

The G1, from a Treo point of view.

As the cab drove away, I realized that we were one bag short. There was the immediate urge to run after it, followed by a memory flash of the bag sitting in an elevator at the hotel, followed by a series of swear words in several languages.

I was standing at Malpensa Airport in Milan, going over what was inside that bag; all my power adapters for the pile of gadgetry I brought with me for my 3 month stay in Italy, and... my US phone, a Treo 650.

The 650 was wonderful, but it wasn't compatible with what I needed for Italy. I liked my Treo so much, however, that I had actually bought a 680 for the trip. It took me only a few minutes to set it up and it was perfect the entire time.

Now, however, I was stuck without a phone that would work in the USA and the bag wasn't going to be showing up in California any time soon. So, what to do?

Well, I've been a bit unhappy with Sprint. Their customer service is a bit lacking, but mostly I don't like the uncomfortably common mistakes in billing. Even during that trip, I called to change my phones to a \$5/month seasonal plan and only found out a month later that it had never gone through. It took me hours of debate to rectify that.

I had already decided to move to T-Mobile and actually had a T-Mobile sim card for the 680 and decided to use that... oops, that was in the bag in Milan as well. #&\$^@*\$@

Still, I ran down to the T-Mobile store with my big ole' 680 and inquired about various plans. Then I saw the G1. Very slick. I had tried the "Wing" – slow crap – and decided against it. I had tried Blackberries, but I really need a touch screen. I even tried the iPhone, but I simply need buttons on my keyboard. (try texting with one hand on an iPhone!) The G1, however, seemed to offer some benefits.

Well, I'm a programmer and I've also become a bit addicted to google products. At the price they offered, I went for it...promising my 680 I'd bring it back to life if things didn't work out with the G1 as I slide it into my jacket pocket.

It's been a week now and I'm still not sold. There are some things that are very good, some things that are lacking and some things that simply suck.

I use the web constantly, the G1 is so much better than a treo it is simply incomparable. Seriously, the browser is fantastic. The speed of a g3 network is very nice, but the way the phone hops around from my home wifi network, to my office wifi, to my local café's wifi. Seriously, that's pretty amazing. So, it has a really nice big screen with a really nice easy to use browser with a really fast connection that is even faster in areas you have access to wifi. I think the iPhone is similar, but even people with iphones will soon admit that the G1 browser is better.

I also use my phone camera constantly. I live in CA and my family is in NY. I got them a Ceiva (which is simply amazing) digital picture frame which displays any pictures I email to it. So, from my phone I can

send a pic to my parents and it pops up in the slide show on their book shelf. They love it. The camera on the G1 sucks.

The resolution is better, but the focus is awful. Seriously, what's the point of getting a high rez picture that is horribly blurry? Honestly, it is really terrible.

I also use the camera on my Treo to remember things. I saw a sign for a preschool in Milan, snapped a quick pic with my Treo as I passed by, then I had the phone number and name so my wife could actually talk to them in Italian and get my daughter hooked up. With the G1 it would have taken me an additional couple seconds to get the camera app open, then another 30 seconds of standing very still to make a picture that you could actually read. It wouldn't ever have happened and my 2 year old daughter wouldn't be spouting out Italian words like she is now.

The video feature on the Treo is great. I actually use it as a replacement for a wide angle lens. If I have a panorama shot, just to give the idea of the great vista I happen to be seeing or some little event... whatever. There simply isn't a video recorder for the G1. People tell me that, since it is open source, it will magically appear. Those people need to get a grip on reality. You see, if your focusing hardware is too slow to get a picture in order, how in the world would it handle a video. Good luck with that.

The email feature on the G1 is really great. I happen to have ditched all my mail servers and host my clients' domains (and my own) with Google Apps. (It is so stable I've never had a single problem.) The G1 goes directly to that mail account and has a nice clear interface for it. It is really fast and it also keeps the mail locally, so if you aren't connected, you can still read your email (which I hadn't expected). The Treo's email is a bit harder to read, you certainly don't get the speed or level of quality, but it was OK for me. Still, if you do a little bit of emailing from the Treo, you'll do a lot from a G1. It is very intuitive and quite a bit faster than pulling out your laptop.

The battery life is really annoying. I never really realized it, but the Treo has a simply awesome battery life. When we were in Milan for 3 months, I had a 680 and my wife had a blackberry. Her's was always dead and mine was never dead – even though I'd forget to charge it for days at a time. Just the background services on the blackberry made it die. (she also has a Treo at home and HATED that blackberry) The G1 is better, but you really do need to charge it every night. There is really a lot going on, with wireless, and GPS and other data synchronization services, but still, it would be nice to have a bit more time. I'd certainly be willing to take another couple ounces to get it.

Along the same lines, the battery... Ummmm... nope. It is internal. I always keep an extra battery for my 650 in my laptop bag. It has saved me many times when out on the road or stuck using my treo to get online (something I'll get to in a second). I've actually been through 3 650s (Not the treo's fault, I'm a bit hard on them and so is my toddler!). I keep the batteries so it is quite nice. With this G1, I don't even have that option. I've got to keep a power supply in my laptop bag, so if I'm in the middle of nowhere on roaming (which is a battery killer), with the G1 I'd be running around with a bunch of wires looking for a plug. Better hope I'm not on the side of the road with a dead car in death valley.

Here is a big killer for me that probably won't affect 99.999% of you. VNC. This is a remote desktop application that lets me log into a server or workstation remotely. Let me give you an example: About 6 months ago, I had a client's website crash. I handle inventory systems, so suddenly, they couldn't rent anything because they couldn't tell what was in stock. Uh Oh. I was in (no lie) Alaska. On a bus. Literally in the middle of nowhere...but I happened to have a signal as we passed into a small town. I got the call, logged into a workstation and watched them typing in the main interface, then I logged into the server, reset SQL Server, found the bug, changed a procedure, ran the update and then even rebooted the machine. My client never even knew I was out of town. The G1 doesn't have that.

Now, there are a couple geeks out there "working on it", and I'm sure it will be coming, but if you need certain applications, you'd better check first. Nobody is paying these kids to get things done on a timeline, so check first.

Other applications, however, are extremely cool. I just installed "ShopSavvy". Wow. You point the camera lens at a barcode on a product (after waiting for the (%\$&(\$@ to focus) and it actually looks up prices of the product at other locations and online, then, since it has GPS, it will actually give you nearby locations where you can get it and exactly how to get there. – pretty neat. It actually works fairly well, although about 1 in 5 products I've played with don't show up. However, it is one of those things that grows over time, so I give it 5 stars. Still, Cool, but not necessary (and probably a batter killer if you play too much)

Now, there is also Instant Messaging, YouTube and a plethora of other features, but I really don't spend too much time playing. My Treo is really focused on Work, not shopping, playing around with IM friends, playing on YouTube. Whatever. If I want to do that sort of thing I'll do it on my laptop.

Memory is also a problem for me. Now, the real problem is the MicroSD slot. I admit, this isn't an issue for most newer Treo owners, but those of us who have normal old-fashioned 650's and similar that use normal SD cards, well, it sure is nice to be able to jam that card into a normal camera. I've also got a Toshiba Portege (Very nice machines, this is my 3rd), which comes with a SD slot. I really love it. I really don't want to have to keep a microSD converter in it. Blech. More tiny little things to lose. Still, I can deal with that. I just wish I didn't have to look at the 5 little 2gig cards I have know I'll not be able to use them in the G1. Still, that's not going to be an issue for most people.

Maps are another nice thing. The 650 and the 680 can display maps, but not very quickly and I've had very poor results. The G1 is pretty hot. you can see exactly where you are and the maps are very quick. The directions features...well, it is very similar to the iPhone and frankly I don't see the Treo ever keeping up simply due to the screen size. I was driving and following the map on the phone at the same time. No problem. Not going to happen with a Treo. So, not exactly necessary, but pretty nice.

Oh,yeah, I didn't try this on a Treo, but "street view". Wow. I've had great luck using this. Finding something in a city is really easy if you can pop open your phone, type in your target address and see a picture of the building you're looking for. I can't imagine that the Treo can do that very well. The G1 handles it in a snap. I'd guess the iPhone can do the same, but I didn't try it.

Here is a big one that may do it for a Treo user. Contacts:

Hmmmm... It doesn't look good. Now, I've actually ditched Outlook altogether in favor of Gmail. I know, there are benefits, but outlook isn't my primary contact source anymore. It took me a while, but...well, there it is. Your contacts on the G1 are connected to the online contacts in your Gmail account (or hosted domain account). So, when I make a change, add a contact, whatever, it is no different than typing it online. There simply is no need to sync. Now, with my Treo, I have to admit, I tended to use it as a machine in it's own light, not some phone that needed to be sync'd each day. I only ran the sync when I felt the need to back it up. That's not the case with most people. Honestly, I've no idea how well it will handle a sync. What I do know is that you'll need to get some kind of cable that doesn't come with it. Maybe Google will have an app that does a sync or one of the geeks programming Android will break down and make a Microsoft Outlook interface. All I know is that you'd better check on the progress before you ditch your Treo. The same goes for the Calendar features. For me, it's a non-issue, since I don't use those.

The final thing that may be a killer for me personally is the T-Mobile service itself. I live in San Francisco and I can't get service in my own bedroom. What's up with that? Sprint can do it. My Verizon phone can. T-Mobile... hmmm. They actually have this modem/repeater gadget that makes your home totally T-Mobile accessible. It's great...if you don't use the G1, since it isn't compatible with that tool! On the other hand, the Fave-5 feature is great, since I really only ever keep 2 or 3 clients at any given time. It's cut my minutes in half. I'm really not too concerned about the bed-room, but going to have to see how it performs in other places.

There are lots of other features that G1 fanatics will go on and on about, but in reality, if you like your Treo, these are probably the main things that concern you (along with a few that probably don't). Honestly, I'm still a bit undecided. I've still got that 680 and my 650 is getting muled across the planet by a flight-attendant friend. I've got about 10 days left on the "trial" period, but I think I may keep it – and keep the Treo!