

Nokia E61 smartphone

Can Nokia offer a viable alternative to the BlackBerry?

by Stuart Miles published on 26 October 2006

Nokia, not content with dominating the consumer mobile phone market with models like the N70, has decided that it wants a piece of the business email pie as well. But can the Finnish company really offer a true alternative to the BlackBerry?

The Nokia E61 isn't designed like any Nokia phone you've seen before. Lacking any swishes or flashes of crazy design, Nokia has developed and made a handset which is fairly boring to look at and business users will be pleased to hear devoted to doing the job at hand.

There is no digital camera, no fancy new fangled number pad options and no material label as found on the company's fashion phone range. Instead, the front of the phone, which measures 117 x 70 x 14mm and weighs 144g, is dominated by the large 2.8-inch landscape display with a resolution of 320 x 240 pixels and a full QWERTY keyboard as found on the more business focused BlackBerry handsets.

The keyboard is tight and compact with rounded buttons more like a Palm Treo than the flat keyboard found on a BlackBerry, but overall we found it fairly easy to use and certainly better than the Sony Ericsson M600 with its dipped rocking keys launched earlier this year.

Other hardware features include wireless and 3G connectivity as well as 75 megabytes of free internal storage memory, which can be expanded using miniSD cards - although you'll have to take the back casing off to access the slot. Bluetooth, however not the music sharing A2DP variant, is also included.

Software wise, and it's here that Nokia fans will find themselves with a big smile on their face. The smartphone runs Symbian's Series 60 3rd Edition software and this means that users of any Nokia



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phone should feel right at home.

All the usual features are here including a quick key to access the menu and a today screen so you can see what is happening and whether or not you've got email. As expected, there is a strong emphasis on email with the E61 even providing a hardware quick key just below the screen.

The phone supports either dial-in email options where you manually connect to collect your mail from a pop3 account or, surprisingly the option to run BlackBerry's Connect software on the device giving users the option to either connect to BlackBerry's Enterprise solution or to its Internet Service solution in this case offered by T-Mobile.

Other features of note, on the model we tested was T-Mobile's Web'n'Walk service and the phone's 3G and wireless g capabilities mean that surfing the Internet, including Pocket-lint, as long as you've got a decent reception, is very easy and efficient.

VERDICT

The Nokia E61 is one of many smartphone options available from T-Mobile and it's clear that it's an alternative to the BlackBerry - or the company's own branded Vario range - rather than a replacement.

The real crux of whether you choose the E61 over the BlackBerry or the Treo isn't down to services, as they both offer a similar package, but whether you prefer the screen, the keyboard and the overall look of the hardware.

For us, while Nokia has succeeded in not creating a device that is like its Communicator handset (i.e., a brick) we have to say we do prefer the software interface and keyboard layout of the BlackBerry over the Nokia.

But that isn't to say that a Nokia user wouldn't prefer the software over and above the

At a glance

What is it?

Smartphone

Good

Large crisp screen, full keypad, comes with BlackBerry Connect software

Bad

No digital camera for non business users

Verdict

A solid phone that offers plenty for the business user afraid to leave the comfort of the Nokia interface

Price price dependent on contract

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/1866/Nokia-E61-smart-phone-mobile>

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BlackBerry or Palm offering.

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