

29 May 2009

By: Cosmin Vasile, Communications News Editor



[BlackBerry Bold 9000 Review](#)

One of the best smartphones coming from RIM

[MRSUMMARY=1]Recently entered on the touchscreen smartphone market, RIM decided to give one more shot to its traditional smartphone lineup with no-touch displays. One of the last such devices was BlackBerry Bold 9000, which should've been one of the best in its line.

Thanks to [PureMobile](#), we will see whether or not this good-looking smartphone rises to the challenge of its touchscreen disciples. Boasting a full QWERTY keyboard and a nice leather-like material, BlackBerry Bold 9000 is a business-oriented smartphone that intends to offer its users, above all else, a complete email solution.

Announced in May 2008, BlackBerry Bold 9000 hit the shelves in August 2008. There's only one color available for this product and as a business phone this should be Black.

[Blackberry Bold](#) is no cheap smartphone and even today, one year after its launch on the market, you can buy it for at least 500USD unlocked and without any plan.

Design

There's not too big a difference between BlackBerry Bold 9000 and its older predecessors, except maybe for the leather-like compound of the back cover. The same 'pie form' so recognizable from afar and the same medium-sized weird display are still among the main attractions of the smartphone. Measuring 114 x 66 x 14 mm and weighing 133g (including battery), RIM proved that it could shorten the size of its devices, even though it kept the same form factor. The handset feels great in hand, but I have noticed that the back cover is slightly moving, like it's not firmly fitting into its slot.

The right side of the smartphone features a dual volume key and dedicated camera key. On the left side there's a lot of activity, which implies a 3.5mm jack port, a small miniUSB port, a dedicated Voice command key and a microSD slot. On top of the phone there a special button that locks the keypad, while on the button there's a small slider that opens the back cover. The 2 Megapixel camera embedded on the back of the phone features flash and is protected by a wide metallic frame. The same metallic compound surrounds and covers the edges of the smartphone, while the back hood is made of a leather-like material that feels exceptional to the touch. The QWERTY keyboard features 35 keys, which have been wisely placed.

Still, the numeric keypad has been moved to the left side, which makes it a little bit annoying for left-handers. The keypad benefits from a great and even backlighting, which makes the use of the phone in dark areas perfectly possible. Between the display and keyboard there are four buttons common to almost all BlackBerry devices: Accept Call, Menu key, Back key and Reject call. In the middle, the famous trackball that make browsing through menus very easy.

The 2.6-inch display is covered by a protective foil, which can be removed as the device is not a fingerprint magnet. Above the screen you can notice the usual earpiece and a status LED, which blinks when you have a missed call or you have received a message. There is definitely some classy look here, but I could not get past the fact that Bold 9000 doesn't feel too solid and compact. Nevertheless, I'm almost sure that BB fans will be happy to find it much better looking than its predecessors.

Display and Camera

BlackBerry Bold 9000 features a 2.6-inch display, supporting 65k colors and a 480x320 pixel resolution. The medium-sized screen does its job very good. Just wide enough to provide a smooth Web browsing experience, with excellent brightness, vivid colors and very good contrast, the screen is perfectly visible in strong sunlight, which has become quite a standard for BlackBerries lately. The two themes included with the operating system make the phone's interface even more appealing. Overall, the quality image is quite high for a BlackBerry business device. In terms of performance, you can check out some of the tests I made below.

The 2 Megapixel camera isn't worth too much attention, but for a business phone this is not such a tragedy. Without being the lowest in terms of performance, it only meets the minimum requirements for a user who intends to take some pictures. The device features flash and 3x digital zoom, but lacks autofocus capabilities. Overall, images are saved pretty fast, but most of them aren't focused and the noise effect is at a high level.

[IMG=21][IMG=22]

Sometimes, colors look faded or simply insipid, which means that the contrast is low. Still, the module camera is better than what you have embedded in BlackBerry 8220 Pearl Flip. In the end, if it's necessary you can take decent pictures with the phone, but don't expect miracles. The interface of the camera is very basic and intuitive. You don't have too many options to use that would somewhat change the quality of the pictures, except for White balance and Effects.

[IMG=23][IMG=24][IMG=25][IMG=26]

The 2 Megapixels camera is there just so people won't complain that the handset lacks one. The dedicated camera key is also a nice addition, which means you won't need to keep using the trackball to take pictures (kind of annoying). Clips can also be recorded using a maximum resolution of 480x320pixels, but these have a lower quality than pictures.

[IMG=27][IMG=28][IMG=29][IMG=30][IMG=31]

Menu and Software

BlackBerry Bold 9000 runs BlackBerry 4.6.0 operating system, platform 4.0.0. This is one of the latest OSes from BlackBerry, but if you have an older one, it's usually better to update it to the latest version. The interface of the smartphone hasn't changed and if you already own one of RIM's devices this won't come up with anything new in terms of productivity tools.

[IMG=32][IMG=33][IMG=34][IMG=35][IMG=36]

The only improvement that you cannot miss is the look of the interface, which is more eye-candy than its previous versions. Colors of the icons you'll find in the main menu are

softly lighted in contrast with the dark background, and make a very good impression on the user. The usual Office package, called Documents To Go, developed by DataViz, is also included in Bold's operating system. Unfortunately, as you can see from the screenshots, you can only read or edit Word docs, Excel docs, and PowerPoint presentations, but need to pay if you want to make new documents.

[IMG=37][IMG=38][IMG=39][IMG=40][IMG=41]

Instead of getting more new features that might not come in handy at all, RIM preferred to keep all the old stuff and give everything a shiny look. Not too bad, as Blackberry's all productivity tools are pretty solid. The phonebook can store an unlimited number of contacts, as long as your available memory allows it. Each contact can be filled with multiple numbers, e-mail addresses, birthday and anniversary information, a picture and a slot for both work and home addresses.

[IMG=42][IMG=43][IMG=44][IMG=45][IMG=46]

There are also some games that you can play when you're bored: BrickBreaker, WordMole, Texas Hold'em King 2, Sudoku, Klondike. Of course, there's always the possibility to add more software, Blackberry or Java compatible.

[IMG=47][IMG=48][IMG=49][IMG=50][IMG=51]

Communication

Finally, one of RIM's few devices that include the whole connectivity package: HSDPA 3.6 Mbps, Wi-Fi, EDGE and GPRS class 10. Fans of the brand can now benefit from any of the above-mentioned connections when needed. Although the integrated browser is not that good, as rich-in-graphics pages are loading pretty slowly, you can easily change it for the MiniOpera browser, which is perfectly compatible.

[IMG=64][IMG=65][IMG=66][IMG=67][IMG=68]

Tested on EDGE and HSDPA networks, the device's results were pretty good: 120 Kbit/s download and 79 Kbit/s upload (EDGE), 1117 Kbit/s download and 321 Kbit/s upload (HSDPA).

[IMG=52][IMG=53][IMG=54][IMG=55][IMG=56]

In terms of messaging Bold 900 features the standard Blackberry package. Should you either want multiple emails or instant messaging, this smartphone has it all. Unfortunately, you will be limited to BlackBerry Internet Service email accounts on the Bold. The same goes for the instant messaging application, which only features a proprietary BlackBerry service. Furthermore, to fully integrate the BlackBerry into a company's system, the installation of BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES) is required. Synchronizing the smartphone with the PC can be made very easily with the Blackberry Desktop Manager. The transfer is very fast, should you either be syncing emails and messages or simply filling your smartphone with music files.

[IMG=57][IMG=58][IMG=59][IMG=60][IMG=61]

If that is still not enough for you, then note that Bold 9000 also features a built-in GPS receiver with A-GPS support and BlackBerry Maps. The GPS module works perfectly and completes the technical features of a smartphone that has all the BB fans wanted included in a single device.

[IMG=62][IMG=63]

Blackberry Bold 9000 is a quad-band GSM (850 / 900 / 1800 / 1900) and tri-band HSDPA

(850 / 1900 / 2100) smartphone, which features GPRS, EDGE, and HSDPA. Other connectivity tools include the Bluetooth 2.0 with A2DP and the miniUSB for PC synchronization (including charging). The call quality is exceptionally good, almost impressive. You'll thus be able to talk on the phone even in more crowded areas. The GSM signal is also very good on the EDGE network, as well as on WCDMA.

[IMG=69][IMG=70]

Processor and Memory

BlackBerry Bold 9000 is powered by a single Intel XScale 624MHz CPU, which makes it one of the fastest BlackBerries up to date. While modern BlackBerries incorporate ARM9-family processors, there are some that are added ARM7 CPUs, which are a little bit slower. Unfortunately, this is showing especially when browsing the menu, using multiple applications and especially when 3G connectivity is used. I have experienced some lockdowns when I have tried to open multiple apps within the device's menu. Overall there are some hiccups that could've been avoided if a more powerful CPU had been embedded.

[IMG=71]

The smartphone embeds 1GB user free internal storage memory and 128 MB Flash memory, which makes data processing much faster. Storage space can be expanded up to 8GB through the hot-swappable microSD slot card. The sales package also contains a 1GB microSD card, depending on the location.

[IMG=72][IMG=73]

Multimedia

There's not much to tell about the multimedia just that it bears the same conservative and business-like look, which is quite understandable as it comes from a business smartphone. The built-in music player supports album art features, but lacks any Equalizers. It supports MP3/WMA/AAC+ music files, which can be sorted by Artist, Albums and Genre. Users will be able to make their own playlists within seconds. Furthermore, even if these are only basic features, I was surprised to find out that the quality of the sound was pretty high, especially when using your own headphones. Thanks to the 3.5mm port you can now change the included headphones, which are not that bad though. One more drawback that I noticed was the missing Repeat feature, which was present in previous models.

[IMG=74][IMG=75][IMG=76][IMG=77]

The music player can be minimized to the background and listening to music through the stereo Bluetooth feature is also possible. The external speaker is very loud and pretty clear, but the lack of an Equalizer makes the music sound pretty much the same, regardless of the song played. Overall, multimedia features are surprisingly good for a business phone, and especially for a BlackBerry device.

[IMG=78][IMG=79]

Battery

The 1500 mAh Li-Ion battery has an officially stated life expectancy of 310 hours in standby, and of about 5 hours in talk-time mode. Our test unit made it for about 4 days at medium use. Heavy users will need daily charging or 2-3 charges per week. The autonomy is pretty acceptable for a BlackBerry owner that only uses the specific BlackBerry services, namely

messaging capabilities.

[IMG=80][IMG=81]

Impressions

BlackBerry Bold 9000 is one of the most appealing smartphones coming from RIM in terms of design. Even though it's not one of the smallest devices, the Bold (like its name says) is definitely one of those phones that have the 'wow factor'. Better seen as a business device, I would recommend the Bold 9000 before any other Blackberry smartphone, not just because it looks good, but also because it is one of the few that include all the features a businessman needs nowadays.

The Good

Having all the latest technologies embedded into a BlackBerry device might seem awkward, as RIM is recognized for its conservative thinking (see Apple). HSDPA and Wi-Fi included in the same smartphone is one great feature. The 1500 mAh is also one of the best features in a BB device and it shows, as the handset will just continue to work for days and days. The multimedia experience, while on a basic level, shows great potential. Last, but not least, the QWERTY keyboard and the excellent finishes make BlackBerry Bold 9000 one of the best smartphones ever manufactured by RIM.

The Bad

The only thing I was really concerned about was the sturdiness of the device, which is nowhere near its predecessors'. The somewhat high price could also become an obstacle to the phone's possible success in the market, but that could be explained by the fact that it targets a supposedly rich class - businessmen.

Sales Package

Blackberry 9000 Bold smartphone
Standard battery 1500 mAh Li-Ion
Blackberry Premium 3.5mm Stereo Headset
AC Travel charger
USB data cable
Leather case
1GB microSD memory card
User manual
Sync software CD-ROM

[IMG=82][IMG=83]