

**From:** [Jim Patterson](mailto:Jim.Patterson@mobilesymmetry.com)  
**To:** [jim.patterson@mobilesymmetry.com](mailto:jim.patterson@mobilesymmetry.com); [mobilesymmetry@gmail.com](mailto:mobilesymmetry@gmail.com)  
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Greetings from Kansas City, where the Fourth of July holiday festivities are popping and the grill has been put to work. Nothing like beef from the farm – I highly recommend it, especially with garden grown vegetables.

Thanks also for the round of questions and article suggestions last week. We also added 10 to the Sunday Brief mailing list so you can welcome each and every one of them in confidence. In an unusual twist, one of the top articles in RCR Wireless last week was the Sunday Brief entitled “[Still an Android World](#)” which was two weeks old. (You aren’t the only one catching up on prior Briefs). I would strongly urge you to go back and read the strategic planner article from May 22 (“The Year Ahead – Your Strategic Planning Primer”). It did not make the RCR Wireless print schedule (perhaps we will publish it soon), but in the article we talk about several “take it to the bank” trends for the rest of 2011 and 2012. (If you want a copy of the article, please send me an email – I hope to get it posted to [www.thesundaybrief.com](http://www.thesundaybrief.com) very soon).

This week should be known as the “week of the counteroffensive.” AT&T, Google, and Blackberry all came out swinging. In the multi-front battle for the hearts and minds of the American (and global) consumer, the war rages on. Here’s what happened this week:

1. One of the trends highlighted in the Strategic Planning Primer article is that the carrier will begin to focus on applications *performance*, not just applications *availability*. We suggest in the column that the carriers should be asking the following question: “*How can we create billions of dollars of differentiation with a focused, prioritized applications strategy?*” One answer to that question came in the form of the **AT&T/ Zynga announcement this week** (press release is [here](#) for those of you who missed it). From the news release: As part of the relationship, AT&T will work closely with Zynga to optimize the mobile gaming experience for AT&T customers. Having already tested several games across a range of AT&T Android devices, the companies will continue to explore ways to extend device battery life during game play, as well as improve network efficiency for playing. You may be asking, “Really? I need better latency for my 30-day running game of *Words With Friends?*” No. This announcement is not for today’s games, but tomorrow’s. It’s a coup, just in time for 2Q earnings (which we predicted last week would be OK for AT&T thanks to the iPhone 3Gs performance).

AT&T has launched a counter-offensive. Unable to compete on broad speed coverage (click [here](#) to see the April results of the Broadband Speed Test from PC World), they will differentiate on applications and latency. This is the start of a new relationship between the carriers and the applications providers (large and small). It’s not driven by the product development group, but by marketing.

AT&T’s battle cry is **Get Closer**. From those of us who focus on latency, it’s a critical relationship that will drive up carrier managed services revenues. And, as best as I can tell, it does not violate net neutrality. (I can see it now – that’s Level3’s or Sprint’s connection to our backbone that’s causing the delay – if you sat your server on America’s fastest broadband network, we wouldn’t have these issues. Said another way, AT&T might have an open pipe between their servers and the cell site, but to third party servers – it’s a “little slower.” And that does not violate net neutrality – not one bit).

While AT&T’s announcement focused on consumer games, imagine if [Glenn Lurie](#) was able to duplicate this for AT&T’s (and Google’s) business customers. Could wireline-focused competitors stand a chance?

2. We needed our frenzy for June, and Google provided it to a few, at least, with **Google+**. [Here’s the announcement](#), if you missed it. As we have followed Google for nearly two years, this is no surprise. And, for those of you with your heads in the US sand only, believing that the rest of the world lacks the bandwidth or intelligence to Tweet or Friend as well as Americans, Google’s social media service Orkut is gaining speed in India and Brazil (see note on Comscore’s latest report [here](#)). Still losing to Facebook, but a lot closer than you think.

Google's strategy, as outlined in the article, is quite simple: Provide an alternative to Facebook, and repackage Google's arsenal of services (messaging, video, etc.) to facilitate closer communication. Merely having better visual effects will not work here – Google will actually need to market this service to pull away Facebook users.

Think of this as we would a political campaign. You are the upstart (billionaire) candidate, and Facebook is the four-term incumbent with immense popularity. The "party" is behind you (social is a critical strategy for Google), and your positions on the issues are a lot closer to the mainstream than your candidate. But the incumbent is well-heeled and has good ties to the media (I had to chuckle at the [Washington Post's objective article on Google +](#). Really? C'mon, do the full disclosure that until very recently, Donald Graham sat on the FB Board of Directors).

So how would a good challenger carry Google into victory? Start with increasing the incumbent's negatives. This may be tricky for Google, as they are in the middle of an FTC investigation, but highlight the value of privacy. Grab a good quote or two from Mark Zuckerberg and legally blow it out of proportion. Sway the occasional Facebook user away from a service they weren't passionate about anyway.

**Google needs to "go negative" on Facebook** in a Silicon Valley sort of way. Highlight the value of privacy, security, and true friendship. Get sentimental and nostalgic (think about the swing vote), like those [recent commercials about my dog and Chevy truck](#).

Then, **Google needs an incentive**. Unlike Facebook, Google can provide app and device credits. Set up a "refer a friend" contest, and top 100 Google + referrals each week win a free Nexus S with \$25 of applications credits. Call it Google's "Economic Stimulus Plan."

Finally, **Google needs business supporters**. Google + for business takes on LinkedIn, emphasizing security (they have closed network access to servers – no Internet) and features (voice, conferencing, mobile, video collaboration, and yes – email). Bring in the big corporate donations. There's no McCain-Feingold here.

More on this in an upcoming column. **Bottom line:** Google needs to treat this like a campaign. Hire Carl Rove and Mark Penn and David Axelrod. Make it fun while you are going negative. Be hokey and pokey. Provide incentives for all while you are taking the big corporate donations. Facebook won't know what hit 'em.

3. If that weren't enough for the week, **Blackberry** introduced its [Blackberry Protect service](#), a product certain to create the world's largest Network Address Book. For years, the carriers have been operating network address books for customers, sometimes for a fee. Blackberry has incorporated it into their base service with a free application. It's very easy to use, although was a bit clunky for the T-Mobile network to handle. With this announcement, Blackberry joins Apple and Google in the cloud with free storage and protection. **Next up:** Blackberry's answer to DropBox – I'm sure they're working on it.

Blackberry Protect is the start of RIM's counteroffensive to take back the cloud. This is their differentiator and a very good move. However, it's like Spain trying to fight Germany in WWII. Sure, Blackberry has a legacy (so did Spain), but their share of new decisions is puny compared to Apple and Android (see [attached for the latest Nielsen figures](#)). Get help from Microsoft or IBM (or maybe even HP). Don't fight a war on two fronts (carriers, competing OS) that you cannot win.

It's time for counteroffensives – that's what healthy competition is all about – spurring innovation and driving productivity. As history has taught us, however, a good counteroffensive has a) a strategy; b) good supply routes for reinforcements; and c) a backup plan. Let's see how each of this week's counteroffensives stands the test of battle.



Now for five you may have missed:

1. FREE EVOs for switchers at [Walmart.com](#). \$30 at Radio Shack. Blackberry who? Apple what? Sprint's last minute push to make 2Q as good as possible...

Compare 




**HTC EVO 4G with Google - White (Sprint)**

- 1 GHz Snapdragon Processor
- 4.3" 480 x 800 WVGA OLED Touchscreen
- 3G/4G Data Speeds

**\$0.00\***

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Compare 



**HTC EVO 4G with Google (Sprint)**

- 1 GHz Snapdragon Processor
- 4.3" 480 x 800 WVGA OLED Touchscreen
- 3G/4G Data Speeds

**\$0.00\***

**\$0.00\***

2. I rarely promote other blogs, but Mark Shuster's retrospective on computing and Amazon's [AWS service](#) is one to read.
3. [TechCrunch reported Friday](#) that FaceBook is set to launch a video service with Skype next week. Take that, Google +!
4. A terrific retrospective from Engadget on the [20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first GSM call](#).
5. A little self-promotion, as [I am Keynoting the COMPTEL CEO breakfast](#) in Orlando, October 2-5. Subject: Competition, of course. I promised to pack the house, so please, get to the breakfast!

We've seen a significant uptick in Mobile Symmetry subscribers, and will pass the 60,000<sup>th</sup> church family on the Mobile Symmetry service after we load an 18,000 member church in July. I am positive that you know of someone who has a sports team, civic organization, small business, church, school, family calling tree, etc. that needs better organization. Please do your part – [sign up](#) today, and then add a group. It's easy, fun, and all groups are free for the first 30-days. Also, if you are an Android user, please download our Android app (featuring free Calling Name) [here](#) or search on Mobsym through the Android Market.

Thanks! Have a safe and Happy Independence Day!

Jim Patterson  
CEO & Co-Founder  
Mobile Symmetry  
[www.mobsym.com](http://www.mobsym.com)  
816.210.0296  
Click [here](#) for our new Facebook site!  
Twitter: @mobilesymmetry