

TECH NEWS

First Intel-powered BlackBerry unveiled

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Nov. 1, 2005, 2:00 PM CST / Source: Reuters

Research In Motion Ltd. launched on Tuesday the first version of its BlackBerry e-mail device produced through a recent partnership with Intel Corp., the world's biggest chipmaker.



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The new BlackBerry 8700c, which had been code-named Electron, will initially be offered exclusively through Cingular Wireless, the No. 1 U.S. mobile phone service provider, starting November 21.

RIM and Intel announced in September they were partnering to produce the device, which uses a high end Intel processor and is the first BlackBerry to run on EDGE (Enhanced Data Rates for Global Evolution) networks.

EDGE is a mobile network standard that lets users connect to the Internet and send and receive data faster than traditional networks, but slower than the more recent third-generation wireless standards.

RIM Co-Chief Executive Jim Balsillie said users will notice higher speeds than previous devices because of both the network and the new Intel chip.

"It really is a quantum leap forward in the performance for the user both in voice and in data," he said in an interview ahead of the launch.

"The speed of it is really a system experience. Though you may think it's the network, it's often other things."

Balsillie said Cingular Wireless, a joint venture between SBC Communications Inc. and BellSouth Corp., will be the only wireless carrier offering the device in the United States for a "period of months."

"We're not going into details. And you can expect to see other launches around the world in the not too distant future," he said.

Kent Mathy, an executive with Cingular's business markets group, said the phone company will offer the device for \$299 to customers who sign a two-year contract.

"We don't get into the exact device subsidy, but it suffices to say there is a subsidy when you see a device of this quality at that price," he said.

The launch of the new BlackBerry comes as rivals including Microsoft Corp., Palm Inc., Motorola Inc. and Nokia step up their wireless e-mail offerings in a bid for a share of the lucrative and fast-growing corporate market.

RIM shares last month touched their lowest level since May 2004 on investor concern about increased competition and the company's legal battle with patent holding company NTP Inc.

Last month RIM lost several bids to derail a patent infringement ruling against it, sending the case back to the lower court where it was first heard.

NTP successfully sued RIM in 2002 and won an injunction in 2003 to halt U.S. sales of the BlackBerry and shut down its service. That injunction was stayed pending appeal. NTP said it will once again ask the court to confirm the injunction.

Balsillie said he could not comment on the case, but reiterated past comments that RIM has a "workaround" technology designed to skirt patents at the center of the legal battle.

"As we've said before we have a workaround. We said that back in June and we say it now," he said.

"We're committed to supporting our market and supporting our customers."