

TECHNOLOGY IN OUR LIVES

Be Smart When Choosing A “Smart” Phone

(NAPSA)—Until recently, choosing a mobile phone was like buying bottled water: There was an abundance of brands and prices, but roughly the same thing inside. Not anymore.

To better serve busy professionals and computer-savvy young adults, telephone makers have introduced an array of advanced phones that have transformed this water into a high-tech wine cellar of options. Phone buyers can get wireless Internet and e-mail access, music and video storage and playback, downloadable applications, and games. Oh, these aptly named “smart” phones can send and receive phone calls, too.

With consumer demand growing, manufacturers will nearly double shipments of smart phones by 2008. This is nearly twice the anticipated growth rate of phones with built-in cameras, according to technology forecasters InStat/MDR.

Tom O’Keefe is among those who have already ditched their old mobile phones. The chairman of Tully’s Coffee Corp. uses his Motorola MPx200 with Microsoft Windows Mobile software to answer e-mail, monitor his calendar, check stock quotes, show off pictures of his kids and listen to music. A self-described “gadget geek,” he has even stored a video of his mother-in-law singing the national anthem before a baseball game on his phone.

For those who aren’t as tech-savvy, here are a few things to consider when choosing a smart phone:

- Familiar programs. Smart phones that use the same e-mail and other programs as the majority of desktop PCs take less time for new smart phone users to master.

- PC synchronization. Models with features such as ActiveSync technology help ensure that contact, calendar and e-mail information are the same on a person’s smart phone and PC.

- Personalization. Models that easily download screen savers, ring tones and music via wireless infrared or USB connections reflect the owner’s style and tastes. Also, to ensure lifelike picture quality for playing games and viewing photos, phones should offer a screen with at least 65,000 colors and 176x200-pixel resolution.

- Expandable memory. Advanced models offer a slot for memory cards, which add up to 256 MB of extra storage for games, music and other files.

- Smart text entry. To make typing messages on the keypad easier, look for models with tools such as T9 Text Input, which predicts words as they’re being entered. Similarly, auto-suggest features offer information such as e-mail addresses.

O’Keefe still can’t get over everything his smart phone can do: “This phone does everything, and it’s no bigger than my old cell phone.”