

## **Verizon to ditch most phone plans, introduce plans 'shared' among family members, devices**

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NEW YORK (AP) -- Verizon Wireless, the nation's largest cellphone company, is dropping nearly all of its phone plans in favor of pricing schemes that allow consumers to share data usage among up to ten phones and other devices.

The new plans will let individuals add non-phone devices like tablets and laptops to their plans, as well as the phones of family members.

The change takes effect June 28.

It's the biggest revamp in wireless pricing in years, and one that's likely to be copied by other carriers. AT&T Inc. has already said that it's looking at introducing shared-data plans soon.

Verizon's new "Share Everything" plans include unlimited phone calls and texting, and will start at \$90 per month for one smartphone and 1 gigabyte of data. If used only with a smartphone, "Share Everything" prices are lower than for current plans with unlimited calling and texting, but higher than plans with limited calling and texting.

Bigger savings will come for those who add more devices like tablets to their plans. In such cases, the new pricing system will be cheaper compared to getting separate data plans for each device. That gives Verizon a chance to capitalize on the growing popularity of tablets. Few consumers put tablets on data plans, probably because they dread paying an extra \$30 or so per month, on top of their phone bills.

Under "Share Everything," adding a tablet to a plan will cost \$10 per month. Adding a USB data stick for a laptop will cost \$20.

Verizon's limited-calling and texting plans will disappear, except for one \$40-per-month plan intended for "dumb" phones. Verizon is keeping its limited-data plans for single non-phone devices, like the \$30 tablet plan.

Current Verizon customers will be able to switch to the new plans or keep their old ones, with one exception. Those who have unlimited-data plans for their smartphones won't be able to move those to new phones, unless they pay the full, unsubsidized price for those phones. (For example, an iPhone 4S that costs \$200 with a two-year contract costs \$650 unsubsidized, with no contract.)

Verizon stopped signing people up for unlimited-data plans last summer. The industry as a whole is moving away from the plans, since the data capacity of their networks is limited.

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Under the new plans, subscribers can stop worrying about monitoring the number of calling minutes or text messages their families use in a month, but they'll have to keep a close eye on data consumption. Verizon will allow subscribers to adjust their data allowance from month to month, but if they go over their monthly allotment, that will cost \$15 per gigabyte.

The data allowances start at \$50 per month for 1 gigabyte. That's enough for prudent two-smartphone users who use Wi-Fi a lot, but Verizon recommends getting 2 gigabytes for \$60. After that, each additional 2 gigabytes cost an extra \$10 per month.

Under "Share Everything," Verizon will stop charging extra for letting devices act as "mobile Wi-Fi hotspots." That means subscribers who have a recent smartphone could use it to connect a tablet to the Internet, without paying the extra \$10 per month for a tablet.

Verizon had telegraphed the move toward shared plans, but had not revealed the details or pricing.

Verizon Wireless is a joint venture of New York-based phone company Verizon Communications Inc. and Vodafone Group PLC, a British cellphone company with wide international interests.

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