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a data speed testing utility, the Flipboard visual social media app, and the Confirmation.com audit inquiry mobile tracking tool.

Brian Tankersley • Aug. 29, 2012

This month, we cover major changes to standard mobile plans by AT&T and Verizon, a data speed testing utility, the Flipboard visual social media app, and the Confirmation.com audit inquiry mobile tracking tool.

New Phones and New Plans

Summer has turned to fall, and many of you are thinking about the new mobile devices. As I write this column in late July, current pundit speculation has Apple releasing the next iPhone (the “iPhone 5“, “new iPhone”, or whatever they decide to call it) in mid-September. Before you fall hopelessly in love with this new device (or any other new device), you should review carefully the significant changes carriers are making to service plans. The price increases and fundamental changes to how plan usage is measured may make you think twice before upgrading your existing cell phone and getting one of the “new” plans.

The mobile communications companies have figured out that their future is in charging for data, especially since you can use tools like Tango, Google Voice, Skype, and others to get around the metering and incremental charges for voice and text conversations. Mobile data (and what you can do with it) is one of the more revolutionary areas in technology. We have gone from having dial up internet speeds as a goal to LTE service which rivals wired high speed internet connections in under ten years, and plans have to change to reflect this new reality.

As I was contemplating paying my incumbent provider an obscenely large early termination fee this summer (to get faster data service on another network), I

learned that new cell phone plans on AT&T and Verizon have changed their family

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Flipboard

Flipboard is an excellent tool for Android and iOS which creates a categorized visual interface for the pictures, links, and stories shared by those you “follow” or “friend” on social media sites. Flipboard links into Twitter, Facebook, and Google Reader/Google+, and allows users to “flip” through stories as one would flip through the pages of a magazines. Categories and stories are navigated by using a finger to “flip” to the next page, and individual stories can be read by clicking on the excerpt from the story which appears in the app. Stories can be forwarded, “liked”, and shared with others from within the application. While the app is useful on smartphones, it is a “must have” app on the larger screens of tablet and slate devices.

Flipboard is a free app for iOS and Android devices, and more information is available at www.flipboard.com.

Mobile Data Speed Testing

If you plan to work out of the office for an extended period of time, you may need to evaluate your data speeds at the spot where you will work. Electrical lines, buildings, and geography can make certain areas in buildings which appear to have perfect wireless voice and data service “dead spots”. Before you unpack your mobile gear in a location with poor wireless data coverage, I encourage you to test your connection speed using the Speedtest.net mobile app. I recently used this handy utility to test wireless connections available in my office, (and the comparative results are shown in Figure 2). Users can test performance with the nearest test server (automatic), or with a selected test server location to determine the best way to connect.

The SpeedTest.net internet connection testing app is free (ad-supported), and is available for devices running the Android (from the Google Play Store) and iOS (from the iTunes App Store).

Mobile Bank Account Confirmation

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from iOS devices such as the iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad. Those responsible for managing confirmation responses for banks or companies can use the app to obtain real time status information on pending and in-process requests, including requests dated for future periods.

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