

Motorola debuts new wireless device called Backflip

January 8 2010, By Dan Gallagher



Motorola Inc. debuted a new wireless handset late Wednesday designed to further the company's position with the burgeoning Android operating system.

At a press event at the [Consumer Electronics Show](#) in Las Vegas, Motorola lifted the wraps on the Backflip, which features both a [touch-](#)

[screen](#) and keypad similar to the company's latest offering: the popular Droid handset that went on sale at Verizon in November.

The major difference on this device from the Droid is that the Backflip has its keypad in the back, which can fold out rather than slide out.

The device also features the company's MotoBlur software, a platform that is designed to integrate social networking and other communications features easily for the user. MotoBlur is featured on the Cliq -- which Motorola launched last year -- but not on the Droid.

Sanjay Jha, Motorola's co-CEO who leads the handset business, said the company intends to launch the device sometime in the first quarter of this year, but did not give a specific launch date, carrier partner or price on the device.

In its own news conference earlier in the day, however, AT&T said it planned to launch new Android phones this year, and had a picture of the Backflip. See full story on AT&T's plans for 2010.

Motorola is working to re-vitalize its once mighty handset business, and is betting heavily on new Android phones to do it. Android is the mobile phone [operating system](#) developed by Google to compete with popular smartphone platforms such as the BlackBerry by Research In Motion and the iPhone from Apple Inc.

"Our brand name still has tremendous relevance around the world," Jha said at the news conference. He was recruited to Motorola in 2008 specifically to lead the company's restructuring efforts.

Wall Street analysts are watching the company closely. Tero Kuittinen of MKM Partners said in a note to clients Wednesday that even with the new [Android](#) devices, Motorola "is still facing very strong competition in

this [smartphone] segment."

Ed Snyder of Charter Equity Partners believes that while [Motorola](#) benefited from a strong push at Verizon for the Droid, the company may feel some pressure this year as the carrier turns its attention to webOS phones from Palm. Having the Backflip at AT&T may help make up for this, Snyder said.

"We expect AT&T to push it hard as a hedge against its impending loss of iPhone's exclusivity to Verizon mid-year," Snyder wrote in a note to clients late Tuesday.

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