

Admits Buzz Testing Sucked and They Are "Very, Very Sorry"

Google has admitted that their Buzz testing process was equivalent to mine: Click enable, then disable it ninety seconds later. They said to the BBC that their testing sucked donkey balls, which is why [many people hate it](#). The excuse:

We're very early in this space. This was one of our first big attempts. We've been testing Buzz internally at Google for a while. Of course, getting feedback from 20,000 Googlers isn't quite the same as letting Gmail users play with Buzz in the wild. If it becomes clear that people don't think we've done enough, we'll make more changes.

That's what Todd Jackson, Buzz product manager, told BBC News. Google only tested this thing internally, and didn't put the service through the Google Trusted Tester program, like they have done with other services in the past. He also admitted that tens of millions of Buzz users were "rightfully upset" and that Google was "very, very sorry." Todd's right, but I don't think all those "tens of millions of Buzz" ex-users would care about the too late apologies. They do care about the privacy problems and the inbox spamming.

Would these users give Google another chance? I doubt it would be soon. And, personally, I doubt there's enough interest for yet another Facebookish Tumbred Twitting clusterfuckassered online service.

Dear Comcast High-Speed Internet Customer,

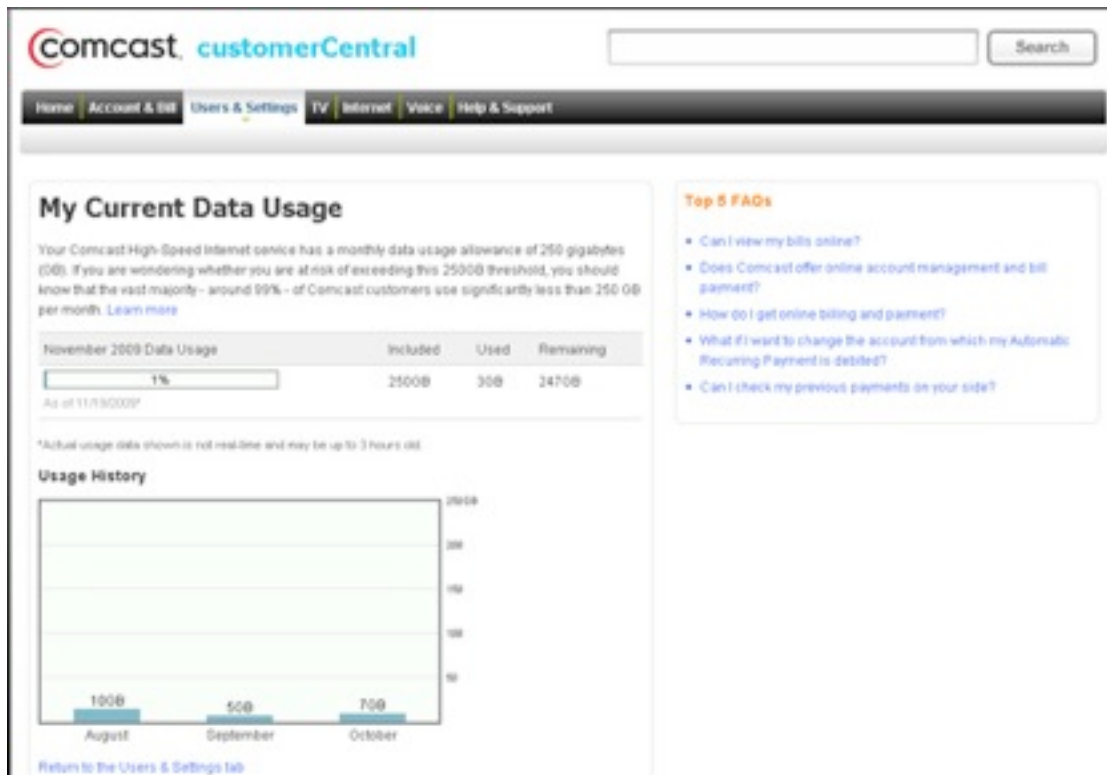
We are pleased to announce the pilot launch of the Comcast Usage Meter in your area. This new feature is available to Comcast High-Speed Internet customers and provides an easy way to check total monthly household high-speed Internet data usage at any time. Monthly data usage is the amount of data, such as images, movies, photos, videos, and other files that customers send, receive, download or upload each month. Comcast measures total data usage and does not monitor specific customer activities to determine data usage.

The current data usage allowance for the Comcast High-Speed Internet service is 250GB per month. This means that the vast majority of our customers – around 99% currently – will not come close to using 250GB of data in a month, and do not need to check the usage meter.

To view your current data usage, please visit <http://customer.comcast.com> and sign in to customerCentral (shown below).

The screenshot shows the Comcast customerCentral website. At the top, there is a search bar and a navigation menu with links for Home, Account & Bill, Users & Settings, TV, Internet, Voice, and Help. The main content area is titled "Welcome to Comcast customerCentral" and includes a "Sign In" button with a red arrow pointing to it. Below this, there are several sections: "My knowledge center" with links for "Save time, Save trees" and "Want to record your favorite show?"; "Did you know?" with links for "Comcast offers the McAfee Security Suite" and "Comcast's Smartbone is your communications headquarters"; "Top 5 FAQs" with links for "How do I make a one-time payment online?", "Can I view my bills online?", "If I signed up for Comcast's E-cobill process, how will I be notified of my monthly bill or that my ebill is available for viewing?", "How do I pay my bill in Comcast Customer Central?", and "How do I cancel automatic payments?"; and "Resources" with links for "Ask Comcast", "Moving?", and "Security Channel".

After signing in, click on the "User & Settings" tab and click again on "View details" under "My devices". The usage meter shows the current calendar month's data usage for your account starting on the 1st of the month. Over time, you will be able to see the previous three months' data usage as shown in the sample image below.



The usage meter is only available to Primary user accounts and Unrestricted Secondary user accounts with billing access.

If you would like to learn more about the usage meter and how it works, please visit <http://networkmanagement.comcast.net/datausagemeter.htm> for more information. Please visit our customer support forums at <http://forums.comcast.net> if you would like to ask us more questions or post comments. You can also click [here](#) to chat with a customer service representative, or call 1-800-COMCAST for assistance.

Thank you for choosing Comcast!

Samsung's About to Own More of the TV Market Than Any Company in 60 Years

Samsung's the biggest TV maker in the world. It beat Sony 4 years ago. But it's getting even bigger. Soon it will pass 20 percent marketshare, which the WSJ points out is "a threshold not reached by any manufacturer since the earliest days of the industry more than 60 years ago." Think about that.

Also interesting! Number two is LG. Together, today, they make over 30 percent of TVs. (They actually make the TVs, too, instead of [outsourcing the crap](#) out of components.) They'll own more than a third of the market soon. Seoulpower. Korea is the new Japan.

Tax and Deduction Software Reviewed and Compared



It is, unfortunately, that time of year again. If you're thinking about buying tax software from TurboTax or H&R Block, or using their free online deduction

tools, the New York Times and Consumer Reports have done the legwork in comparing the two.

The Times considers TurboTax and H&R Block at Home as ease of mind purchases for those with taxes that aren't quite corporate enough to warrant a full-fledged accountant, but not so simple as to require just a few checkboxes. Neither software, however, is a perfect solution:

Before you buy a tax-preparation program, understand that it won't be a panacea. You still have to keep good records – they matter mightily if you're audited – and, in complicated situations, you may need to research tax laws yourself. The software can't tell you whether tuition for your Spanish class is deductible, only that job-related educational expenses might be. What's more, it won't ease the headache you may get by trying to find answers on the I.R.S. Web site. The agency provides reams of guidance, but the rules can be murky for people who muck about with them only occasionally – even pros. Meanwhile, for those with a good number of charitable and other deductions, Consumer Reports tackles the pros and cons of each software provider's free online offerings to help you value and deduct the proper amount for donated goods and resources.

For an in-depth look at what software like TurboTax has over human accountants, and where it falls short, reference Gina's [battle of the human accountant versus TurboTax.com](#).

G launches Skinny Frame plasma HDTVs, hates on bezels

If you needed another reason to not stop believin' in plasma, look to LG. The company is introducing a pair of the sets in its home market of Korea dubbed "Skinny Frame," a reference to the 25mm thin border around the panels -- which honestly isn't mind-blowingly thin, but nobody likes beefy bezels, right? The sets are available in 50- and 60-inch sizes, both offering 600Hz refresh rates, automatic contrast adjustment based on lighting conditions, and the ability to play photos and videos from a connected USB drive. Not bad, but at 1,700,000 and 3,800,000 won (\$1,150 \$1,500 and \$3,325) they're

not cheap, either. Gallery: LG Skinny Frame plasma TVs LG launches Skinny Frame plasma HDTVs.



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Buffalo Kokuyo reveals 4-port USB 3.0 hub, leaves you little choice but to upgrade



Oh c'mon, that [80-port USB 2.0 hub](#) served you well, and frankly, it owes you nothing. With [USB 3.0](#) upon us, it's only a matter of time before every last external HDD, scanner and printer you own is cruising along the SuperSpeed highway, and while that's obviously a gross exaggeration, we've always been one for proactiveness. If you're worried about having the bandwidth to handle the next generation of USB, Japan's own Buffalo Kokuyo has just the thing: a 4-port USB 3.0 hub. The BSH4A03U3 supports Windows and Mac platforms and promises to handle speeds up to 5Gbps, though the ¥ 8,000 (\$89) asking price *does* feel a wee bit steep.

Microsoft Fights Google With Google-Hosted Videos



Yesterday, we saw [Microsoft shamelessly go after the iPhone](#) with a video which played at Mobile World Congress for its new Windows Phone 7 Series. But it's not just Apple that Microsoft is taking on with videos, it's competitors like Google and OpenOffice.org as well.

On the [Microsoft Office Videos channel](#) on YouTube, you'll find a series of videos which find Microsoft aggressively going after its competition. For example, here's one in which [Microsoft Office is compared to Google Apps](#) and specifically, Google's "low-cost" email service. Office, it seems deals with "real world" issues, Google Apps (and specifically Gmail) do not, according to the video.

Microsoft also notes that Google's offering lacks some standard features customers are used to — like copy & paste. Another key selling point: if you choose to use Google Apps, your formatting may be screwed up when you inevitably have to work with others who are using Microsoft Office. When all else fails, turn to [FUD](#).

Another video sees an actual Microsoft employee comparing [Microsoft Outlook with Gmail](#), again for business. The best part of this one is the ominous gray clouds in the background with "Gmail" written across them. Get it?

Microsoft clearly doesn't enjoy seeing companies make the switch to Google's business offerings — and why would they? It's a very real threat to one of their key profit centers: Office. But using these videos to take on Google are humorous for one reason above all else: they're all hosted on the Google-owned YouTube.

Videos

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rcOs-oS_OrE&feature=player_embedded

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eIEwRKWdSA&feature=player_embedded

Switched On: Making it different versus making a difference



How many apps does it take to screw in a light bulb? That was the question facing Microsoft as rival mobile operating systems backed by Apple and Google added tens of thousands of applications giving users stylus-free access to a wide range of capabilities. For a company whose co-founder trumpeted the notion of information at your fingertips, it was a bitter position. The light bulb wasn't screwed, but Microsoft looked as though it was.

Finally, though, the light bulb has turned on, and it has lit a path in the opposite direction from the guiding user interface philosophy that characterized Windows Mobile, née Windows CE, since it powered devices known as Pocket PCs. With its miniature Start menu, menu bars and icons, Windows Mobile had been designed to present a familiar interface to those used to using Windows 95. In this case, however, familiarity bred contempt. As Microsoft's Joe Belfiore repeated several times during his introduction of the new Windows Phone 7 OS, "the phone is not a PC."

But perhaps it might pass for a Zune. As many expected, the gestures, appearance and animations of Microsoft's digital media player were in retrospect a precursor for its new handset user interface. The focus is on the content with few on-screen controls; the design reflects a laudable disdain for lists. Indeed, the Zune's functionality has been integrated directly into Windows Phone, part of the Microsoft services homecoming that has included Xbox Live and Bing, with an update to Microsoft's My Phone services likely in tow.

Beyond the Zune, though, there have been several enhancements; Microsoft's team has artfully scaled Zune interface conventions to support the wide range of applications demanded of the modern smartphone. Key among the new concepts are hubs, which are live centers of interest that seamlessly branch to each other. For example, the People hub branches off to maps, Xbox Live, and social networks, and a Music and Videos hub integrates with streaming services such as Pandora instead of having to return to the device's main screen and relaunch it.

And as it has fled the desktop paradigm in its critical mobile foray, Microsoft has acted like many a convert, eager to show members of its former flock the error of their ways. In this case, the targets were Apple, which was chided for the iPhone's app-centric unitasking that requires frequent launching and in and out of different apps, and the many smartphones and feature phones that have aped the iPhone's appearance.

While its approach is unique, Microsoft is touting many of the same integration messages that we've been hearing from Palm and Motorola.

In contrast, the screens of Windows Phone 7 devices don't look anything like other operating systems, but they won't look much different from other Windows 7 phones. Unlike with previous versions of Windows Mobile, hardware partners will apparently not be able to add their own user interface layers on top of Microsoft's. While this has caused continuity problems in the past, it limits the differentiation an LG Windows Phone can have from a Samsung Windows Phone.

Indeed, while its approach is unique, Microsoft is touting many of the same integration messages that we've been hearing from Palm and Motorola. Those two companies, by the way, represent former licensees that Microsoft has not won back with Windows Phone 7. Other licensees, including HTC, LG and Samsung, are also supporting Android -- and Samsung has revealed its first handset with its homegrown Bada OS. Microsoft also did not attract new licensees like as Kyocera or Nokia, which was adding to the mobile OS clutter at Mobile World Congress by blending its Maemo effort with Intel's Moblin effort under a new MeeGo banner. For now, it appears that Windows Phone 7 hasn't done much to expand Microsoft's partner ecosystem.

Without a doubt, Microsoft will see some short-term lift when the first phones sporting its new operating system hit the market. If there's one thing the past three years have shown us, it's that U.S. operators love to get behind a new smartphone operating systems, leading to big campaigns behind the iPhone, T-Mobile G1, and Palm Pre. And this new Microsoft operating system is different enough to serve that role.

Beyond that, though, a different reality may set in. While the Zune was arguably later to a market dominated by others than Windows Phone 7, Microsoft's revamped user experience was not enough to change its fortunes in the media player space. And for all Microsoft's talk about the tighter integration among hardware, software, and services that it has fostered with new Windows Phones, it controls the complete experience with the Zune device.

Windows Phone Series 7 is different from its predecessors, it's different from the iPhone, and it's different from desktop Windows, But different doesn't always mean better. Microsoft's burden is to prove that its visual distinction and smooth integration outweigh the advantages of market leaders.