

Bold 9650 and Pearl 3G: RIM turns Blackberry phones into work line extensions

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Research In Motion on Monday beefed up its Blackberry line with two new models and added a way to turn its smartphones into extensions of office numbers for business users.

The Canada-based firm said it is adding the Bold 9650 and Pearl 3G models to its smartphone stable.

It also announced a deal with computer networking giant Cisco that will let businesses turn Blackberry smartphones into extensions of workers' desk phones that handle calls using low-cost Internet telephone at [Wi-Fi](#) hot spots.

BlackBerry Mobile Voice System 5 "provides a wireless extension of the corporate phone system to allow voice over Wi-Fi calling at work, public hotspots and home," according to the company.

RIM platform product vice president Alan Panezic said the new option would allow companies "to enhance the productivity of employees who are often away from their desks or working from home."

"This latest release enables businesses to better leverage their investment in the corporate phone system, adapt to the growing demand by employees for more flexible work arrangements, improve workforce productivity and save costs on long-distance and international roaming charges."

The new Blackberry Bold model is tailored to work with CDMA networks. A version of the smartphone that works with the more common GSM technology used by mobile telephone service carriers has been on the market for months.

The BlackBerry Pearl designed for high-speed 3G mobile service networks was billed as "compact and elegant" and is seen as part of RIM's effort to compete in a consumer market where touch-screen Apple's iPhones are coveted devices.

RIM emphasized the messaging and [social networking](#) capabilities of Pearl 3G smartphones, which feature Blackberry's trademark full keyboards for typing.

"We expect a broad range of new and existing customers will be drawn to its powerful features and compact design," RIM president Mike Lazaridis said of the Pearl 3G.

"Considering the fast growing consumer interest in smartphones and the fact that more than three-quarters of the people in the global mobile phone market are still buying handsets with a traditional alphanumeric keypad, we think the new [BlackBerry](#) Pearl 3G addresses a substantial market opportunity."

The new models are to become available in May.

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