Build Your Own Phone

Meaghan Ziemba, Editor

I go through cell phones more often than the average consumer, but I blame phone companies for their clever marketing ploys. Sure, I can say no, but then I wouldn’t have a cool new toy to show off to my fiancé (iPhone's greatest and loudest champion).

I know that I’m not the only one who creates any excuse possible to get the latest phone upgrade. Phone carriers are even producing commercials that promise upgrades whenever you want – as soon as January hits, the Verizon Edge program will however, welcome its newest member (see byline information).

The rapidly increasing rate of new phones does have an unattractive downfall – electronic waste and lots of it. To help decrease phone and other types of electronic-device trash, Phonbloks is a new design concept that provides consumers with detachable blocks that connect to a base to form a modular phone. If a "blok" breaks, consumers can easily replace it. If it's getting old, just upgrade the single blok. Phonbloks provides customization while at the same time decreasing the amount of ewaste.

Although I appreciate this concept’s intentions, I’m not a fan of the overall look that the phone has once all of the bloks have been placed on the main base. It seems clunky to me. If it comes in pieces, I am more apt to lose some of them, and what a mess to pick up if anyone drops it.

Another concern is each individual's blok's price point. The replace-as-you-go idea is great for consumers who don’t need or want all the extra features that smartphones offer today, but will the pieces be cost-efficient compared to buying one phone with everything available right away? What happens to the pieces users send back once they are done using them? Are they being fixed, recycled, or just adding to the heap in the landfill?

While I am a huge fan of the concept, and believe this device would be fun to own for a few days, I’m not convinced this design will even reach a critical mass. Society

is too fast-paced, and very few people enjoy taking the time to make something their own. They want to get in, get out, and have their devices to have full functionality right out of the box.

I do think the concept of recyclable electronic devices is an important one for every consumer to consider, and while Phonbloks may not ever make it to market, I applaud its attempt to get the masses thinking about it.

What are your thoughts about the Phonbloks concept? Post your comments below, or send them to meaghan.ziemba@advantagemedia.com [1].

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