

## Amazon ties new 4.7-inch Fire Phone to its services (Update 2)

June 18 2014, by Ryan Nakashima

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Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos introduces the new Amazon Fire Phone, Wednesday, June 18, 2014, in Seattle. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

Amazon has introduced a new smartphone with audio and object recognition technology that seeks to make it easier for consumers to locate and purchase products and services from the nation's largest e-commerce company.

The new Fire phone also adds such features as the ability to render images in 3-D.

The Fire phone doesn't differ much from other smartphones on the market and shares many characteristics found in other Amazon devices. For instance, the phone will have X-Ray for supplemental content about movies and TV shows and Mayday for live tech support.

Amazon's new Firefly feature allows users to take a photo of an object, such as a toaster or a soup can, and get more information about it, including a way to purchase it through Amazon. Many of the new features have been available elsewhere as separate apps. Sony, for instance, has a tool for getting information over the Internet by snapping a bar code or a landmark. Firefly goes further, though, by incorporating audio recognition.

"It goes back to the mission of Amazon, which is to sell you stuff," said Ramon Llamas of the research firm IDC. "It reduces the number of steps it takes to buy things on the phone."

The phone will have a screen measuring 4.7 inches diagonally. That's smaller than leading Android phone, but larger than Apple's iPhone. CEO Jeff Bezos calls the Fire's size ideal for one-handed use.

The phone will be available July 25 in the U.S. exclusively through AT&T. People can start ordering it Wednesday. Prices are comparable to other leading high-end phones, but the Fire will have double the storage. It will cost \$200 for a base model with 32 gigabytes and \$300 for 64 gigabytes. Both require two-year service contracts. Without contracts, they will cost \$650 and \$750.

The phone will come with 12 months of Prime membership, which is normally \$99 a year. Existing Prime members will get their term

extended.

Competing won't be easy, though, particularly because Fire's prices aren't lower, Llamas said. With tablets, Amazon has been able to beat Apple and its iPads on price. Amazon makes up for that by selling more content.

Amazon is also arriving late to a tightly contested marketplace. Samsung and Apple dominate worldwide smartphone sales with a combined 46 percent share, according to IDC. And in the U.S., Apple leads with more than 37 percent, with Samsung at nearly 29 percent.



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As the phone was announced in Seattle, Amazon's stock rose \$8.82, or 3

percent, to \$334.44 in afternoon trading.

Firefly is the centerpiece of the new phone. Snap a photo of a book, and it'll help you buy it, either as an e-book or a physical copy. Listen to a song playing in the background, and it'll direct you to that tune on Amazon.

It can even direct you to facts and data, by showing a Wikipedia entry with information about a painting you snapped.

The feature will also let you snap bar codes, phone numbers and more.



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Another distinctive feature is 3-D images. You can rotate the phone and get a different view depending on your angle of vision. CEO Jeff Bezos calls this "dynamic perspective" and said the phone is basically redrawing the image 60 times per second.

To make that happen, the phone has four front-facing infrared cameras to tell where your head is, even if your fingers happen to cover two of them.

That is on top of the regular 2 megapixel front camera for selfies, plus the 13 megapixel one on the rear for regular shots. The rear camera will have image stabilization to counteract shaking as people take shots, something available in other phones as well.

Amazon is offering unlimited free storage of photos on its Cloud Drive service.

The phone will also come with earbuds that have flat cords and magnets to clasp them together, so tangled cords will be history.



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And it will have an auto-scroll feature that lets you scroll down website articles or books by tilting the phone. Samsung's Galaxy phones have that, too.

The decision to make AT&T the exclusive carrier is similar to the approach Apple took when it unveiled its first iPhone in 2007. AT&T had exclusive rights to the iPhone in the U.S. until 2011, when Verizon and eventually others got it, too.

Amazon's first gadget was a Kindle e-reader, released in 2007. Although there are plenty of devices that do more, many people still prefer stand-alone e-book readers because they typically have better screens for reading in direct sunlight and don't have distractions such as Facebook and email.

The company started making Kindle Fire tablets in 2011. The latest models, HDX, are notable for a Mayday help button that accesses live tech support 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



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With Mayday, which the Fire phone will also have, you see the customer assistance representatives in a video box, but they can only hear you and see what's on your screen. They can also help guide you by placing orange markers on your screen or taking control of your device completely.

In April, Amazon released its Fire TV streaming devices. What sets it

apart from rival gadgets is a voice search feature that lets you speak the title, actor, director or genre into your remote to get matching content on the TV. On Wednesday, AT&T CEO Ralph de la Vegas said his Spanish accent wasn't able to throw it off.

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