

Verizon says Droid smart phone goes on sale Nov. 6

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In this product image released by Verizon Wireless, the new Droid by Motorola is shown.

(AP) -- Verizon Wireless' answer to the iPhone - the Droid - will go on sale for \$200 next week as the company taps into the growing appetite for smart phones that go far beyond making calls.

The Droid could help Verizon retain its status as the nation's largest wireless carrier and contribute to a turnaround of its manufacturer, Motorola Inc., which hasn't produced a hit since the wildly popular Razzr phone in 2005.

The new device also could give a boost to Google Inc., which used the Droid to unveil new mapping software that could challenge standalone navigational devices, sending GPS gadget maker Garmin Ltd.'s stock plunging after Wednesday's announcement.

Although the Droid won't be first challenger for the iPhone, which is available in the U.S. only to subscribers of AT&T Inc., Verizon has thrown its largest marketing campaign ever behind the new device with television commercials and other ads. Verizon has been pointing out the features Apple Inc.'s iPhone lacks, such as a physical keyboard and the ability to run several applications at once.

Verizon is targeting 15- to 35-year-olds who are highly engaged with their [gadgets](#) for social networking, blogging and other online tasks. [Social networking](#) is integrated throughout the device. That means you can sync Facebook friends into your contacts and share photos on Picasa without having to go through separate applications.

"Apple revolutionized the industry," and the smart phone industry needed time to collect itself and figure out its next move, John Stratton, Verizon's chief marketing officer, said at a launch event in New York. With the Droid, Verizon and Motorola are hoping to shatter any perception that the iPhone is the end-all of mobile devices.

Verizon, the Droid's exclusive U.S. distributor, will start selling the phone Nov. 6 for \$199.99 after a rebate, with a two-year contract. The price is comparable to the iPhone's basic model.



The Motorola Droid mobile phone is shown in this photograph in New York, Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2009. Verizon Wireless' answer to the iPhone — the Droid — will go on sale for \$200 next week as the company taps into the growing appetite for smart phones that go far beyond making calls. The Droid is the latest Motorola phone to use Google's Android operating system, an open platform that any developer can customize. (AP Photo/Richard Drew)

With the Droid, Verizon is tapping into the frustrations some users have with the iPhone. Users have complained of dropped calls, while many software developers hate Apple's requirement that it approve all applications running on it ahead of time. The Droid runs on Google's Android operating system, an open platform that any developer can customize.

The Droid is a sturdy, angular device, with a standard, "QWERTY" keyboard that slides out, though you can also pop up a virtual on-screen keyboard with tactile feedback so it bumps back a little when you tap out the keys.

It has a five-megapixel camera - better than the iPhone - and a tiny flash, along with voice-activated search that brings up your contacts and

location-based Google search results. Say "pizza" and nearby pizza restaurants will pop up.

The Droid's display is slightly larger than the iPhone's, and its claimed talk time on a single battery charge is a bit longer - 6.4 hours, compared with the iPhone's five hours.

The Droid is heavier and thicker than the iPhone. Because it incorporates the slide-out keyboard, it lacks the iPhone's all-in-one sleekness. The corners aren't as softly rounded, and even Stratton noted its target market may skew a little masculine. It's the Rolling Stones to the iPhone's Beatles. And, of course, no iTunes.

Google is also throwing its weight behind the Droid, which is the first smart phone to run Android 2.0, the latest version of the system.

The Internet search leader released a mapping application that calls out turn-by-turn directions while providing a variety of visual guides, including satellite imagery and high-resolution photos of the streets being traveled in places where they are available. Destinations can be found through voice commands or simply typing in an address.

The free application, called Google Maps Navigation, will only work on devices running on Android 2.0 - an exclusive distinction for now. But Google plans to make it compatible with other systems and devices, including the [iPhone](#) and the BlackBerry from Research in Motion Ltd.

Shares in Garmin, based in the Cayman Islands with headquarters in Olathe, Kan., fell \$6.34, or 17 percent, to \$31.44 in afternoon trading Wednesday. Apple, which is based in Cupertino, Calif., lost \$4.25, or 2.2 percent, to \$193.12, while Dallas-based AT&T gained 52 cents, or 2.1 percent, to \$26.12.

Verizon Communications Inc., which owns a majority stake in [Verizon Wireless](#) in a joint venture with Vodafone Group PLC, gained 79 cents, or 2.7 percent, to \$29.99. Shares in Google, which is based in Mountain View, Calif., were down \$6.97 to \$541.32, while [Motorola](#), based in Schaumburg, Ill., gained 13 cents to \$8.03.

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