

BlackBerry 8820 Smartphone

Can adding Wi-Fi connectivity to the 8800 make this a hit?

by Stuart Miles published on 4 September 2007

A smartphone without Wi-Fi, surely that's like a fish out of water these days, but it has been the case for Research In Motion with the company's BlackBerry handhelds until the launch of its Wi-Fi enabled 8820. So should we bother? We get emailing to find out.

Coming in the same form factor of the company's 8800, you would be mistaken for thinking they are the same thing. In fact there is no tell-tale sign that the model now packs the ability to connect to your local Wi-Fi network via wireless 802.11g and surf the Internet.

The size isn't any bigger, it still measures 11.4 x 6.6 x 1.4cm and weighs 134g with the battery and the keyboard still the same and the now defacto Pearl navigation device still there. Also unchanged is the lack of digital camera and the inclusion of GPS.

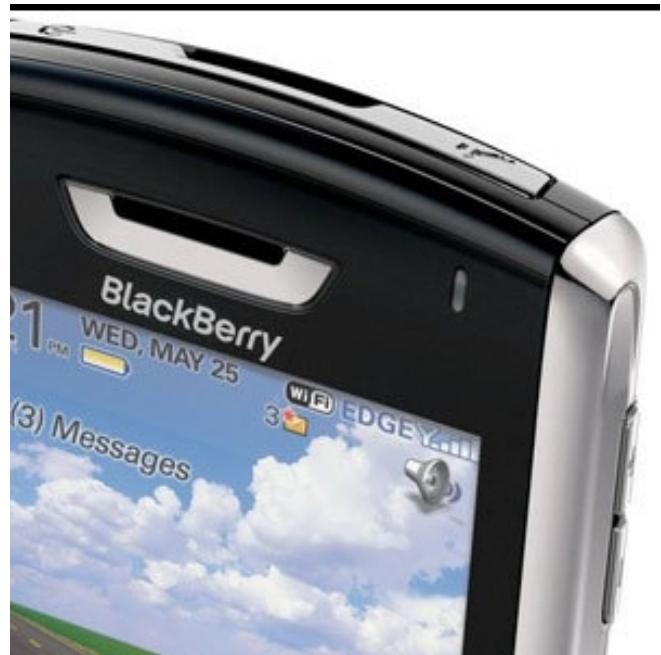
In fact the only difference the 20 on the end of the name makes is wireless access.

So what's it like? Well the Wi-Fi is good and certainly a welcomed addition to the model. In our tests we were able to find wireless networks easily through the setup tool, connect to them and then surf the Internet quickly and easily.

As with the BlackBerry, browser sites are re-organised to fit on the page, rather than shrunk, and we found it especially handy for downloading applications that otherwise would have taken either days on GPRS or cost a fortune on our data package.

So what's the catch? Well there are a number.

The first is that while connected to a the Wi-Fi connection you can't easily get messages or send them if you've got GSM turned off. The model



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doesn't just automatically switch to the Wi-Fi connection to for sending but still relies on the GSM connection to do this bit for you - we aren't sure why, but suspect it's so operators can still charge you for your data usage.

The second is that with such fast internet access when you are in a hotspot, like the Apple iPhone, as soon as you walk away you have to go back to lousy GPRS and its crappy download speeds. It's like driving around a test track in the latest Ferrari and then having to get the bus home and the noticeable difference in speed only helps to show how bad GPRS actually is.

While we welcome the inclusion of Wi-Fi we are puzzled as to why RIM opted to exclude 3G or HSDPA connectivity.

With no digital camera the only other multimedia feature of the 8800 is the built-in GPS. With no improvements to the software we are still disappointed, however if your budget can stretch then we recommend downloading TelMaps and signing up. The service, which is incredibly easy to use and useful in its directions makes the GPS unit a worthwhile add.

Other than that it's business as usual meaning that you'll be addicted to the flashing red light telling you you've got mail every second of the day and in the 2 weeks we've been living with it we've already found ourselves checking our mail at 3am because it's that easy to do.

Other features include Bluetooth 2.0, polyphonic ringtones, media player, headset jack, and video support.

VERDICT

The best way to think of the 8820 is like a software update or patch that refreshes the application and fixes a few bugs along the way.

We aren't going to say that we don't want the wireless connectivity because we do, however we

At a glance

What is it?

Wi-Fi enabled BlackBerry

Good

Styling, Built-in GPS, QWERTY keyboard, Wi-Fi

Bad

No 3G, no camera, GPS software not great, large

Verdict

The best way to think of the 8820 is like a software update or patch that refreshes the application and fixes a few bugs along the way

Price price dependent on contract

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

<http://www.pocket-lint.com/review/2569/blackberry-8820-smartphone-mobile-phone>

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also want HSDPA or at the very least 3G.

Standing in the shop having to make a decision over this or the 8800 and its easy. It's this every time, and we wouldn't be surprised if RIM phase out the 8800 shortly - I mean who wouldn't want Wi-Fi given the choice?

So what's the score? Well the addition of Wi-Fi makes it an 8, but to get 9 we want more from the business-focused mobile phone.