

My Dumb-to-Smart Phone Transition

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It has been a few years since this essay was first written. As with other modern technology, the content is already dated and may be retired soon.

Recently, I purchased [Karma Go](#) (WiFi hotspot without credit expiration). It is working well and serves most of my remote WiFi connection needs for all of our portable WiFi-dependent devices. So, there is no more need for phone company's data services, even for an emergency.

I still use my Nokia C6-01. Not being an Android or iPhone, it is limited in terms of the availability of apps. This is certainly a big issue, but I have adjusted to live with it. I am still attracted by its easy USB-connectivity to synchronize various files with my PC. My wife uses her Samsung, now on AT&T's prepaid \$30/month plan (unlimited talk/text), except for the summer months when she switches to the 10c/min plan.

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Introduction

I finally replaced my old-fashioned dumb phone with a so-called smart phone. However, my situation does not warrant an expensive monthly plan *with data*, normally required for the purchase of a smart phone at major wireless outlets. So, here is what I did.

Background: The Dumb Phone Era

I don't use my cell phone so much. However, I do need it for occasional conversation with my family/friends and for also emergency. So, in 2006, after years of subscribing a monthly plan, I switched to [T-Mobile's Pay-As-You-Go plan](#) with a very basic Nokia 6010 (for about \$50 then). At that point, I invested \$100 to get [Gold Rewards status](#). This refill would last for one year, which is pretty good. In addition, thanks to the Gold Rewards status, if I refill at least \$10 just before it expires, the expiration for the entire amount (including the previous refills) will extend for another year. *Note that this may need to be through my on-line account management area, not through a refill card, etc.* For the past six years, I normally added just \$10 a year, except for one time when I added \$50. Adding

smaller amounts is not cost effective in terms of the cost/minute ratio. However, when there are a plenty of minutes left, there is no point of spending more than necessary. So, the total cost of using my old-fashioned cell phone for occasional calls for six years was about \$250 in total, or a little more than \$40/year or about \$3.5/month. In comparison, my wife was spending about \$47 a month (AT&T 450), or over \$3,300 for the same six-year period. But she uses the phone for work and would not be comfortable dealing with the complications associated with the Pay-As-You-Go plan.

Even with this old phone, I was able to handle SMS/text and even e-mail messages to some extent. I set up e-mail forwarding (selectively) as SMS text messages through my e-mail account using a [sieve filter](#). This arrangement is extremely useful for receiving emergency information, for example, from the school district and to know when someone (on our white list) leaves a message on our home phone. By the way, our home phone is a [Magic Jack](#) and voice messages come as e-mail. Relatively recently, I also learned that there is a free SMS-to-Email gateway (World-Text.com, <http://www.world-text.com/services/emailgw/smstoemail.php>). As a result, I was also able to send e-mail through my old phone, albeit in a very limited way.

In addition to my cell phone, I was usually carrying a Windows Mobile 6 pocket computer ([HP iPaq 111](#)) as a scheduler and also to view/edit certain documents (mainly, .rtf and .xls files). The content/files are synchronized with Outlook 2002 and files on my home computer (Windows 7). Occasionally, when available, I used iPaq's WiFi to check e-mail and web browsing on the road. Also occasionally, I used my iPaq for reading e-Books and listening to audio books.

For my life style, this dumb phone/iPaq combination had been acceptable. However, the quality of my phone battery was deteriorating and I started to think about consolidating the two. Of course, this is what many people have already been doing. In 2011, I bought my wife a Windows 6.5 smart phone ([HTC Imagio](#)) exactly for that reason. Well, she "breaks" gadgets more often than I do and so, she usually has more opportunities to try out new things. Now, finally, it is my turn to try a smart phone of some sort.

Transition to a Smart Phone: Carrier, Plan, and Handset Choice

If we commit two years to a major wireless carrier's monthly plan, we could get a smart phone fairly inexpensively. However, the purchase of a smart phone from them requires us to subscribe to a data plan, which is expensive and overkill for me. Alternatively, we could subscribe to a prepaid monthly plan. Many resalers, e.g., [Straight Talk](#), [TracFone](#), [Simple Mobile](#), [Boost Mobile](#), offer such plans as well, usually at a much better rate. Still, I am not inclined to commit even that kind of monthly recurring charge. I just don't use phone as much and data is not essential, although it would be nice to have the capability *occasionally*. So, I decided to stay with my current T-Mobile's Pay-As-You-Go plan.

Since I am going to use my existing T-Mobile SIM card, I need an unlocked GSM phone. After buying an unlocked HTC for my wife, I became quite comfortable with unlocked phones. At first, I considered Windows 7 phones such as Samsung Focus I917/Flash and Nokia Lumia 710. However, after reading reviews, I realized that Windows 7 phones no longer support direct USB connection between the

phone and Outlook. There seems to be no file synchronization mechanism either. It is a big change from Windows 6.5 (e.g., my wife's HTC Imagio), with which USB synchronization was straightforward. So, Windows phones are out. Instead, I chose [unlocked Nokia C6-01](#). It is a small phone, but I like it that way (even a large phone is too small for document viewing any way). Even though it runs Symbian, it seems to have the most functional and straightforward synchronization capability between the phone and Outlook as well as files over USB, among the current options. I am aware that Symbian is no longer maintained (although C6-01 can be updated to Nokia/Symbian Belle). But this phone will be a temporary solution any way. In a few years, the cell phone market could be radically different. Nokia C6-01 was attractive also because of its reasonably good camera (according to the reviews) and offline GPS (i.e., use without data subscription).

Just before Thanksgiving, I bought a used/returned unit sold as "Amazon Warehouse deals" at \$116. It came with a 30-day return policy, the same as for a new unit. Although I would not like the experience of returning purchased items, this guarantee was a peace of mind. Earlier this year, I purchased a refurbished Windows 7 desktop PC through [Dell Outlet](#). It was a good deal and a good experience. So, for those who are not concerned about minor scratches or not being packaged in the original box and are confident about dealing with other potential issues, this can be a good deal. New units were being sold at \$159 at that time.

The unit I received was in a small shipping box wrapped in paper, i.e., not in the original box. I tried to identify any scratches or damages; I found none. However, I noticed that the micro SD card was missing. The package was supposed to contain 2GB micro SD; according to some reviewers, they actually received 4GB. I notified this issue to Amazon and received a 20% refund. Later on, I purchased a 8GB micro SD card at Staples for \$5.99 (their sale item then). So, the cost of the phone with a micro SD turned out to be below \$100. But I would eventually get a 32GB micro SD card.

Even during the first few weeks, I started to like it. So, I didn't need to return it! It is small enough to carry in a pant pocket. Even if I sit, I don't need to worry about bending/breaking the phone. It feels almost like a pocket rock. Still, it is amazingly functional as: phone, scheduler, camera, GPS, music/video player, etc. The USB synchronization between the phone and Outlook/file is very good. There are two options to do this: using the older Nokia PC Suite and using the newer Nokia Suite, both for Windows (note the similar/confusing program names). I normally use PC Suite because only this has file synchronization. However, when I upgraded the phone OS from Symbian^3 to Nokia/Symbian Belle, I used Nokia Suite. I think that Nokia PC Suite can update only up to Symbian Anna, older than Belle. Also note that Nokia Suite somehow disrupts the existing Windows Mobile USB connection (in my case, the connection to iPaq). To avoid this, I needed to stop the process associated with Nokia Suite using Windows Task Manager; this process would continue to run even after closing Nokia Suite. I used Nokia Suite also for downloading/installing apps, e.g., Swype, Microsoft Office Mobile, Opera Mobile, Skype, Screen Saver, Battery Monitor, PocketLock, Timer (for meditation), etc. Later, I downloaded/installed some apps through Nokia Store on the phone. Despite the small screen size, the process was painless.

Although I like the phone in general, there are some issues. First, the touch (or software) response seems to be a little slow/erratic. I was uncertain if this is the expected behavior of this model or if

there is something wrong with my unit, probably the former as I read similar comments on-line. However, I am becoming more and more comfortable with living with imperfection, inconvenience, and uncertainty of all sorts, including my aging body. So, I thought I would accept it. After all, I can still use all the functions of the phone.

Here are some other issues; I don't think these are specific to my unit. The phone hung several times during the first one-month period. I guess it happened when I used the phone heavily with a lot of applications and/or dealing with large files. Also one night, the phone restarted by itself; this may be related to receiving dozens of email messages attached with large image and video files. But as I get used to the phone, the frequency of hang decreased. Nowadays, I rarely need to restart or remove the battery (for forced restart). I have a feeling that I can live with occasional hangs, though. One other condition I experienced was that the calendar (and some other functionality) hung *for a while* and then resumed working.

There is one outstanding issue with WiFi, which I started to notice recently (but not initially). At a few public WiFi locations (a local library and a car dealer, to be specific), I was occasionally unable to use WiFi. When it doesn't work, the WiFi does connect but the browser and the mail client cannot access the Internet. This is rather annoying. I tried various things but so far, I don't have a complete fix for this problem.

There also is an annoying issue with contact synchronization. When I edit contact entries on the PC, the ring tone assigned to the affected entries are reset to the default. Normally, I want to do most of editing on the PC and I want to keep specific ring tones for specific contact groups. According to on-line discussions, iPhones seem to have a similar problem.

One other issue is about audio book transfer. With iPaq, I was able to transfer both mp3 and wma audio books from [ListenNJ](#), a free service through local libraries. With my new Nokia, I can only transfer mp3 audio books, even though C6-01 is supposed to be able to play wma files. This most likely be due to the service's security issue. I think I could play unprotected wma files.

There were some other issues initially. But most of them have been resolved to my satisfaction. One is editing office files. On my iPaq, I have been mainly using .rtf files for synchronization (this way, I was able to open files quickly with WordPad, not with MS Word, on the PC). Now, the version of Quick Office which comes with the phone is read only (the full version with the editing capability is available for about \$6, though). So, I downloaded and installed new Microsoft Mobile Office (for Symbian). I was unable to edit .rtf files or .doc files. However, I realized that it can edit .docx files. So, I changed the format of my synchronized files to .docx. On the PC, I can still edit them with WordPad (which starts quicker than Office). One minor glitch is that when I edit these documents on the phone, the edited section appears with black background and with underline. I need to change these attribute manually. Furthermore, for some reason I don't understand, the file synchronization stopped working as expected. When I synchronize files, it always copies files in the direction set in the conflict resolution. It was not like this for the first three to four months. To deal with this issue, when I edit a file on the phone, I change the file name, e.g., from X.docx to X2.docx. Then, both files will stay on both the phone and the PC. I will then need to delete unnecessary files and change the file name.

This is tedious, but editing on the phone is only occasional events. Or, if I go on a trip, I employ another strategy. Before I synchronize the files, I move the contents of the sync folder on the PC. This way, all the changes made in the phone will be copied back to the PC. So, I can deal with the situation. In addition, PDF viewing is fairly good, esp. in the landscape mode; I can read a variety of PDF documents on the phone.

As for Japanese language support, which I need only occasionally, is better on my new phone than on iPaq. On iPaq, I was able to read Japanese on web browsers (with additional fonts installed) but not in the mail client. On my new phone (after upgrading the OS to Nokia/Symbian Belle), reading Japanese seems to be seamlessly integrated. But there is no Japanese input capability. This is not essential, but it would be nice if I can send email in Japanese. There is an app, [+J for S60](#), which may work on my phone. However, it is rather expensive (around \$50). There also is a free app called [M-FEP60](#). But one of the users commented that the program screwed up certain things on C6-01 and cannot be reverted without factory default reset. So, I am hesitant. My tentative, albeit awkward, solution is as follows. I keep a file containing hiragana, katakana, and some frequently used phrases. I can copy and paste some of these characters and phrases as I compose a message. Furthermore, I recently noticed that there is a web site that support Japanese character conversion without the input function (<http://sumibi.org/>). So, if necessary and with sufficient time, I can send a message in Japanese.

Here are some other comments about the phone. The camera is fairly good. But I still like my [Canon PowerShot A1100IS](#) much better; my Canon serves practically 100% of my basic camera and video needs. My main issue with C6-01's camera is the lack of macro mode. There are times when I would like to use the camera more as a scanner. My temporary fix is to use an additional lens. [The Photojojo store](#) has a nice variety of lenses for iPhone (supposedly good for other phones); but a single macro lens costs \$20. So, I am trying two less expensive, generic lenses, (1) [Carson® MagniFlip 3x Flip-Open Pocket Magnifier with Built-In Case \(GN-33\)](#), about \$3.5, and (2) [ITOYA PocketLens \(Small\) PL-A](#), about \$4.5. Even if I don't use these lenses for the intended purpose, I could use them as emergency reading glass and my daughter could use them for fun as well. After comparing these lenses, my conclusion is that Carson is a better option for macro shooting. To use it, I can just hold the lens half open and shoot clear images at about 4 inches from the subject. I also realized that with the highest resolution (8MP), I can get a reasonable image of a letter-size document, if shot from a little further than needed. Another discovery is that Scam (free app) can be used to shoot a continuous and motion-detected series of images.

The GPS, usable off-line, is really good, even comparable to our Garmin Nuvi 40LM (it is slower when the next position is far from the last known position and without data assist, though). The only problem is that there is no Nokia map for Japan. However, I found ViewRanger (free app) can be used for this purpose. It can even be used with off-line maps. So, this is no longer an issue.

I also like the phone's user interface in general. Probably, some people would think that Symbian is too limited. However, I think it is pretty good overall, with a reasonable room for customization. The number and quality of available apps is OK for me. I only use free apps and some of the ones I downloaded/installed are really helpful. For example, I like [PocketLock](#) very much; it locks/unlocks the screen when the phone is inside/out of a pocket. Battery life is OK. With my normal use, I just need

to charge the phone at night. If I shut off WiFi and use it only for stand-by, the battery seems to last about a few days. So, I would say that I'm quite happy with the purchase.

Finally, I was monitoring the price of several phones (and some other things) before and after the Thanksgiving break. What I noticed was that the price was often lowest before, not after Thanksgiving. In certain cases, availability became low/empty right around Thanksgiving.

Using Data: Using Two SIM Cards

Since I got my new phone, I felt that it would be nice if I can use *some* data when I *really* need it. Again, this is not essential and I wouldn't subscribe to any monthly data plan for now. I noticed that on T-Mobile and other discussion boards, people talk about T-Mobile's web day pass, which seemed nice but since discontinued. So, after considering certain alternatives, I came to the following conclusion. In addition to my Pay-As-You-Go plan, I started to use [T-Mobile's Pay-By-The-Day plan](#), with unlimited voice, text, and 2G data for \$2/day. That is, I now have two SIM cards. The new SIM card itself was \$0.99 (later, I found that it was also sold for free on another page at T-Mobile; then, it has increased to \$10). Normally, I still use the Pay-As-You-Go plan/SIM card. When I want to use data and/or need to talk for a long duration, I swap the SIM cards (to the Pay-By-The-Day one). This would also be helpful for certain cases involving long voice call, e.g., calling the power company when the power goes down; I wouldn't do this with the Pay-As-You-Go plan as we can't tell how long we will be on hold. Some time ago, I locked in my car key at a section of a large county park. I had to stay on the phone for some time to make an arrangement and guide the service to reach us because there was no street address to describe the location easily. I would have benefited from the Pay-By-The-Day plan. In the future, when I anticipate to talk for more than 20 minutes, I will use the Pay-By-The-Day SIM card.

The main reason I chose T-Mobile's Pay-By-The-Day plan for (slow) data is that even \$10 refill comes with 90 day expiration, not 30 days like other carriers (unfortunately, the expiration date is not shown when I log on to my T-Mobile account; so I need to pay close attention to it). This is very important for me because I don't expect to use data so often. Another reason is that it is unlimited for the day (till midnight), even though it is slow 2G. I just don't want a usage-based plan. So, I expect to spend about additional \$40 a year for occasional data and long voice calls. Compared to my expense until recently, this is luxury, but I feel it is still a reasonable extension. One surprising discovery is that if I switch between the two plans of Pay-By-The-Day, i.e., \$2/day and \$3/day (3G plan), the expiration date *seems* to extend by 90 days from the day of switch.

For some people, swapping SIM cards may not be an option. I too wish my phone had dual-SIM slots. However, by removing the Pay-By-The-Day card, I can make sure that the phone won't access data accidentally and get charged for the entire day without my intention. In addition, for many people, 2G may be unacceptably slow. However, I would mainly use email and basic web browsing, i.e., no game, music, video, etc. So, the speed is not a big issue. When a faster connection is needed, I can switch to \$3/day and switch back to \$2/day.

One possible use of the Pay-By-The-Day plan is as follows. When connected to a notebook PC via a

USB cable, Nokia C6-01 can be used as a modem. With this combination, I could benefit from the inexpensive Internet availability on my phone and a larger display and full-size keyboard of the notebook. There also is a free app called [Joiku Light](#), which is supposed to be able make C6-01 as a WiFi hotspot. But for both of these, I am still unable to use my notebook (Windows 7) to access the data on the phone (there is one thing I want to check, i.e., setting up a wireless ad hoc connection on the notebook). On the other hand, I can access the same data from my wife's iPad.

My Wife's New Phone

My wife and technology often go against each other. She has been complaining about her HTC phone. She says that the phone often (every morning?) doesn't work, especially when she arrives at work after about one hour of driving. Strangely, whenever I check her phone, it works all right. So, although it has been only one and half years since she got the phone, we decided to replace hers too. Also recently, she was given an iPad (WiFi only, no 3G) at her work. So, she decided to carry the iPad (almost) all the time and use it for her scheduling, contacts, notes, etc. Since iPad's screen is large enough, she will use just that for scheduling. Then, she will no longer need to keep her schedule on the PC or the phone. This eliminates the need of synchronizing her phone or iPad with the PC. In addition, without the need of the scheduler function in her phone, even a flip phone would work for her. Still, she considers using a flip phone is backward. So, we decided to find another smart phone. Since she has difficulty seeing small letters, she wants as large screen as possible. For example, my Nokia C6-01 is too small for her. At the same time, there is a space limitation due to the size of her pocket book. So, we tried to find one approximately the same size as her old HTC. Although she is qualified to purchase a reduced price phone from AT&T, again, it would be actually costlier to subscribe the required data plan, which she doesn't need. So, I considered unlocked Nokia phones first; my wife likes Nokia. However, larger unlocked Nokia phones were either Windows or too expensive for us. In a sense, Nokia Windows phones are no longer real Nokia.

Then, I noticed unlocked [BLU Vivo 4.3](#), which had fairly good reviews. However, I thought it would be a little too tight in her pocket book and cost still a little more than I was expecting. [BLU Dash 3.5](#) was at a good price, but the screen seems too small. So, my final suggestion was an unlocked [BLU Elite 3.8 D430b](#), an Android 2.3 phone with a 3.8 inch screen. This was sold at \$144 as a new item. It is almost exactly the same size as (and slightly thinner and lighter than) HTC Imagio. She likes the size of the display and virtual keyboard. The basic phone function seems all right so far.

Although this phone comes with an old version of Android, it does not matter. She will mainly use it just as a phone. Although she will no longer need to synchronize the phone with Outlook, I transferred contacts from the PC using [MyPhoneExplorer](#). Actually, it took hours until I was finally able to do this; I tried two or three other apps without success prior to this one.

After getting used to my Nokia C6-01, I too felt that the display and keyboard are larger and a lot easier to use. However, I do not particularly like Android's user interface. Somehow, it reminds me of the Microsoft style. I feel that Nokia Symbian is more user-friendly. The number of pre-installed ring tones on BLU was much smaller than on my Nokia. The user's manual was a joke; and there was no on-line manual (my wife wouldn't read the manual, though). My Nokia has a decent on-line user's

manual and support discussion forums. Unlike Nokia, we cannot use GPS offline on Android; but ViewRanger would do, if she really needs it.

There are a few extra features that may be useful in the future. When my wife is on the road, she can use her BLU as a WiFi hotspot, using my T-Mobile Pay-By-The-Day SIM card, for her WiFi-only iPad. This can be done easily with this phone's dual SIM slots; there is no need to remove her AT&T SIM card. This turns out to work quite well. In addition, when we go to Japan, I initially thought that we could use both of our phones (with the 2100MHz coverage) there with a rental SIM. Unfortunately, we couldn't do this; surprisingly, it is *illegal* to do this in Japan. According the Japanese Radio Law, the device that uses a SIM card must be "registered" with the Japanese government (i.e., the "giteki" mark is required). Only the non-Japanese device currently registered are (latest?) iPhones. This kind of restriction is very annoying for people who only visit Japan. An alternative is to use a Skype number (\$18 for 3 months), which would be cheaper than renting a phone even for a week. I actually got a Japanese number (050-XXXX-YYYY) for my Skype account and tested. It was not perfect, but it worked. I was able to receive some calls on that number.

Since I never really thought that AT&T 450 is a perfect plan for my wife, I have been searching for a better plan for her. I looked into prepaid monthly plans, e.g., Straight Talk \$45/month. As long as she can keep her current number and does not need to think about refill, etc., she wouldn't mind which carrier/reseller she is using. This Straight Talk plan includes unlimited data at about the same cost as her current plan. I initially thought that this might even let her/me access WiFi through her phone as a WiFi hotspot. However, Straight Talk does not allow the use of a phone as a modem. Then, since my wife doesn't need data on the phone, unlimited data is not that attractive. She doesn't text much either. Her voice usage is well within the 450 minutes limit. Then, recently, we finally moved her number to T-Mobile's Monthly4G "1500 Talk & Text with 30MB of Data." The main drawback with this move was that T-Mobile's signal is considerably weaker in her office, compared to AT&T's. Often, she cannot use the phone there. Because of this, she went back to AT&T. But this time, \$35/month prepaid plan.

Testing New Phones

About a month after we got our new phones, there was an occasion to field-test them. My wife needed to visit Japan for one week. She carried her new phone (BLU Elite 3.8 D430b) and iPad. As mentioned earlier, it is now illegal to rent a SIM card for her phone and thus she rented a local phone as well (we didn't try Skype number then). She noticed that even with her AT&T SIM card (then postpaid 450), her phone was receiving calls and text messages in Japan. So, I actually called her cell phone (the U.S. number) from the U.S. just as if she were here. We talked only for one minute because I was not sure what kind of charges are added to her bill. It turned out that the air time was \$2.5/minute. So, I assume that she could have called U.S. Numbers just as if she were here. In addition, I guess she could have called Japanese numbers and received from Japanese callers there as well, if the Japanese numbers are dialed with the country code (+81) and her numbers are dialed with appropriate access code in Japan (e.g., 0063?). I wanted her to try these (as well as Skype calls and some other things) but I didn't ask because she was so busy during the one-week trip. Anyway, it was good to know that her phone is usable in Japan as is. Although it is too expensive to actually use the

phone this way, we could still use it for emergency purposes.

On the way home from Japan, my wife's flight from Detroit to Newark was delayed multiple times due to the weather condition, mechanical problems, and crew replacement. After five hours of delay, it was eventually canceled. At this point, she was diverted to another plane to LaGuardia. Since I was waiting for her at the Newark Airport, we needed to communicate using our new phones. The phones worked well and served our purposes perfectly. Since I figured that the situation would involve many and long phone conversations, I swapped the SIM to Pay-By-The-Day (\$2 for unlimited talk/text/2G web). I did need to power off the phone because the SIM card slot is beneath the battery. But the process was fairly straightforward and painless. This way, I was also able to check the airline's web site for flight status wherever we go. I noticed, though, that the on-line status was "in flight" even when my wife needed to get off the plane. The battery status of our phones were all right but both of us charged the phones at mid point. I used Opera Mobile web browser as full browser mode and Nokia's native browser for mobile view. On Opera, I wanted to see the flight status with the map showing the plane's current location. The map didn't show up; maybe because my data is only 2G. I was unable to do a few things; e.g., setting new one-time notification to the number associated with my Pay-By-The-Day SIM card. I still don't know why. Other than these, web access was really helpful. I was able to check my main email box for flight status notifications, checked the flight status (esp. for the flight to LaGuardia) many times on their web site, and also checked LaGuardia Airport terminal/parking map, which I was not familiar with.

When I picked up my wife it was just before midnight. I quickly swapped the SIM cards so that I won't be charged another \$2 for the new day. I was able to do this while standing. I think the both phones passed the test at that point. But the test had the second phase.

Due to another family emergency, only two days after my wife returned from Japan, it was my turn to visit Japan, again, for just one week. It was the end of the year, one of the busiest time for overseas travel into and out of Japan. Due to the high demand, I initially had difficulty renting a mobile WiFi hotspot; I called several rental shops and none of them had a stock. Finally, after some adjustments, one store was able to arrange a unit for me. As mentioned earlier, I cannot rent a SIM for my non-Japanese phone. But I neither rented a phone nor got a Skype number for this trip because those who need to contact me can do so by email or Skype. I used mainly my notebook PC, occasionally my Nokia C6-01, for email and web browsing. As for Skype, I used the notebook for video/voice calls and the phone only for voice calls (because the Skype app for Symbian does not support video). Also with Skype credit, I was able to call Japanese phone numbers (as well as US numbers) from my notebook and phone fairly inexpensively.

Since my phone has basically the same frequency coverage as my wife's BLU, it picked up SoftBank's network upon arrival in Japan. I initially thought that my prepaid plans would not let me roam internationally. However, when I tested (with my Pay-As-You-Go plan) by calling my U.S. cell phone number from my Skype account on my notebook, my phone rang. As far as I can tell from T-Mobile's web site, the international roaming charge is \$2.69/minute. It is too costly; I wouldn't use it. However, I realized that I can still use this capability as a "pager." That is, if, for example, my wife wants to contact me, she can call my cell phone number (from either the U.S. or Japan) and hang up.

Then, I should be able to return the call from my Skype account. If the caller leaves a message, I would use my web interface to check it with no cost. So, only with a WiFi hotspot, I was able to deal with most of the cases.

Overall, my phone worked well. I used Mobile Word for viewing/editing document files and Mobile Excel for keeping the expense record. I used camera and video for capturing various images. The Carson lens worked well for macro shoots, e.g., copying medication labels. One limitation already mentioned earlier is the lack of Nokia map for Japan. Since I didn't know of ViewRanger at that point, with the WiFi connection, I was able to use on-line maps, such as Yahoo map. During the trip, the phone crashed a few times, esp. when I was using maps in Opera Mobile web browser. At one point during the trip, the phone dropped from a shelf about four feet high on to the hard floor. Due to the good construction, the phone survived even without a scratch.

The test is now complete. Since I like the phone and wanted to use it more, I recently replaced the 8GB micro SD to a 32GB one. I copied all the files and swapped the cards. Initially, the phone behaved funny (sluggish, hangs). But after restarting the phone a few times, it seemed to be working normally. It is great to have a large capacity.

Conclusion

During the past few years, our mobile phone and associated office environment changed significantly. I think it was a good move. Both my wife and myself are happy about the transition ... so far.

Addenda

August 3, 2014

- As mentioned above, my Nokia C6-01 does not have a native method or free apps to compose texts in Japanese. One way to overcome this shortcoming is to use a web site, Sumibi.org. We can enter "roma-ji" (alphabetic form) followed by a space and the site will show lists of possible Kanji conversions. Note that the roma-ji inputs need to begin with a lowercase letter for proper conversion.
- I recently acquired a small jeweler's loupe (<http://www.ukge.com/Product.aspx?ProductID=291&L=1&site=en-us>). This works great to take macro photos with my Nokia. Although this particular item is not easily available in the U.S., there are similar products that would work just fine.
- My wife started to complain more and more about the unreliability of her BLU. Recently, she replaced it with [Samsung Galaxy Ace 2 i8160 White \(Factory Unlocked\)](#). She seems to like Samsung much better than BLU.