

# THE DAILY RECORD

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## Telecom Law:

# Taking advantage of the iPhone

*...without actually buying one*

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I really, really, really need a new personal digital assistant/ BlackBerry-type unit.

When I leave my office, I carry three separate devices with me: A wireless phone, a BlackBerry (it does my e-mail and, while it's capable of phone service, it's really not very good) and a PDA (because I like my Windows-driven device, even though it's fading fast). This is really ridiculous, perhaps even more so because I consider myself to be a telecommunications professional — ha!

I even got locked into a two-year contract when I got the BlackBerry, which despite an outright assault on my kind account executive, relying on my (usually) highly-effective and persuasive charm skills, I've been unable to break. On June 12, I'm free to get another device (and lock into another agreement for some longer-than-I'd-like-period of time). So I've been window shopping.

I was offered the opportunity to preview ads for Apple's iPhone. This is one cool device that does virtually everything but brush your teeth for you. It's a phone, it's an e-mail device, it's an iPod, it's a photo album, it's a PDA and it shows high-definition video. (I'm not exactly sure why anyone would find viewing a video on a very small screen to be desirable, but I'm also not 17).

As you've no doubt heard, the iPhone is scheduled for release on June 29, and initially it will be available only for use with AT&T (formerly Cingular) wireless. The cost is estimated to be between \$500 and \$600 per unit, according to *The Wall Street Journal*.



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In an article that appeared on June 7 by Li Yuan and Amol Sharma, ("Rivals Answer the iPhone"), the authors describe how other carriers and providers (most notably Verizon and Sprint-Nextel) are working to create other devices "not intended" (read: can't) to go "head to head" with the iPhone, but which will offer some sexy features at either a lower or comparable price, or without the two-year term accompanying an iPhone acquisition.

What no one is talking about, and how this nicely relates to my need for a new device, is that it is likely that when the iPhone hits the street, many of the current pricey and feature-rich devices, including PDAs and music and/or video phones, will drop in price. My trusted BlackBerry salesperson wasn't able to confirm or deny this possibility, but it only makes sense. After all, when high definition televisions came out, didn't the price on otherwise strong sellers drop significantly?

Given that the lifespan of one of these devices is about as long as the service contract that accompanies it, my recommendation is to wait until at least June 29 to secure a new device. The prices certainly won't have gone up, and it's likely that either prices will have dropped or consumers will be able to get more phone/music/video/address and calendar functions/calculators/games for the same cost as a less fancy device used to cost. That's a better value any way you look at it.

If you're an uber-techie who needs to have the latest and greatest, wait until June 29. If you just need a new device with some power and functionality, wait until June 29 or later to see how the iPhone sells, and how those sales affect the pricing and terms of the device you've been dreaming about ... or need.