



GSM, CDMA - What's The Difference?

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Those mobile phone ads are pretty slick. Some of them are quite funny like the one with the two sales guys whose phones break down. One gets a free replacement and continues to make a bundle while the other guy's pants are falling down because he is over laden with the quarters he needs to make calls from pay phones. Another company rivets your attention through the use of cute and strange animals. Most of these ads can be very enticing but should they be the reason for buying?

Mobile phones, like most consumer products, should be purchased based on what you are going to use them for, not how good the ads are or even because of the great offers. Naturally one of the uses will be to make phone calls but if you are a business traveler the device you choose can be a very useful tool or it can be a costly and painful barrier to doing business.

To keep things simple, there are basically two protocols around the globe for mobile phones, CDMA and GSM. There is no point in explaining what the acronyms stand for. CDMA was developed in the US and is the dominant standard in NA and parts of Asia. GSM was developed by an international organization which promotes the standard globally. The European Union mandates the sole use of GSM in Europe putting CDMA at a disadvantage if you are travelling there. GSM is better suited for international roaming as long as you have a quad band mobile device and it has the advantage of being able to take out the SIM card and inserting a prepaid one from the foreign country you are in. GSM carriers are Rogers and AT&T Wireless.

If you travel primarily in North America you are more likely to get better coverage with CDMA technology which has evolutions known as HSPA/LTE and EVDO. EVDO offers the fastest download speed so if you intend to do a lot of web browsing,

watching TV or downloading MP3s you are probably better off with a CDMA device. These mobile devices are sold by Telus, Bell Mobility and Verizon which has the largest number of subscribers in the US.

Regardless of your choice of provider always remember if you are going to be traveling to get a roaming package for both voice and data. Failure to do so can cost an extra \$500 for your trip or even more. They can be removed after one month.

Once you have identified your basic needs ask your friends and colleagues if they are satisfied with their signal strength and see if they experience dropped calls or slow downloads. There are many pockets where coverage is better from one provider over another.

A mobile device is a necessity in today's business world but you should assess your needs before heading to the provider with the great ads. You can get the device that best suits your needs and dramatically reduce your costs by asking a few questions of the right people.

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