



FEATURE



## Sideload: A New Way to Play

[By Philip John, CEO Clippz.com]

Have you heard about this new cell phone from Apple? The...iPhone? OK, unless you were on a mountaintop for the month of June, you are probably well-familiar with the new "Jesus phone," as one tech industry wag called it.

Now that some time has passed since "6-28," it's a good time for a little reflection, perspective, and rational discourse on the subject of the iPhone. Perhaps we can even ask the million dollar question: did the product match its marketing hype? And even more importantly, is there really anything revolutionary about the iPhone?

The iPhone's industrial design is clearly breakthrough. The iPhone joins the line up of artfully designed Apple products; no other technology company matches Apple's legacy of product design. However, apart from the equipment envy engendered by iPhone's sleek and shiny form, I posit that the device itself is not revolutionary. All the parts exist to some degree in other devices already on the market, from the elegant touch screen to its Wi-Fi capability.

What is truly revolutionary about the iPhone is more subtle than its "look and feel," but potentially much more important: it is the first time that a manufacturer has developed a video-enabled cell phone but chosen *not* to deliver video to the device over a mobile network.

The iPhone's YouTube content is streamed to a PC and then streamed further from the

PC to the iPhone. Apple did this because it knows that there is no commercial mobile network that could accommodate the data rate required for video that is optimized for a screen the size of the iPhone. It also knows that content bought from the iTunes store and transferred (or sideloaded) into the iPhone from a PC or Mac does not require any mobile carrier.

Some analysts have called out the iPhone's lack of 3G connectivity as the reason for bypassing the carriers, but the high resolution of the iPhone screen means that not even 3G would be able to sustain a suitable data rate (never mind what this would cost the consumer in data charges).

There's a wider trend at work here, and the iPhone illustrates it beautifully: when it comes to mobile devices, sideloading is more effective than downloading. Handset functionality advances at a far greater pace than mobile networks. It's innovate or die out there for cell phone manufacturers, and they upgrade quickly and often. On the other hand, mobile network upgrades are massive undertakings that can take many years to accomplish. Even adding a new transmission tower can be a huge project.

This gap in innovation and execution provides consumers with mobile devices that can play back content at a much higher quality than is available over the air. Granted, this situation may not be keeping c-suite execs at Verizon and T-Mobile up at night – they have plenty of other crushing competitive issues to worry about. Nevertheless, the device/network gap is fueling an upstart new segment in the digital economy. Companies like mine – [Clippz.com](http://Clippz.com) – are taking advantage of this widening gap to invent ways to optimize content for mobile devices, and deliver it off-carrier by "sideloading" from a PC or Mac straight to the device.

The way that Clippz.com delivers mobile video – by sideloading optimized files from PC to device – is essentially the same path that Apple has chosen for the iPhone. It's an approach that can be used for cell phones (even older models), portable media players and PDAs – more than a billion devices worldwide.

The practice of "sideloading" content is nothing revolutionary or even all that new; the Wiki definition for sideload states that the term has been in currency since the 1950s, and even cites a reference from the U.S. Department of Energy Nevada Test Site web page. But that was an entirely different kind of



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boom. Sideloaded today has the potential to be a disruptive force, a source for technical innovation, and a way for users to actually realize the playback potential of their mobile devices.

The revolution of the iPhone is the way it legitimizes sideloading - and the challenge it poses is for mobile network carriers, who to this point have assumed that they were the default channels for downloading content.

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