Universal Cell Phone Charger -What a Concept!

The Mobile World Congress Show (MWC) recently took place in Barcelona, Spain. Every year this show has its "hot topics" that attendees just can't seem to get enough of, and this year was no exception. Conversations focused on handsets, Long Term Evolution (LTE), Location-Based Services (LBS), social networking, application stores and mobile advertising.

There was also a major announcement made at the show that could benefit both the consumer and our environment. If you are like me, you have a box or drawer full of old mobile phone chargers that are no longer useful since they don't fit the port on your current mobile phone. I can't tell you how many times I've grabbed the wrong charger before leaving on a trip, or forgot to bring it entirely. If all goes right, help is on its way and this problem will be solved within the next few years.

At this year's show, the GSMA (Groupe Speciale Mobile Association) announced the creation of a universal cell phone charger that will function with most mobile phones by January 2012. The technology is based on the popular micro-USB interface. All major handset makers, including LG, Motorola, Nokia, Qualcomm, Samsung and Sony Ericsson, have agreed to use the Micro-USB technology as the common universal charging interface, according to Rob Conway, GSMA CEO. Seventeen mobile operators, including AT&T, T-Mobile, Vodafone, Orange and Telefónica, have announced that they are committed and have already signed up for the plan.

To me there is much to gain by adopting such a standard and very little to lose. It will not only make life easier for the more than 3 billion mobile phone users in the world today, but it will also help the environment. Last year an estimated 1.2 billion cell phones were sold, according to University of Southern Queensland data reported by the GSMA, of which handsets accounted for between 50 and 80 percent. That equates to between 51,000 and 82,000 tons of chargers. The GSM also hopes the initiative will slash the greenhouse gases that result from the manufacture and transport of chargers by 13.6 and 21.8 million tons each year.

However, there are those that are opposed to the idea of a Universal Phone Charger and feel that it will not work due to the constantly changing nature of technology. They believe it will only be a matter of time before the micro USB-Charger is

replaced by an improved technology. And there is also the question of corporate greed. Will companies stand in the way of adoption because they think that the development of such a device equates to lost revenue for them? And, currently, the initiative is lacking the support of one big 800 lb. gorilla — Apple and its very popular iPhone, which has a unique charging mechanism. I guess we will all just need to wait and see if Apple's reluctance to get on board will kill the universal charger concept. I sure hope not. In the meantime, let's all get behind this initiative if for no other reason than to improve the planet we all inhabit.

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