Itâ€™s Whatâ€™s InsideThat Counts...Isnâ€™t It?

Â David McQueen, Principal Analyst, Informa Telecoms & Media

There were high expectations for todayâ€™s launch of the latest iPhone, with the new look iPhone 5 being the nomenclature of choice. However, there was a little disappointment in the air as, in actuality, Apple revealed a warmed up version of last yearâ€™s iPhone following 15 months without any hardware upgrade.

The iPhone 4S looks the same, with similar industrial design, screen size and user interface but just with a little better innards. Having a faster dual-core processor helping improve battery life, 1080p HD video recording, an 8MP camera and the ability to roam between CDMA and GSM networks may float some peopleâ€™s boat, but that may not be enough to seduce all Apple lovers to upgrade.

There were announced improvements in the service layer with some neat features such as iCloud integration, an instant message application iMessage, tight integration with social networks, double-tap use of the home button to activate the camera, a voice recognition offering, and iTunes Match to scan and match a userâ€™s library for $24 a year (US only for the present). Of these, voice recognition has the capability to be a key differentiator as its tight integration with the hardware and ability to work organically should offer market-leading performance.

Whilst Apple announced improvements in the hardware performance and on the service layer, it has been let down somewhat by having almost no change in the user experience and in the industrial design. Unfortunately for Apple, this is happening at a time when competitors are aggressively bringing new products to market with superior user experience in the form of wider and better screen, intuitive UIs, and more integrated apps.

As a result, iPhone 4S could be the first disappointing device since the launch of the brand. However, by keeping both the iPhone 3GS and iPhone 4 models in market at significantly reduced prices, free and $99 respectively on contract, perhaps the company has created opportunities in the mass market without actually having to resort to a lower-cost new product. In the US, Apple has also extended its reach by making the phones available on Sprint for the first time.

Finally according to Malik Saadi, principal analyst at Informa Telecoms & Media, â€œIn light of all these super-smartphones coming to market from the likes of HTC and Samsung, the iPhone is no longer a champion in terms of user experience.â€

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Posted by Janine E. Mooney, Associate Editor

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