

# Nexus One stumbles as Google joins smartphone race

January 16 2010, by Glenn Chapman

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Google is learning that being a star contender in the smartphone arena takes more than a big name and well-crafted hardware. Nexus One has stumbled since its grand launch on January 5 as buyers grumble that there is nowhere to go but online for answers to complaints or questions.

"You would have to call their approach either naivete or hubris," said Interpret analyst and vice president of strategy Michael Gartenberg.

"Google has learned a number of things; most importantly that selling the

device is only part of the equation."

The Internet giant unveiled its new [Nexus One](#) smartphone in a direct challenge to heavyweight Apple's [iPhone](#) handsets, billing it as a "superphone" and the next step in the evolution of its Android software.

Google worked with Taiwanese electronics titan HTC to make the Nexus One handsets, sold exclusively from the Internet company's online shop at [google.com/phone](http://google.com/phone). There are no real-world stores or service centers for the devices.

The touchscreen devices sell for 179 dollars if bought with service from T-Mobile, while "unlocked" handsets that can work with any telecom providers cost 529 dollars each.

"You have to wonder what Google was thinking putting this thing out there with no place for customers to call for support and automated email support that takes days to get answers," Gartenberg said.

"There is a reason that Apple invests so much and devotes so much space in their stores for service and support after sale (of an iPhone)."

Nexus One hardware stands up to iPhone devices but premium smartphones are about "ecosystems" that include synching with online services and compatibility with hip, fun or functional "apps," according to Hubert Nguyen of popular gadget website [Ubergizmo.com](http://Ubergizmo.com).

"The hardware of the Nexus One is by and large better, but it is only half the experience," Nguyen said.

The Nexus One display is sharper and the processing faster than the iPhone, while innovative speech-to-text software lets people dictate email or text messages.

"It even recognized what we were saying and got it down correctly," said Ubergizmo's Eliane Fiolet.

Nexus One batteries do seem short-lived, running out of power in a day even with minimal use.

The main complaints about Nexus One are aimed at customers having no recourse other than to deal with shipping or technical woes over the Internet.

While signal strength and coverage is in the hands of telecom providers and hardware gripes might best be aimed at HTC, it is Google's phone so the California firm is the frontline for complaints no matter where problems lie.

"It's good to be bold and it's good to be aggressive, but the Nexus One launch was aggressive and bold in ways that seemed to more irritate than delight," Gartenberg said.

"Google many find they are also challenging their partners to look elsewhere for an operating system if Google is going to create a store, exclude other vendors and compete against them."

Prior to making its own smartphone, Google's open-source Android operating system was being hotly adopted by hardware makers such as Motorola, which used it in a heavily-marketed Droid model.

Google has not disclosed sales numbers for Nexus One devices, but estimates by industry trackers place the first week's figures at around 20,000 units.

"If they had sold a million devices, they would have shouted it from the rooftops," Gartenberg said of Google. "It is clear to me they haven't

taken the world by storm here."

[Google](#) this week cut 100 dollars from the price charged to existing [T-Mobile](#) customers and promised refunds to those who paid an original 379 dollars to upgrade to Nexus One from other devices.

"It shows details were not well thought out in advance," Gartenberg said.

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