

BlackBerry sets new phone launch in revival bid

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The screen of a BlackBerry phone seen in Rennes, western France, on October 22, 2012

BlackBerry is set to unveil its latest smartphone Wednesday, in a move aimed at reviving the fortunes of the struggling Canadian tech group.

The BlackBerry Passport with a square 4.5-inch screen and [physical keyboard](#) will be priced at \$599 without a contract in the United States,

chief executive John Chen told the Wall Street Journal.

The price is slightly below the contract-free price of Apple's new iPhone and high-end smartphones from Samsung.

It will be launched at events in Dubai, London and Toronto, before launching in stores 15 days later, he said.

The Passport launch follows the failure of devices on the BlackBerry 10 platform to gain traction, and a management shake-up last year aimed at stemming massive losses.

The Waterloo, Ontario-based company helped create a culture of mobile users glued to smartphones, but lost its luster as many moved to iPhones or devices using Google's Android software.

Last December, BlackBerry unveiled a manufacturing partnership with Taiwan-based Foxconn and a revamped organizational structure.

The deal transfers to Foxconn the manufacturing and inventory management and allows BlackBerry to focus on software and services.

The company is scheduled to release its second quarter results on Friday, which are expected to show the company slowly climbing back from the brink.

In May, BlackBerry launched a new budget handset in Indonesia, one of its last bastions, in the hope it will take off in emerging markets and stem a decline in the [smartphone](#) maker's fortunes.

The touchscreen Z3, the first to be produced from the Canadian firm's partnership with Foxconn, is aimed mainly at Asian markets and especially Indonesia, where the company maintains a loyal following,

thanks in part to the popularity of its BBM messaging service. The device was launched at a price of under \$200 without a contract.

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