



# OMNI NEWS

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## CHOOSING A SMARTPHONE

Still don't have a smart phone, or the one you have(possibly a Blackberry) is out of date? There are several platforms to choose from, but, only two major ones, Apple and Android.

Android is an open source operating system controlled by Internet giant Google while Apple's iOS is proprietary. Since Android is open source, there are several different versions that have been customized for various different devices. There is just one iPhone(including older models still on the market).

There are advantages and disadvantages to each platform. Apple's phones are sleek and offer a seamless experience for the user. Its app store is considered the best in the market and the SIRI digital assistant is widely used by some(and not at all by others).

Apple does have its drawbacks including no 4G access and sorry, TMobile users, no iPhone. It is rumored that the next release of the iPhone will feature 4G. Apple believes it is best qualified to determine what a user wants or needs, whereas Android users have a wider choice.

The biggest plus for Android is its integration with Google. Email, contacts, and calendar are seamlessly synced almost instantly. Google maps and navigation are very useful, especially for users already using Google on a PC. While not as large, Android Market(app store) offers a wide variety of products, including all major ones offered by Apple.

But Android can vary significantly from phone to phone, depending on the manufacturer. This can be confusing to users. The exception to this is Google's Nexus line which receives new Android software first.

Both the Apple and Android platforms probably offer more features than the average user will ever use. The iPhone is stylish and just plain works well. Android phones work well, too, but not all are as ascetically pleasing as the iPhone. Android phones are more flexible in what they can do, and don't forget the Google integration.

The phone to choose is really a matter of personal taste, the offerings of a specific carrier, and the price the user is willing to pay.



# INTERNET BANDWIDTH IN HOTELS

The high speed Internet models for hotels that have worked well in the past may need to change. The long ago “revenue sharing” arrangements with vendors soon moved into “free to guest” ones that did not charge for service to mainly business travelers. The bandwidth(a measure of throughput on a computer network) provided was adequate to perform tasks such as email, web surfing, and checking company sites.

Bandwidth requirements have changed drastically in the last several years. Now it is the non-business traveler that is demanding more speed for activities such as video streaming, listening to music on-line, and downloading large files. Also, guests may carry up to three devices that require a connection, a laptop, smart phone, and tablet PC. A hotel’s internet infrastructure may no longer be able to meet this increased demand.

Because of these increased requirements, bandwidth management has become increasingly important. Some routers have the ability to limit usage per user, thus putting a maximum amount each guest can use at a given time. More sophisticated routers can actually continually divide bandwidth among users thus allowing the maximum available to each user. Other management techniques include prioritizing traffic coming into the hotel, and ways to offer different levels of bandwidth to guests. This would usually apply to tiered pricing in hotels that charge for Internet service.

Hoteliers may need to re-think the free to guest model. Increased equipment and monthly Internet service costs may require reverting to a paid model. Of course, not all hotels give away Internet service. Most higher end hotels charge between \$9.95 and \$14.95 per day. Some are considering tiered pricing based on bandwidth, but, that requires equipment capable of providing multiple levels of service.

Bandwidth demand is being pushed even higher by guests that carry their own streaming media players(connected TV players) and hook them up to the hotel’s TV. These devices allow users to view Internet content such as Hulu, Netflix, and You Tube without using a computer. The bandwidth for these services can be significant. Optimal usage for these services is around 9mbits, which can be more bandwidth than is being provided to the entire hotel. Some hotels are even providing these devices in some rooms. The leading manufacturers are Apple(Aple TV), Roku, Boxee, among others.

For a complete article on streaming media players, please see the latest addition of Hospitality Upgrade magazine(Spring 2012) page 155.



*Internet Router*



*Boxee Internet TV*



## TV EVERYWHERE

The ability to view the same programming on a television, PC or tablet computer, and smart phone is already here. Some sports leagues offer their games “where ever you are” and service providers tout this capability in TV ads. So the technology is in place to provide this service, but, the licensing agreements are not. This means that every type of provider(cell, cable, satellite, etc) must negotiate rights to every cable TV channel, something few have accomplished.

There are some cable operators offering on-line access to certain current TV shows for subscribers only. Some content providers such as ESPN are also offering on-line access to their programs for a fee.

Meanwhile, Google’s YouTube, Netflix, and Hulu are adding attractive original programming that may require a subscription to access. But adding subscriptions to Internet content providers is just a fraction of the cost of cable TV service. Some are already dropping cable in favor of Internet TV and an outside antenna(remember those) to pick up over the air digital signals from local channels. The picture quality is good, but it does require a digital TV or a converter box for older analog TV’s.

While this approach does offer significant cost savings, there are drawbacks. Some Internet TV can be jerky, or pause, at times during a program, even with the best Internet connection. Currently, cable still offers far more channels than are available on the web.

While advances in technology can address any reception concerns over the Internet, it may be left to good old “deal making” to have more content available.

## IMPROVED WEBSITE

The Omni Group has upgraded and improved its website. There you can find a list of our services and clients, a section containing additional articles, and selected client comments. Please visit our site at [www.atlantaomnigroup.com](http://www.atlantaomnigroup.com)

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