



On this episode of Selling Geek, we talk to PC Magazine's Sascha Segan about mobile phones for sales pros.

Welcome to Selling Geek, the show about the latest gadgets, gizmos, and technology resources for sales professionals looking for a competitive edge. Our toll-free voicemail line in the United States is (877) 345-7763. Everywhere else in the world, dial 1-(404) 418-4970, or comment on our blog at SellingGeek.com.

And now, here's your host, the Selling Geek - Tim Sullivan!

Thank you, Ruth, and welcome, everyone. I hope this finds you feeling good, doing good, and doing good business. First, we received some interesting comments about our review of LinkedIn in the last episode.

We got a quick comment from Dave Stein, who incidentally has a great sales practices site of his own at DaveSteinsBlog.wordpress.com. Dave liked our recommendation to turn the visibility of your LinkedIn connections off to protect against competitors using them to penetrate into your accounts. He tells us, "You're absolutely right on your point about poachers."

But Flynn Penoyer disagreed with us. He said, "Keeping a semi-closed network gives poachers an advantage. If you're an open networker and have a large network, the poachers are going to have to do a lot of work. Wouldn't it just be better to poach from the big open networkers who will connect to anyone, anyway?" That's an interesting perspective from a liberal LinkedIn connector, Flynn. Thanks. But I don't think that most salespeople are willing to spend the time required to build a huge open network. So to protect their limited high-quality network, turning off its visibility will make it impossible for poachers to even see connections, thereby stopping the problem altogether. Let's just say we have a respectful difference of opinion here, spanning the spectrum between conservative and liberal LinkedIn connector views.

Lisa Katzen tells us, "I find it interesting that many of my corporate buddies love LinkedIn. As a financial planner, I found it -- well, to be honest, quite useless. As a small business professional, I rely on trusted associates and strong customer relationships to generate new business. Befriending hundreds of online strangers means very little to my bottom line." Instead, Lisa suggests another online tool -- ReferralKey.com. "With this tool," Lisa says, "I get quarterly reports to analyze and can ensure all my relationships are reciprocal. I also have access to my associates circle so I can exchange referrals with

new prospects with only one degree of separation. I highly recommend ReferralKey.com for small business looking for results from networking."

Atia was more enthusiastic about our review. "What a great and thorough analysis of how sales pros can use LinkedIn," she tells us. "There's no doubt that sales professionals can no longer ignore Web 2.0 as a must-have resource for prospecting and lead generation. It'll be interesting to see where the social media wave takes us in the next few months. I hope to see an increase in the number of resources tailored specifically for selling professionals." Atia also suggests that sales pros take a look at SalesConX.com. This is a business-oriented networking service like LinkedIn, but also compensates members for each introduction that they make. And in most cases, if a referral in real business, they also receive a finder's fee.

Errol Green also praised us for our LinkedIn review, saying, "It's probably the best article I've read on utilizing networking sites and uncovering hidden opportunities for lead generation. What I like about your columns is they don't try to rework stale information or put a slight spin on the obvious." Gosh, Errol, we're blushing. If only all of our feedback could be so positive; but that would be awfully boring, wouldn't it?

So a sincere thanks to everyone that sent us feedback, both favorable and not; and we encourage you to do the same. In fact, as a special incentive, we'll award a crisp \$20 bill in U.S. currency to the best voicemail, e-mail, or blog comment that we receive from you before the next show. Use it to buy that book you wanted or have lunch on us. It's completely up to you. So give us a call or send us a message. We ask only that your comments be substantive and interesting. We look forward to hearing from you.

We've got a fascinating interview with mobile phone expert Sascha Segan coming up. But first, here's a brief summary of our most recent news items from the SellingGeek.com blog.

AT&T Mobility released official pricing for its iPhone 3G offerings, which went on sale July 11 in the U.S. It includes a future option for an iPhone without a contract, although official availability dates for this option were not disclosed. If and when such an option does become available, AT&T will sell a no-contract iPhone 3G for \$599 U.S. dollars for an 8GB model and \$699 for the 16GB model; both a whopping \$400 premium over the regularly subsidized iPhone prices with a two-year contract commitment.

The no-contract iPhone 3G will almost certainly continue to be locked into the AT&T network. In addition, AT&T has set some tight restrictions for access to those highly subsidized iPhone prices of \$199 U.S. for the 8GB model and \$299 for the 16GB model. They will be available only to people who bought the previous version of the iPhone before July 1st; to new AT&T customers; to existing customers activating a new line; or who are eligible for an upgrade discount. That means that any current AT&T customer with handsets other than the iPhone will pay \$399 for the 8GB model or \$499 for the

16GB model, plus an \$18 upgrade fee to switch; and they will have to enter into a new two-year contract under a 3G iPhone plan.

So if you're a sales professional looking to upgrade to an iPhone, get out your wallet, because you are going to pay handsomely for the privilege.

Based on a report from the U.K.-based tech blog [The Register](#), rumors are swirling around a possible Apple iPhone with a slide-out fully QWERTY keyboard, targeted at corporate users for possible introduction sometime next year. If true, such a phone would be designed for heavy text messaging and mobile e-mail users, such as sales professionals, many of whom use RIM BlackBerry devices today as well as other full keyboard phones provided by Nokia, HTC, and Sony Ericsson among others. Ironically, RIM is working hard to develop a pure touchscreen interface for its next-generation BlackBerry, rumored to be called the 9500, also to be introduced next year.

Our advice here at *Selling Geek* is don't hold your breath for an iPhone with a physical keyboard. The onscreen keyboard of the iPhone 3G, without tactile feedback, is certainly serviceable as a text messaging and e-mail device. If you prefer the reassuring click of a keyboard, however, consider the BlackBerry Curve or 8830 or similar device, although you won't get nearly as cool an interface and you'll miss most of the advanced Web-based computing features. But you'll be able to communicate with customers and prospects just fine.

Guinness, besides being the world's greatest brewery of fine Irish stout, is also well known as the registrar of world records of all ilks, and in this capacity, they have bestowed the first official record for most software downloads in a 24-hour period to Mozilla, who on June 17, 2008, saw 8,002,530 copies of its Firefox 3.0 open source Web browser distributed over the Internet. We at *Selling Geek* applaud Mozilla for the successful execution of this obvious publicity stunt, mostly because Firefox 3.0 is the speediest Web browser we've ever used. Sales professionals who want to save time and money should definitely consider switching to Firefox.

U.S. traveling sales professionals can be of good cheer because their days of removing laptop computers from their luggage for security inspection in airports is nearing a merciful end soon. According to a story in the *New York Times*, the Transportation Security Administration has approved use of carry-on bag designs that allow pass-through of laptops without removing them for x-ray inspection. Luggage manufacturers Pathfinder and Targus both expect to release their checkpoint-friendly laptop cases in late September or early October 2008. The new cases include either a special fold-down section for the laptop or a protective sleeve, and are designed to allow easy scanning by

x-ray machines. The new bags should cost between \$100 U.S. and \$200, depending on size and if wheels are attached.

And that's the latest Selling Geek tech news for sales pros. Go check out SellingGeek.com for all the details. And now, on to our featured interview.

I am an avid listener to PC Magazine's weekly podcast, *PC Mag Radio*, which you can find at www.PCMag.com. In every episode, PC Mag's editors and expert guests cover the most important technology and consumer electronics news. But I must confess that the real reason I listen is to hear Sascha Segan's incisive comments and acerbic wit about the latest goings-on in the tech industry. His keen observations are always interesting and usually amusing, too. And he's never taken in by the marketing hype and hyperbole that swirls so commonly around consumer electronics products today.

Most importantly, Sascha is truly an expert in his field. As PC Magazine's lead analyst for mobile phones, he is responsible for testing and evaluating handheld communication and computing devices. And as you'll hear in this interview, he knows his stuff.

Before the interview, I sent Sascha a wishlist of criteria that I thought sales professionals would be most interested in when selecting a mobile phone carrier and handset. The list included eight points: consistently good call quality; broad coverage, advanced Internet connectivity availability; smartphone multiple purpose/multiple device availability; instant messaging affordability; competent customer service; positioned for the future, as in 3G or advanced networks; affordable and flexible agreement terms.

As you'll see, Sascha recognizes the importance of mobile communications to today's sales professional, and he respects how much sales pros have pushed the boundaries of today's mobile communication technology. I know you'll find his observations and advice very useful, so it's my pleasure to share this interview with Sascha Segan.

Tim Sullivan: Sascha, thanks for joining me today.

Sascha Segan: I looked at your eight criteria for a mobile service for sales professionals and it really made me laugh, because I look at them and yes, you're describing the perfect delicious pie-carrier from that imaginary beautiful world made of pie.

Tim Sullivan: Of course.

Sascha Segan: But unfortunately, we live in the United States of America and you can get probably about five of those eight at a time.

Tim Sullivan: You recently wrote a column about consolidation of the carriers, or potential consolidation in the U.S., even suggesting perhaps it might come down to AT&T and Verizon. So would you recommend one of those, or would some of the other carriers like Sprint Nextel or T-Mobile be a viable option?

Sascha Segan: Well, what we have in the U.S. right now are two carriers with tremendous national coverage but relatively high fees. We have T-Mobile, which is sort of cheap and cheerful. It has low fees and excellent customer service, but not that great coverage. And then we have Sprint, which is floundering on all accounts.

Tim Sullivan: Sprint's never been able to digest the Nextel acquisition, or do you feel that they're finally coming around?

Sascha Segan: I think they're finally starting to crawl out of the pit that they fell into after that ill-fated Nextel purchase. It's a very deep pit, unfortunately. But the new CEO, Dan Hesse, really has a lot of the right ideas. His main idea is to focus on customer service, which is where Sprint fell the farthest.

We do a large survey of our readers every year and I'm looking at the results from this year's survey -- which haven't been published yet -- and Sprint's customer service numbers are just abysmal. That's really where Hesse has to bring things up.

Tim Sullivan: What other carriers might be ones that you might consider?

Sascha Segan: If you're looking for coverage, reliability, and good customer service, it's Verizon Wireless all the way. Verizon Wireless has the best national coverage. They have the best call quality. They even have very good technical support and customer service. The downside is you're going to pay for that.

Verizon knows that they are a premium quality service and they charge premium rates, and they have a limited set of equipment they work with.

Tim Sullivan: I'm interested in your opinion of the iPhone, and of course, that's AT&T today in the U.S.

Sascha Segan: Well, the first iPhone wasn't a very good voice phone, but Apple has said with the new iPhone, the 3G model, they've really improved that. Now, the upcoming Application store is also going to have a lot of interesting vertical applications for sales professionals. For instance, Salesforce.com is a major Apple partner right now.

Now all of these things, the improved phone quality, the 3G higher data speeds, and the partnership with SalesForce.com could make the iPhone a good phone for sales professionals if it wasn't for one thing. That thing is I feel that a lot of professionals on the road prefer a physical keyboard, especially if you're doing a lot of e-mail writing. This is something that does become a very taste-oriented thing; something that starts religious wars. Especially if you're writing a lot of e-mail, I find that a lot of people prefer physical buttons to an all-touchscreen.

Tim Sullivan: So we're talking a RIM BlackBerry device; is that right?

Sascha Segan: Yes. And I find the BlackBerry Curve especially to be a terrific device for getting your work done all-around. The Curve also has a lot of vertical options; SalesForce.com, of course, works very well with Blackberries. It has one minus, which is that right now, Blackberries have a lot of trouble editing Microsoft Office documents on the road.

Tim Sullivan: I use a Verizon BlackBerry 8830 myself and it's a very reliable device. And for text messaging, you just can't get better than the physical keyboard on a BlackBerry device.

Sascha Segan: That's the thing, and one of the things I really like about the BlackBerry line is they just work. Windows Mobile devices are actually considerably more flexible than the Blackberries. They have a lot more software options and the software does more things. But they're also buggier and slower and more confusing. You can figure out a BlackBerry pretty quickly and it does what it says it does.

Tim Sullivan: Let's talk about some of the emerging phones and technologies that are coming out. You mentioned Windows Mobile, for example.

Sascha Segan: Well, the thing you have to understand about Windows Mobile is that Windows Mobile is the only operating system that has a whole bunch of manufacturers doing phones in the U.S. in a whole bunch of form factors. If you look at BlackBerry, all those phones are made by BlackBerry; Apple phones are made by Apple; Symbian phones are made by Nokia in the U.S. Windows Mobile has more than one licensing.

Tim Sullivan: While you're talking about open platforms, let's talk about Android. I've been very intrigued by the short demos; of course, those are in very controlled situations that we've seen so far. Do you think Android will be a significant platform, and is that something salespeople should wait for?

Sascha Segan: I don't think there's any need to wait for it. It's definitely too early to tell if there will be compelling devices and business applications released for Android. What I've seen of the operating system itself is fast, smooth, and efficient. But an operating system alone doesn't make a mobile ecosystem. It's going to be at least a year until I would actually recommend adopting an Android infrastructure.

Tim Sullivan: Now what about Nokia's latest move? They've recently acquired Symbian and they're going to roll them out as an open platform. That's even further down the road, isn't it?

Sascha Segan: Absolutely. We're not really going to see any action on that until 2009. But your mention of Nokia does open up something I did want to say to salespeople. A lot of business nowadays is global, and if you travel globally, then you may want to look at a Nokia device on AT&T.

Unlike Verizon, AT&T has truly global roaming. Verizon phones go to about 35 countries, but AT&T phones go to 120 countries. If you pick the right device, you can have 3G in a lot, if not all, of those countries. And the Nokia infrastructure, especially in Europe, is very well developed.

Tim Sullivan: If I'm in Europe, for example, what carriers might I consider, or what kind of phone should I consider for other parts of the globe?

Sascha Segan: Carrier choices in Europe are a lot less fraught than carrier choices here in the U.S. You can often just shop by price and contract terms. Because all the carriers in Europe tend to use the same technology and you can buy phones independent of the carrier, you can pick the device that fits you best and then the contract plans that fit you best.

For instance, the Nokia E-series are very, very popular among businesspeople in Europe and Asia. I would look at those. At the same time, I would also look at Blackberries.

Tim Sullivan: BlackBerry, ironically, seems to be moving towards this touchscreen interface with this new 9500, codenamed "Thunder", device. Do you think that that might be a viable platform for salespeople to consider as well?

Sascha Segan: What BlackBerry does, they tend to do well. They're a very thoughtful company and they tend to put out products that work. So if BlackBerry is coming out with a touchscreen device, I'm pretty sure it's going to be a good one.

At the same time, I personally don't get the entire touchscreen fad. There seems to be something really visceral about it, but I'm just as fast selecting things with a trackball.

Tim Sullivan: What do you think about this rumor that Apple's actually considering a slide-out physical keyboard?

Sascha Segan: There's a lot of ideas kicking around Apple, but the big question is which ones actually make it to a product. It would be a good idea for them, but I don't know if they could do it with the elegance that typically want from a physical design.

Tim Sullivan: Where do you see U.S. carriers going in the future? What kind of services and capabilities can people expect from wireless providers?

Sascha Segan: You're going to see a lot more speed, flexibility, and freedom as we go forward, provided that the marketplace doesn't consolidate too much.

Verizon, AT&T, and T-Mobile has all said they're going to LTE around 2010 or 2011. That's a fourth-generation technology that's truly global in scope, and it's much more open than a lot of the technologies we're using right now. Sprint has said they're going to WiMAX, another very open technology. So we may see, provided there's not too much consolidation, a marketplace that looks a lot more like the Internet provider marketplace, where you shop based on price and customer service and you buy the best device for you separately, and you can switch between carriers a lot more easily than you can now.

Tim Sullivan: Don't you think that phones are basically becoming -- I guess the best way to describe it is mobile computing or handheld computing platforms? The dream of cloud computing with a handheld interface is one that we've heard for a long time. Are we getting to the point now with technology where that actually becomes feasible?

Sascha Segan: Absolutely. That's a place where salespeople have been ahead of the curve for years. They've been computing on the road for years now. Handhelds today have the power of, as people like to say, PCs of several years ago. Handhelds on open operating systems have applications that are as effective as many PC applications. You can do a lot of your work on the road.

It seems like the barrier is getting to be not applications not network, but just keyboard and screen size. There are some things that people just like to do on a bigger device. I think in the future

you're going to see, for instance, handhelds that plug into attachable keyboards and bigger screens. It functions as a handheld but becomes then your laptop when you need a laptop form factor.

Tim Sullivan: So there'd be no need to carry around a laptop. Your computer literally would be your mobile computing device.

Sascha Segan: Exactly. We've seen the very first generation of this in an interesting product called the Celio REDFLY. This is a peripheral for Windows Mobile phones that basically looks like an ultralight laptop, and it's a brainless laptop. It's a keyboard and screen for your Windows Mobile phone. You connect it to the Windows Mobile phone and it lets work on the Windows Mobile phone but with a laptop form factor. That's really cool.

Now that device has got a lot of the 1.0 syndrome, if you know what I mean, but I think it's a harbinger of things to come.

Tim Sullivan: You mentioned Windows Mobile. The general perception right now is that they're kind of behind, although they are selling a lot of devices. First of all, I'd like to hear your opinion on that. And secondly, they've been talking about the next version of Windows. What impact will that have on Windows Mobile devices?

Sascha Segan: Windows Mobile seems to be developed independently of Windows on the desktop, but they are working on the next version of Windows Mobile. It's going to be, from what I've seen from leaks, basically, a lot easier to use, a lot more stable, and a lot more oriented towards people and communication.

Windows Mobile is a really flexible operating system. It's great for connecting to back-end business systems. It's great for connecting to the Microsoft infrastructure. It has a tremendous amount of third-party software, but it's kind of difficult and annoying to use and often buggy. That's where it's gotten its bad rap. So hopefully Microsoft will be able to streamline the user interface and stabilize the Windows Mobile devices so they can take advantage of this incredible infrastructure they have in business.

Tim Sullivan: Sascha, any other advice that you'd like to give sales professionals as they're considering a mobile phone or a mobile carrier today? What are the kinds of things they should be on the lookout for?

Sascha Segan: I think you need to pay a lot of attention to coverage still. I can't believe that in 2008 we're still worrying about coverage, but it's absolutely true. All of the carriers have coverage maps online. T-Mobile's coverage map, for instance, goes down to the block level.

Also, ask around. Salespeople travel a lot. You're on the road a lot. If you don't have signal, you haven't made the sale. That is the single most important thing, I think.

Tim Sullivan: Yeah, that happened to me recently. I was in Lansing, Michigan and I was on a Verizon area; supposed to get good coverage; could not get out. It was very unusual. I've also used Sprint in the past, and you're right. There just seems to be pockets of areas that aren't covered. Is that simply because we just don't have the right technology, the right number of cell towers? What is the reason for this spotty coverage in the U.S. today?

Sascha Segan: It's really just build-out. There's a wide range of annoying, bureaucratic, somewhat boring reasons why a carrier might not have built out a certain area. Carriers don't own spectrum all the way across the country. Often they make roaming deals with other carriers. Maybe municipalities will have restricted the number of towers in their town, etc. It's a big complicated country, and the carriers haven't really invested in covering it comprehensively.

Tim Sullivan: Sascha, this has been great. Thanks so much for joining us today. We'd love to have you join us again.

Sascha Segan: I'd be happy to talk about it with you.

So ends this episode of *Selling Geek*. I hope you found it both entertaining and enlightening. Be sure to tune in for our next show, when we talk with CNet's Brian Cooley about the best cars for salespeople.

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So until next time, good luck and good selling, everyone!
