

Apple wants its iPhone back

April 20 2010, by Chris Lefkow



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Technology blog Gizmodo [purchased the next-generation iPhone](#) from an unnamed person who was also at the Redwood City bar that night and revealed details of how the device came to be in its possession.

Gizmodo editorial director Brian Lam also said Apple wants the phone back.

He published a letter sent by Apple's legal department Monday asking

that the device be returned.

"It has come to our attention that Gizmodo is currently in possession of a device that belongs to Apple," said the letter signed by Bruce Sewell, Apple's senior vice president and general counsel.

"This letter constitutes a formal request that you return the device to Apple," the letter said. "Please let me know where to pick up the unit."

Lam also published his reply telling Apple the phone "was burning a hole in our pockets" and Gizmodo would be "happy to have you pick this thing up."

"I'm happy to see it returned to its rightful owner," Lam wrote.

"Take it easy on the kid who lost it," he added.

Gizmodo identified the "kid" as an Apple software engineer named Gray Powell, a 2006 graduate of North Carolina State University.

The technology blog said that Powell was celebrating his 27th birthday and sampling the wares at the Gourmet Haus Staudt in Redwood City, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Apple headquarters in Cupertino, on the night of March 18.

Gizmodo said Powell forgot the prototype phone, which had been disguised to resemble the previous model iPhone, the iPhone 3GS, on a bar stool when he left the establishment.

His last Facebook update according to Gizmodo: "I underestimated how good German beer is."

Efforts to track down Powell's Facebook profile were unsuccessful on

Tuesday although a slew of fake accounts have been created on the social network in his name including a "Drunk Gray Powell" profile and a "My Sympathies, Gray Powell" page.

Gizmodo said the phone ended up with a person who had been sitting next to Powell at the bar after no one else claimed it.

"Weeks later, Gizmodo got it," the technology blog said without providing further details.

Nick Denton, founder of the Gawker blog network and owner of Gizmodo, said on his Twitter feed @nicknotned, however, that 5,000 dollars was paid for the phone and that "yes, we'll do anything for a story."

"We're proud practitioners of checkbook journalism," Denton said.

In January, Valleywag, another Gawker site, offered 10,000 dollars to anyone who could come up with a "bona fide" picture of the yet-to-be-released computer which turned out to be the iPad.

Gizmodo also said it held a brief telephone conversation with Powell about giving him back his phone. "He sounded tired and broken," Gizmodo said.

"Knowing how ferocious and ruthless Apple is about product leaks, those beers may have turned out to be the bitterest of his life," the blog said.

The comments section on Gizmodo, meanwhile, was deluged with messages from readers urging Apple chief executive Steve Jobs not to fire Powell and criticism of the blog for identifying the engineer publicly.

"Releasing his name was uncalled for. Stay class, Gizmodo," wrote Aaron Leibowitz.

According to Gizmodo, features of the new phone, expected to be unveiled later this year, include a front-facing video camera for video chat, a flash and an improved regular camera with a larger lens.

It also has a flat back instead of curved back, is thinner than the 3GS, is three grams heavier and has a battery that is 16 percent larger.

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