

IBM Simon

The **IBM Simon Personal Communicator** (simply known as **IBM Simon**) was a handheld, touchscreen cellular phone and PDA designed and engineered by International Business Machines Corp. (IBM) and assembled under contract by Mitsubishi Electric Corp. BellSouth Cellular Corp. distributed the Simon Personal Communicator in the United States between August 1994 and February 1995, selling 50,000 units. The Simon Personal Communicator was the first cellular phone to include telephone and PDA features in one device.

1 History

IBM debuted a prototype device, code named "Angler," on November 23, 1992 at the COMDEX computer and technology trade show in Las Vegas, Nevada, United States. The Angler prototype combined a cell phone and PDA into one device, allowing a user to make and receive telephone calls, facsimiles, emails and cellular pages, among other functions. COMDEX show attendees and the press showed notable interest in the device. The day after Angler's debut, *USA Today* featured a photo on the front page of the Money section showing Frank Canova, Angler's architect, holding the prototype.^{[1][5][6]}

BellSouth executives gave the finished product its final name, "Simon Personal Communicator", before its public debut at the Wireless World Conference in November 1993.^[1] BellSouth Cellular had planned to begin selling Simon in May 1994, but due to problems with the device's software, the Simon did not become available to consumers until August 16, 1994. BellSouth Cellular initially offered the Simon throughout its 15 state service area for US\$899 with a two-year service contract or US\$1099 without a contract. Later in the product's life, BellSouth Cellular reduced the price to US\$599 with a two-year contract.^{[2][7]}

BellSouth Cellular sold approximately 50,000 units during the product's six months on the market.^[1]

Although the term "smartphone" was not coined until 1995, because of Simon's features and capabilities, it can be referred to as the first smartphone.^{[1][8][9][10]}

2 Features

In addition to its ability to make and receive cellular phone calls, Simon was also able to send and receive



The IBM Simon Personal Communicator included a custom-fit, protective, leather cover

faxes, e-mails and cellular pages. Simon featured many applications including an address book, calendar, appointment scheduler, calculator, world time clock, electronic note pad, handwritten annotations and standard and predictive stylus input screen keyboards.^[11]

3 Accessories

Each Simon was shipped with a charging base station, two nickel-cadmium batteries and a protective leather cover. Optional was a PCMCIA pager card designed by Motorola, an RS232 adapter cable for use with PC-Link to access files from a personal computer, and an RJ11 adapter cable to allow voice and data calls to be made over POTS land-lines. The RJ11 adapter helped users reduce expensive cellular phone bills or make calls where cellular coverage didn't exist in 1994.

4 Operating system and applications

The Simon used the file system from Datalight ROM-DOS along with file compression from Stacker. IBM created a unique touch-screen user interface for Simon; no DOS prompt existed.^[2] This user interface software layer for Simon was known as the Navigator.^[12]

The Simon could be upgraded to run third party applications either by inserting a PCMCIA card or by downloading an application to the phone's internal memory.

Atlanta, Georgia-based PDA Dimensions developed "DispatchIt", the only aftermarket, third-party application developed for Simon. It was an early predecessor to "Remote Desktop" software.^[13] The DispatchIt application costs were US\$2,999 for the host PC software and US\$299 for each Simon software client.^[14]

5 References

- [1] Sager, Ira (June 29, 2012). "Before iPhone and Android Came Simon, the First Smartphone". *Bloomberg Businessweek*. ISSN 2162-657X. Retrieved June 30, 2012. Simon was the first smartphone. Twenty years ago, it envisioned our app-happy mobile lives, squeezing the features of a cell phone, pager, fax machine, and computer into an 18-ounce black brick.
 - [2] O'Malley, Chris (December 1994). "Simonizing the PDA". *Byte* **19** (12): 145–148. ISSN 0360-5280. Archived from the original on February 21, 1999. Retrieved June 30, 2012. The CPU is a 16-bit x86-compatible processor running at 16 MHz, a single-chip design manufactured by Vadem. Simon runs a version of DOS called ROM-DOS, from Datalight...
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 - [4] "BellSouth: IBM Simon PDA Cellphone". *RetroCom*. RetroCom. Retrieved June 30, 2012. Graphic display: 160 x 293
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 - [7] "IBM's Plans to Ship Simon Put On Hold for Time Being". *Mobile Phone News*. April 4, 1994. ISSN 0737-5077. Retrieved June 30, 2012. Technical issues, resulting from the integration of Simon's cellular faxing capability, were discovered early in the manufacturing and development cycle as IBM's quality assurance testing was being conducted. IBM will hold up shipments of the device until the bugs are worked out.
 - [8] "Ericsson GS88 Preview". Eri-no-moto. 2006. Retrieved December 15, 2011.
 - [9] "Penelope Box". Stockholm Smartphone. 2010. Retrieved December 15, 2011.
 - [10] Savage, Pamela (January 1995). "Designing a GUI for Business Telephone users". Association of Computing Machinery. Retrieved 2014-09-13. ...It is at this point that early usability test participants met impasse. The switch connected to our "smart phone" is expecting the typical "dumb end-point"... AT&T's PhoneWriter was demonstrated at the 1993 Comdex Computer Show...
 - [11] *Simon Says "Here's How!" - Users Manual* (PDF). IBM. 1994. Part Number 83G9872. Archived from the original on July 29, 2013. Retrieved July 29, 2013.
 - [12] US patent 5537608, Brent A. Beatty; Francis J. Canova, Jr. & Charles S. Lanier et al., "Personal communicator apparatus", issued July 19, 1996, assigned to International Business Machines Corporation
 - [13] BellSouth Cellular Corporation (March 9, 1995). "Bellsouth Cellular Corp. Announces DispatchIt™ Software For Simon™ Commercially Available" (Press release). PR Newswire. Retrieved November 22, 2013.
 - [14] Polishuk, Paul, ed. (May 1995). "BellSouth Cellular Corp. Announces DispatchIt Software for Simon". *Wireless Telecommunications Newsletter* **5** (5): 9–10. ISSN 1083-7779. Retrieved June 30, 2010. BellSouth Cellular Corp. (BSCC) and PDA Dimensions...announced the commercial availability of DispatchIt, a work order field service application using Simon, BSCC's personal communicator.
- "Simon". *Buxton Collection*. Microsoft Corporation. 2012. Archived from the original on November 23, 2012. Retrieved November 23, 2012. Simon is the first smartphone. It paved the way for the ones of today by introducing touch screens to phones.
 - "Buxton Collection Sampler" (PDF). *CHI 2011*. ACM SIGCHI. 2011. p. 6. Archived from the original on November 23, 2012. Retrieved November 23, 2012. IBM / Bell South Simon Smartphone: First shown in 1993, this was the world's first so-called 'smart phone'.
 - *The \$899 Prehistoric Predecessor to the iPhone* (FLV) (Web video). Bloomberg. June 28, 2012. Retrieved December 16, 2012. Long before the smartphone revolution, IBM and BellSouth teamed up to build and sell the Simon Personal Communicator, a 1-pound, \$899 mobile phone that ran apps and featured the first touch screen. It lasted just six months after being put on the market in the summer of 1994.

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