

Verizon cuts Palm Pre, Pixi Plus prices

April 1 2010



(AP) -- Verizon Wireless is cutting the prices for Palm's Pre Plus and Pixi Plus smart phones and offering free access to a Wi-Fi service that lets the phones deliver Internet access to other kinds of devices - such as Apple's iPad.

Palm Inc. has been struggling to compete as consumers flock to such devices as Apple Inc.'s iPhone and Research In Motion Ltd.'s BlackBerry, so the price cut and addition of some free service could help the company snag bargain-hunting shoppers.

Verizon spokeswoman Brenda Raney said Thursday that Verizon is

selling Palm's Pre Plus for \$50, down from \$150. The Pixi Plus now goes for \$30, down from \$80. Both require two-year contracts.

Both phones are black with touch screens and standard QWERTY keyboards. The keyboard for the Pre Plus slides out from the bottom, while the one for the Pixi Plus is built into its face. The devices run Palm's WebOS software.

Verizon is also offering free - though limited - use of a service that lets up to five devices connect to Verizon's wireless network through the phones, which act as a Wi-Fi hotspot.

A mobile hotspot utility was already available as a free download from Palm's App Catalog for use on the Pre and Pixi Plus, but Verizon was charging \$40 a month for 5 gigabytes of data use. Now, the company is offering users that amount of data use for free each month.

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Citation: Verizon cuts Palm Pre, Pixi Plus prices (2010, April 1) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-04-verizon-palm-pre-pixi-prices.html>

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