

**April Newsletter 2012**

**Vol. 5 No. 4**

The Southwest Computer Conference is coming up in May. It is held at the Town and Country Resort in San Diego, so the weather is usually good.

Judy Tylour, the conference leader, has a lot of contacts in the computer industry and calls on them to sponsor the activities. Vendors do presentations, bring goodies, and provide the meals. All platforms are covered, so if you have a MAC, there will be goodies and door prizes you can use. The door prizes are free, and everybody gets at least one. They also have a raffle for specific prize packages. You get a lot more in value than the \$75 registration fee.

The breakout sessions cover a wide range of topics. Many of them are repeated, but I always end up wanting to be in two places at once anyway. Last year there was a hands on photography workshop led by Rick Edwards. It was done in two sessions—one for the photo shoot and one for the editing/critique. Rick also had many of his photos available at the vendor fair.

Rick is an associate of The Royal Photographic Society who perfected his photography while living in Nairobi Kenya watching wildlife in the many parks in Kenya. During his last two years of his stay in Kenya he became the official photographer for the Kenya Wildlife Service. His work can be seen in numerous brochures, magazines and books on wildlife and his beloved Kenya.

Besides the photography Rick also writes articles on wildlife that accompany his images.

Rick uses both Nikon and Cannon equipment with lenses up to 600mm f4 and spends countless hours with each animal or bird to get the images he requires, sometimes spending months with a particular subject.

Last year's trip to the Microsoft store was a lot better than I thought it would be. They have a classroom area for training and presentations. They gave us small goodie bags at the end and

turned us loose in the store to play with the gadgets. It will definitely be in my schedule again this year. I hope to fit the Sony store in also. It wasn't part of my tour last year. Tours are scheduled on Thursday and Friday before the start conference officially starts.

This Sunday I will be leaving for Spokane, WA. Their Bloomsday 12K race is held the first Sunday in May. They have an Expo for two days before the race. I volunteer for it and then walk the race. One year we pushed my Mom in a wheelchair. She had walked it before and wanted to be in it one more time. My sister and her family live in Spokane, so I will also be doing some visiting. It seems like only yesterday that her youngest son was starting grade school. Now he is in college and is the tallest person in the family. At six foot three he definitely towers over me.

At this time two weeks ago I was wondering if I should even try to make the trip. My bursitis came back with a vengeance after not bothering me for over 25 years. I can't take the anti-inflammatory drugs anymore or any of the pain medicine (like aspirin) that could calm it down. Laying down hurt too much, so I was sleeping sitting up and not getting much rest. I was about ready to throw in the towel when a friend told me about DMSO. You get it at the feed store. I put it on and fifteen minutes later I could move my arm without pain. To me it was like a miracle. I could even squeeze and prod my shoulder without hurting.

Vets have known about it for years and the FDA has approved it for one bowel problem. It is a very good solvent that can be used to deliver medication through tough barriers like toenails. Your skin needs to be clean because it will take anything into your body when you use it. You also need to be sure your skin is dry before putting on clothing or your skin will be wearing the dye until it grows out. As I said, it is a very efficient solvent. From what I read it can even dissolve some arthritic bone deposits..

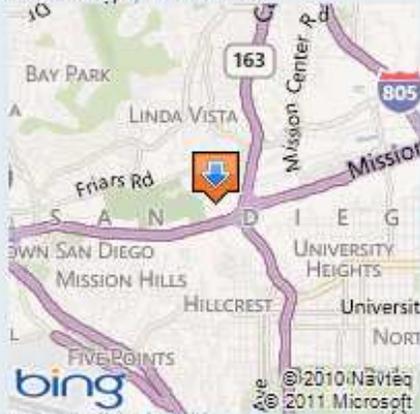
—Beth



## Southwest Technology & Computer Conference Enhance Your Life with Technology

### Where:

\*\*\*Town and Country Resort &  
Convention Center  
500 Hotel Circle North  
San Diego, CA 92108



To see past conferences  
and session topics  
Visit their website

[www.theswcc.org](http://www.theswcc.org)

### Save the Date

Make sure your 2012 plans include attending the 19th annual SW conference, June 22-24. We look forward to seeing you in San Diego.

We have lots of exciting new ideas for the conference this year including mini hands-on workshops.

Abby Stokes will be one of our Keynote Speakers on Friday, she has just released her new book and is traveling around the United States giving interviews.

### Important Dates

Digital Photo Contest Deadline - 5/11/12  
Early Bird Registration Ends - 5/21/12  
Hotel Conference Rate Through - 5/26/12  
Apple, Microsoft, Sony Store Tours - 6/21/12

Register at [www.theswcc.org/registration/registration](http://www.theswcc.org/registration/registration)

### Conference Registration Fees

- ◇ \$75 if received by May 21, 2012
- ◇ \$100 if received after May 21, 2012

#### Fees Include:

- ◇ All Speakers/Events
- ◇ Breakout Sessions
- ◇ Vendor EXPO
- ◇ Most Meals
- ◇ Door Prizes/Raffles
- ◇ Photo Contest
- ◇ Welcome Bag
- ◇ Apple, Microsoft, Sony Store Tour

#### Hotel Includes:

- ◇ Special \$99 Room Rate
- ◇ Special \$4 Parking Rate
- ◇ Pools (3) & Jacuzzi
- ◇ Relaxed Casual Location
- ◇ Garden Setting
- ◇ Conference Wi-Fi (free)
- ◇ Discounted in-room Wi-Fi rate
- ◇ Extended Special Rate Days

## In Search of a Smartphone Part Three: Carriers and Cost

By Kevin, WorldStart Staff Member

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In this, the third in a series chronicling the search for a smartphone, we'll examine providers and plans. The first article covered smartphone basics; the second looked at security. Having never owned a smartphone—or even a decent cell phone—research for this series has been an eye-opener. Due to my lack of experience in most things mobile, it's likely that mistakes will occur, or important information will be overlooked. Please feel free to offer criticism or comments.

Smartphone plans were probably the most baffling issues encountered in this search, as the plans—on the surface at least—appeared to be inexplicably complex. But, overall comparisons revealed few significant differences in price (at least for the individual plan I'm considering). There are three basic items found in the plans; voice, messaging, and data. The least expensive individual plans from most of the providers are roughly the same price; between \$70.00 and \$80.00 per month. So, not including the price of the phone itself, insurance, and other collateral costs, you're looking at a minimum cost of \$1800.00-\$2000.00 over a two year period. No doubt a hefty sum. But, a family plan, where multiple phones can be added, may offer a discount price per phone. Or, if a friend or family member already has a family plan, you might consider piggybacking onto theirs.

For those unfamiliar with data plans, they're designed to enable web browsing, email, etc. via high-speed networks. Depending on the carrier, a data plan may be required. These plans are sold in packages of MB (megabytes) or GB (gigabytes) and the conventional wisdom is that a customer should purchase somewhat more than they expect to use, with at least 2GB recommended. However, data plan usage can be conserved by connecting to the web over an available Wi-Fi network, rather than through the provider's network.

Here are links to the individual plans from a few of the major providers;

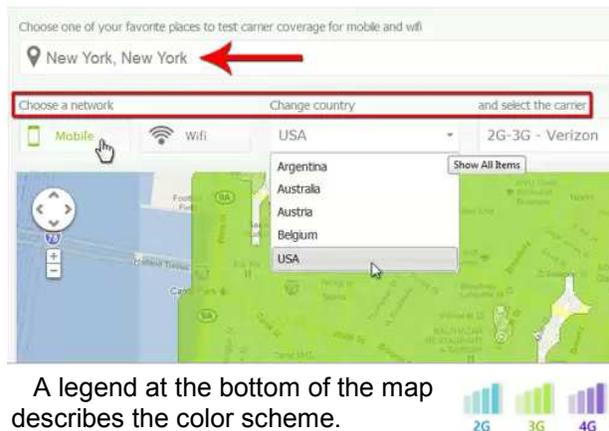
Verizon, <http://www.verizonwireless.com/b2c/plans/?page=single>



Sprint, [http://shop.sprint.com/mysprint/zipcode\\_intercept.jsp;jsessionid=FA5572822E5D4E2E99FC933EB34CF987.shop6?redirectURL=http%3A%2F%2Fshop.sprint.com%2Fmysprint%2Fshop%2Fplan%2Fplan\\_wall.jsp%3FtabId%3Dpt\\_individual\\_tab%26flow%3DAAL%26planFamilyType%3Dnull%26requestid=32327](http://shop.sprint.com/mysprint/zipcode_intercept.jsp;jsessionid=FA5572822E5D4E2E99FC933EB34CF987.shop6?redirectURL=http%3A%2F%2Fshop.sprint.com%2Fmysprint%2Fshop%2Fplan%2Fplan_wall.jsp%3FtabId%3Dpt_individual_tab%26flow%3DAAL%26planFamilyType%3Dnull%26requestid=32327)  
T-Mobile, <http://www.t-mobile.com/shop/plans/individual-plans.aspx>  
and AT&T [http://www.wireless.att.com/cell-phone-service/get-started/index.jsp?q\\_returnUrl=/cell-phone-service/cell-phone-plans/individual-cell-phone-plans.jsp%3F\\_requestid%3D15227](http://www.wireless.att.com/cell-phone-service/get-started/index.jsp?q_returnUrl=/cell-phone-service/cell-phone-plans/individual-cell-phone-plans.jsp%3F_requestid%3D15227)

Price is certainly important, but service deserves attention as well. For example, some providers may offer better coverage for your area than others. Several of the providers offer their own coverage maps, but there are also some from (apparently) neutral sources. Sensorly (<http://sensorly.com/>) is one and Root Metrics (<http://reviews.cnet.com/cell-phone-coverage-map/?tag=contentMain;contentBody>) is another.

The Root Metrics map is pretty straightforward, but Sensorly has a slight learning curve. At Sensorly, which uses Google Maps, click the Coverage Maps link.



A legend at the bottom of the map describes the color scheme.

Of course, like everything else in this series, service needs are user-specific. My own lack of experience guarantees that my phone will be purchased locally where, if questions or problems arise (as they almost certainly will), I'll be able to receive more personal service than an online vendor might offer.

In the next article, we'll take a look at phones... finally.

# THE IMPORTANCE OF TRACKING PRICES AFTER YOU BUY

By Rick Broida

April 6, 2012

<http://news.cnet.com/cheapskate>



True story. A couple weeks ago I purchased a Sigmac LE55ABD 55-inch HDTV from Wal-Mart for \$899. That being a particularly good deal on a 55-inch TV with 3D, my intention was to write about it -- but the model has been out of stock since I received it, so I've held off.

Of course, I've been checking Wal-Mart's site almost daily because I'm keen to write my review. (Wal-Mart is currently the only store that stocks this model.) Yesterday, I discovered that the LE55ABD was still unavailable -- but the price had dropped to \$549. That's a difference of \$350.

Whoa. Whoa, whoa, whoa. I don't know why Wal-Mart massively cut the price of a product that isn't even available, but you can bet I went racing to my local store, receipt in hand. (I'd also printed the Web page, just in case they needed hard-copy proof of the price drop.)

Turns out that because I'd purchased the TV via Walmart.com, I had to "file my claim" on the Web site (even though I'd actually picked up the Sigmac from the store). So I hurried home and contacted customer service about the discrepancy.

My expectations were low. Surely Wal-Mart would claim that because the model was out of stock or discontinued or whatever, no adjustment was applicable. Or, more likely, the \$549 price was a mistake (because that would be an off-the-charts good deal).

What happened was this: a couple hours after I submitted the online form, I received a credit for \$371 (which factored in sales tax). Wow.

The irony is that if I hadn't been checking Wal-Mart's site, I'd never have discovered the price drop. And that brings us to the moral of our story: whenever you buy a big-ticket item (or, heck, even a medium-ticket item), keep checking the price. If it gets reduced, you might just be able to get some money back.

Indeed, many retail stores offer a price guarantee, meaning if the advertised price of a product drops within a certain period after you've purchased it, they'll credit you the difference. A handful of e-tailers do, too, most notably Buy.com -- but Amazon.com, Newegg, and TigerDirect do not.

Don't fancy the idea of checking a Web site every day for two weeks or longer? You can set up a price-drop alert at a site like PricePinx ([www.pricepinx.com](http://www.pricepinx.com)), which monitors prices and sends you an e-mail notification if and when they change.

In my case, there was a heavy helping of dumb luck. Your mileage will vary, of course, but I'm forever convinced that after-the-fact price checking is essential, especially for bigger items like PCs and TVs.

## About Rick Broida

Rick Broida, a technology writer for more than 20 years, is the author of more than a dozen books. In addition to writing CNET's The Cheapskate blog, he contributes to CNET's iPhone Atlas. Rick is a member of the CNET Blog Network and is not an employee of CBS Interactive. Deals found on The Cheapskate are subject to availability, expiration, and other terms determined by sellers.

## A note about tracking cookies

This is an informative note the site provides for first time visitors — Beth

Some of the advertisers and Web analytics firms used on this site may place "tracking cookies" on your computer. We are telling you about them right upfront, and we want you to know how to get rid of these tracking cookies if you like.

Tracking cookies are small text files that can tell such companies what you are doing online, even though they usually don't record your name or other personally identifiable information. These cookies are used by these companies to try and match ads to a user's interests. They are used all

At [www.allthingsd.com](http://www.allthingsd.com)

over the Web, but in most cases, their presence is only disclosed deep inside privacy policies.

We want you to know how to get rid of these tracking cookies if you like. Here are links to pages where you can manage the cookies set by some of the third parties that help us deliver online advertising:

The Wall Street Journal Digital Network Registry, powered by BlueKai

<http://www.google.com/privacy/ads/>

<http://www.omniture.com/privacy/2o7>

If you would like more information about this practice or to opt out of having this information used by third-party ad servers that are part of the Network Advertising Initiative to provide targeted ads, please visit: [http://www.networkadvertising.org/managing/opt\\_out.asp](http://www.networkadvertising.org/managing/opt_out.asp).

We'd prefer a totally opt-in system, but, as far as we know, the ad industry doesn't have a practical one as of now.

If you want to clean out all tracking cookies from all your Web sites, here are links where you can download three programs that can clean out tracking cookies:

- [http://www.lavasoftusa.com/products/ad-aware\\_se\\_personal.php](http://www.lavasoftusa.com/products/ad-aware_se_personal.php)
- <http://www.spybot.info/en/download/index.html>
- <http://www.webroot.com/consumer/products/spysweeper/>

You can also change the preferences or settings in your Web browser to control cookies. In some cases, you can choose to accept cookies from the primary site, but block them from third parties. In others, you can block cookies from specific advertisers, or clear out all cookies.

Not all cookies are tracking cookies. Like most other Web sites, ours may place cookies on your computer, in addition to any placed by advertisers. But ours aren't "tracking cookies." They merely do things like save your registration information, if you choose to register. They do not tell us what you do or where you go online.

This policy will always be available at: [allthingsd.com/trackingcookies/](http://allthingsd.com/trackingcookies/)

— Walt & Kara

This notice is intended to appear only the first time you visit the site on any computer.

## **Amanda's Cool Site** — By Amanda, WorldStart Staff Member

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PearlTrees

Welcome to pearltrees - a site that gives you the tools to cultivate your interests online! I discovered this site while looking for ways to manage my bookmarked and favorited sites. As you can imagine, I have a ton of them. I thought it would be nice to be able to organize them into easily accessible categories like video games, knitting, crocheting, literature, history, music, etc. At the end of my search I was at Pearl Trees and more than ready to give it a whirl.

To start your visit at pearltrees, I'm going to recommend that you watch the video on the main page, which will show you how it works and explain the basic premise of the site and its functionality. Then I'd suggest that you click the Prefer to See Some Nice Examples of Pearltrees? link, which will whisk you away to interactive examples you can click through to get a real feel for how the site works. Notice that you can not only explore the circles on the page and open the content linked to them, but you can also click on the arrows in each direction to open up more pearltrees to explore.

After clicking through the examples and exploring the pearltrees you'll have a good idea if this is a site you'll use to manage and organize your favorite content on the web. IF you've decide to take the plunge and join pearltrees, registration is easy!

Back on the main page there is a registration form that you'll fill out by creating a username and pass-

word, (and providing a working e-mail address). You can also use your Facebook, Twitter, or Google accounts to login. If you use Facebook, Twitter, or Google. You'll sign in with that account and be presented with a form to fill in other details. I chose to edit my username at this point. Click the next buttons to navigate through the rest of the account setup steps.

After you've created your account you'll have the opportunity to watch a few videos on how to use the site and if you're using Internet Explorer you can download Pearler - an extension that will let you add websites to your pearltrees as you browse the internet. You'll just click the pearltree button when you're on a page you want to add and then select where you want your new pearl to go! It is that simple!

This site (and the pearler option) is going to make it so easy for me to get all of my bookmarked and favorited sites in order. Go check it out today!

[www.pearltrees.com](http://www.pearltrees.com)

### Smart Computing Tip Of The Day

#### **Give Your Camera A Little Shade**

If you notice rainbow-like artifacts in your outdoor pictures, your camera is picking up flare from the sunlight. Try a lens hood, which can attach to your DSLR lens. It will shield the lens from the sun and can improve your daylight shots.

## Is cellular broadband more secure than WiFi?

By Leo Notenboom  
Leo (at) ask-leo.com

<http://ask-leo.com/newsletter.html>

**Q** - I recently upgraded to a Blackberry with "National Broadband Access". I can now connect my Blackberry to my laptop and get internet access almost anywhere. The salesperson said it will be more secure to use, even in places that offer WiFi. Is it more secure?

**A** - Yes.

That's not to say that there aren't risks (and even costs) involved, but by-and-large, data connectivity through the cellular network is, as a practical matter, more secure than open WiFi.

In part, though, that's really a reflection of just how insecure open WiFi really is.

The difference, from a security point of view, is simply this: anyone with a WiFi enabled computer has what they need to be a hacker. There's no special equipment needed, and the software required is free, open source and easily available for download. It's even above board, as there are many legitimate uses for this kind of sniffing software.

The result is that anyone can use almost any laptop to sit in a corner of an open WiFi hotspot and sniff the traffic.

With cellular based systems such as that used with your Blackberry, the situation isn't nearly as simple. The biggest obstacle is that you need additional special equipment to start sniffing. You'll also need to be able to decrypt the data as it is encrypted.

Now, neither of those are particularly difficult. I'm sure that the hardware needed is available on the internet (isn't everything?). The encryption isn't particularly secure either, having been developed many years ago when cellular phones didn't have the computational horsepower necessary for today's more secure alternatives.

In other words, it takes some extra steps and expenses to start hacking the cellular network, but it's possible.

However, given the ubiquity of open WiFi, the fact that you don't need special equipment, and the general lack of security employed by most people sitting in that hotspot, the open WiFi scenario is simply a much, much bigger and easier

target to go after.

Now if you, specifically, are being targeted - say as part of some corporate espionage - perhaps it becomes worth it for the hacker to invest in that additional technology. But if you're just an average user, cellular, coupled with a firewall and generally good internet behavior on your part, gets you all the security you typically need.

I mentioned costs above, and there are several tradeoffs to be aware of.

You're paying extra, monthly, for that data plan on your Blackberry. You could, instead, pay extra, perhaps even less, to a service such as HotSpotVPN to be secure in those open WiFi hotspots. This would actually be more secure than either WiFi alone or cellular, and you could even use the service over your cellular connection should you feel the need. (If you're sufficiently geeky, there are also free alternatives that are typically more cumbersome to set up and use.)

You may pay a price in speed. My experience is that cellular broadband is almost always slower than WiFi. Granted, that really depends a lot on where you are with cellular and what your provider provides, as well as how big an internet connection that WiFi access point is connected to and how many other people are using it while you do. But as I said, in my experience speed tends to favor the WiFi alternatives.

You may pay a price in location. With WiFi you need to locate a hotspot. Yep, it seems like they're everywhere, and more are appearing every day. With cellular, however, as long as you're in range of a cell tower, you have connectivity.

And on a final note, lest you think that plugging into a wall socket for hardwired ethernet connectivity, let me remind you that Wired connections can also be as dangerous as wifi. Often overlooked, wired connections, particularly in hotels, share almost all the risks of open Wifi hotspots.



**Ask Leo!**<sup>®</sup>  
by  
**Leo Notenboom**