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REVIEW

BlackBerry PRIV review: A new standard for Android in enterprise?

Credit: Brian Sacco

CIO.com spent a month testing BlackBerry's first Android smartphone with a focus on the businesspeople and IT managers who will use and support it. The PRIV is the most capable BlackBerry ever, but does it deliver on what may be its most important promise?

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By Al Sacco | Follow
CIO | Dec 3, 2015 5:00 AM PT

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A month ago, BlackBerry released what could prove to be the most important smartphone in the Canadian company's storied history: the BlackBerry PRIV.

PRIV is the first BlackBerry that doesn't run a version of the company's own OS. Instead, it runs Google's Android OS. It's a forward departure from what most of the world expects from BlackBerry today. It's aimed at the enterprise, and its productivity-focused users — but PRIV legitimately measures up to the most popular consumer devices. And BlackBerry put a sharp focus on privacy. (PRIV's name is a play on the phrase, *priv*ilege of *priv*acy.)

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Brian Sacco

PRIV could also be one of the last smartphones, if not the final handset, BlackBerry ever releases, at least based on some ominous comments the company's CEO made in October.

I've been using the PRIV for a month now, and evaluating it from the perspectives of a tech-savvy businessperson and an IT manager.

[**Related: BlackBerry Classic review: A killer smartphone for keyboard lovers**]

A lot of people who yearn for the comfortable and familiar clack of those old BlackBerry keys will herald the debut of this smartphone, and the mobile administrators who manage PRIVs will appreciate BlackBerry's eye toward enterprise in its "flavor" of Android. However, some obvious shortcoming will become clear to the most diehard BlackBerry loyalists. And the IT managers who want to deploy, or have to support, PRIV across their workforces also have reason for concern.

Brian Sacco

BlackBerry Classic, Passport and PRIV

I broke this BlackBerry PRIV review into three sections: The good, the bad and the decision. Hit these individual links to jump to specific sections of interest.

First up, the features and functionality business users and IT managers will appreciate about PRIV.

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Elton Calisto 55 days ago

Had one for a week. Battery life was terrible and the phone was always hot. Needless to say it went back.

Reply 0

Roiko Latte 56 days ago

One major appeal of BlackBerrys is it's OS which was stable and secure.Now that it's running an Adroid OS,for me it takes the heart and should of the Blackberry we used to love over the years.
It looks good but what good does a Ferrari body that's running on a Cherry engine. (Chinese car maker) that breaks every time you get in it.

Reply 1 reply 0

Ashley Hosten 40 days ago

Chery

Reply 0

Sheila Dawn 57 days ago

How can u get one to try

Reply 0

teambringit86 57 days ago

The PRiv is a gorgeous smartphone, one of the highest res screens period, ergonomic touch keyboard is great. A company that has been privacy focused since day one is not going to put a fingerprint sensor, and if you knew how to use picture password, you're not going to get into the smartphone. And no smartphone feels built to last, the Passport or CAT are the most durable available. CDMA technology is so outdated, Canada moved to GSM almost 5 years ago.

Reply 0

Paul de Figueiredo 64 days ago

IM IMPRESSED ESPECIALLY WITH THE CAMERA ITS LIGHT AND HAS ENOUGH ON BOARD MEMORY WOULD NOT MIND BUYING ONE FOR MYSELF SIZE IS BIG BUT LOVE IT

Reply 0

CharlieHipHop . 65 days ago

I would say the Priv is the worst BlackBerry since the Storm, possibly the worst ever. You need some dodgy app to do every stupid little thing that works flawlessly out of the box on a real BlackBerry. Google spying on every aspect of your life is not privacy or privilege; it's a kick in the teeth to anyone who actually does value their privacy.

Nobody even knows BlackBerry 10 exists. They haven't advertised it, but it has sold millions of units on word of mouth. It is a far superior product, and killing it would be a bone-headed business move. Nobody makes money on Android except Google. BlackBerry won't be any different. If they do manage to sell some units, it will be because of advertising and publicity, not because of that absolute turd of an operating system.

Reply 0

Wawa Blabla 67 days ago

Talk true about what does now the BlackBerry innovative device !
When BlackBerry has many great innovative features, you're short to describe how these are awesome....
You're very quick to introduce insignificant Spying feature. Niggling a lot with it, like, when you speak for a stupid hackable NSA feature .... The fingerprint sensor, Wow! Well I say NEXT!
Since when this must be essential ?
Your review "was" nitpicky and You "should" be more honest.
Stop talking about the past...Do you have nostalgia?

Reply 0

Charlie Fezziwig 68 days ago

re: However, BlackBerry failed to deliver on what might be the most important PRIV feature: The full QWERTY keyboard. It doesn't feel as comfortable in hand

There's no other modern Android with a keyboard, how can you lose to phones that don't have one?

Reply +3

Shawn Burkit 69 days ago

I have been using Blackberries since they came out and the physical keyboard is fine on this device. No issues with space or thumbs hitting anything. There is basically an entire row of keys sized space above the last row. If this gives you trouble then id assume other rows would too. They keyboard is actually large than most older models with the exception of the passport. I have not seen an non wireless charging version anywhere online as this is actually built into the battery not the device, i doubt one exists unless it is a demo device. As to the cheap look & feel it looks and feels better than most android devices out there with the exception of some htc models. The miniscule air gap in the back exists on most phones. Even my 1000$ note edge has a gap. It is designed that way to prevent heat exchange. Fingerprint scanners are junk and a novelty, anyone actually trusting those as secure should not be in charge of setting security up.

Reply +4

Jeff Goldstein 69 days ago

Just so you know most finger print readers can be hacked in less that 30 seconds, so I am sorry to say the finger print reader does not give you anywhere near the security you expect.

Reply 1 reply +5

CharlieHipHop . 65 days ago

Yeah, the cheap biometric scanners on phones are very easily beaten. Until someone puts a $20,000 scanner on a phone, nothing will be more secure than Picture Password.

Reply +1

Li Shan T 69 days ago

i need to get this. i've been a hardcore bb enthusiast since my very first bb bold 2, and i've followed that up with the bold 3, then z10 and q10 simultaneously, then the z30, z3 and now the passport. i need the Priv!!!

Reply 1 reply +1

Đj StyLëz 69 days ago

nice :)

Reply +1

Willboyce321 69 days ago

ive been using this device for 3 weeks tomorrow and i absolutely love it

Reply +3

4rjk . 69 days ago

I think that the Priv physical keyboard takes some practice and it gets down to individual preference. I have no problem with it. It has the familiar BlackBerry taclle feel.

Reply +4

StephenBB81 69 days ago

Great review
Though I disagree that the BlackBerry Priv is is best BlackBerry ever.
While I prefer using my BlackBerry Classic over my BlackBerry Passport. The BlackBerry Passport still remains the best BlackBerry ever.
I carry a Samsung Galaxy Note 4 and my BlackBerry Passport. I tried using the Priv in place of the Passport but just could not do it.

DroidHUB on the Priv is great if you're an iOS or regular Android user because it is better than what is available to you. But as a BBHUB user it fell short. My Passport usually beats my Note 4 by a solid minute getting my Office 365 emails and navigating through the BBHUB is faster. Interacting with the apps inside of BBHUB is also better because of the level of integration especially in a world were SMS with clients is ever increasing.

The Build Quality was my other issue with the Priv. Like you having the non wireless charging model meant that the back had play. If they had just filled in that airgap with a gasket it would have gone a long way to feeling more premium. But alas my leather backed Note 4 has a more premium feel and my Passport makes the note 4 feel mediocre

Sound quality is of the utmost importance to someone who isn't a desk jockey and that again is where the Passport is in a Class all buy itself. The Priv did not get even close, the Z30 was much better, and its an oldy by mobile phone standards.

The Priv gets points for out of the box apps with PlayStore. I have a Note 4 primarily for Microsoft Office on mobile and Ingress for play. I can make both work on the personal side of BlackBerry with some side loading but they don't work as well and it is worth having the second device in my pocket for the better experience.

If someone is in the market for the best mobile device for fast communication, with the least amount of fuss to accomplish this. I still recommend the Passport over the Priv. Plus the Passport first excellently in the breastpocket of a dress shirt, where the Priv and Note 4 stick out the top.

Reply 2 replies +2

ASacco 69 days ago

Hey Stephen,

Thanks for the thoughtful comment. You know your BlackBerrys, and I respect your opinion. I love the Passport keyboard, but the device itself is too wide for me. I keep my phone in a front pants pocket, and the Passport just isn't comfortable there. I also like the Android software on the PRIV better than the Passport BB10 OS, and the app selection blows away what Passport has. That's big for me.

AS

Reply 1 reply 0

CharlieHipHop . 65 days ago

Have you really used the Passport? It's the size of a passport and fits well in any pocket unless you wear tight jeans. What do you prefer about Android? I find it clunky, slow, and poorly conceived compared to BB10. It is actually frustrating how dumb it is. It can't even play videos in the background. It's just very difficult for me to imagine anyone preferring Android or iOS after using a more advanced, multitasking realtime OS.

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