server software. Running the client software on your PC to install on the RIM 957 is a

simple process, but the system won't work unless it does its job: For this reason, we've downgraded the rim 957's setup rating.

Whether you redirect from the server or your desktop, the RIM 957 does a great job with e-mail even though attachments are not currently supported. The RIM 957 does not include Internet browsing, but you can sign up for ISP access with GoAmerica Communications Corp. and other companies.

Although it's a great portable e-mail and messaging device, the RIM 957 doesn't excel as a PDA; it has the features but doesn't focus on them. And there are far fewer third-party apps available for it than there are for the Palm platform, although a community is growing steadily (see www.rimroad.com for some downloads).

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