New study tests Tucson mobile phone carriers

Inside Tucson Business

A new independent study done this month of mobile phone performance in the Tucson region from the consumer’s perspective shows that providers are improving reliability and speed but Verizon Wireless is, in many cases, the best performing service in the market.

RootMetrics, a company headquartered in Bellevue, Wash., said it conducted almost 10,000 tests in the market then sorted the data to determine which carrier provided the fastest and most reliable data network, the fewest dropped and blocked calls and the fastest text service. The company also gave an overall RootScore Award winner to the carrier that achieved the best combined score.

Verizon was at the top with an overall combined score of 92.1, followed by AT&T at 73.5, Sprint at 49.9, Cricket at 46.0 and T-Mobile at 43.6. RootMetrics says its overall scores are accurate to varying degrees within 2.9 to 5.9 points, depending on the number tests that were conducted.

In specific areas:
• Data: Verizon scored an 88.9, far outdistancing second-place AT&T’s score of 47.0. RootMetrics said Verizon’s network download speed was 1.9 times faster and uploads speeds were more than 3 times as fast as its closest competitor. For reliability, AT&T’s extremely low failure rate of just 0.9 percent made it the best. At the other end of the spectrum, T-Mobile’s failure rate of 27.7 percent was one of the highest RootMetrics said it found in any of its tests in any market.
• Call performance: There was no clear-cut winner with all five carriers delivering statistically equal performances on tests of either dropped calls or outgoing calls that couldn’t be placed.
• Text: Fewer than four points separated the top three but Verizon at 98.5 edged out AT&T at 96.8 and T-Mobile at 94.8. In its tests, RootMetrics said at 4.6 seconds, Verizon had the fastest median receive time for texts, followed by 5.6 seconds for T-Mobile, 6.0 seconds for AT&T, 27.7 seconds for Cricket and 68.3 seconds for Sprint.

As part of its ongoing research, RootMetrics invites mobile phone customers to download a free app from its website — www.rootmetrics.com — that will allow it to continue developing data on mobile phone coverage. Tucson is one of 49 markets the company has conducted its research.

RootMetrics previously conducted research in Tucson in November. In the intervening four months, tests show both Verizon and AT&T have increased their speeds, T-Mobile’s reliability and speed have declined and this time, Cricket was added.

Julia McGavran, a spokeswoman for RootMetrics, says she anticipates the company will return for another month of tests before the end of 2012.
FOCUS ON NONPROFITS

Community Foundation for Southern Arizona has ‘gift’ for philanthropy

By Roger Yohem
Inside Tucson Business

Outside Arizona, Tucson has a reputation for its weather and being a retirement city with a major university. To insiders who live here, the Old Pueblo has a more meaningful reputation. Among its citizenry, Tucson is known as a caring, giving community.

This philanthropic legacy dates back to a time when five local business leaders wanted to expand the pool of charitable givers. By growing the base of donors, they knew there would be more money available to better the community.

Buddy Amos, Jim Burns, Jim Click, Ed Moore and Granger Weil formed the Greater Tucson Area Foundation in 1980. To better reflect its regional reach, it became the Community Foundation for Southern Arizona (CFSA) in 1997.

“Since they were running businesses, they were getting all these solicitations. They saw the need to start a community foundation so there would be somewhere else to go, to promote greater philanthropy,” said Clinton Mabie, president and CEO of CFSA.

Today, the foundation has grown into a charitable clearinghouse that typically awards between $6 million and $8 million a year. On behalf of individuals, families, estate planners, financial advisors, organizations and businesses, CFSA is part advisor, educator, tax consultant, conduit and administrator to those who “gift.”

Mabie characterizes CFSA as a “one-stop shop for managing philanthropy.” The mission of his 10-person staff is to inspire and support donors making a difference.

“This is a complicated business, with a lot of partnering and education. Because we are a public charity, donors get the highest tax deduction possible by law,” Mabie said. “For a professional advisor, we are here to help. For individuals, we are donor-centric, turning their passion, no matter what that is, into investments in the community. That’s our role, to make that happen.”

CFSA makes it happen primarily through a network of affiliates and supporting organizations that are part of the foundation. The Santa Cruz Community Foundation, Oro Valley Community Foundation and Stone Canyon Community Foundation are affiliates.

Supporting organizations maintain their own identity, such as the Thomas R. Brown Family Foundation. They do their own grant-making and receive all the tax benefits. CFSA handles all the administrative services.

Other supporting organizations include the Zuckerman Community Outreach Foundation, Melody S. Robidoux Foundation, Knisely Family Foundation and the Howard V. Moore Foundation.

For donors seeking advice on how to gift or what programs to support, CFSA provides free, confidential counsel through its Center for Planned Giving. The center’s professionals are impartial and will guide and refer “to whatever is best for them. It’s up to the donor, totally customized,” said Mabie.

For example, CFSA is exploring options for a client who wants to help young people in the juvenile justice system. As they “age out” of the system, there are no services to help them transition back into the community.

“This donor wants a program for those people. We convened the community players to see if we can come up with a plan for the donor to get that done,” said Mabie.

Regardless of the cause, a donor’s desires are never judged. At his prior post in Chicago, Mabie had a large endowment “to support the bettering of relationships between cats and dogs.” Another was to support public participation in the sport of curling.

“They are someone’s passions. Our business is to honor their intent,” he said.

Typically, most foundations oversee funds for more obvious needs like education and basic human services. Over the years, CFSA has helped manage the distribution of some $100 million in charitable donations. It currently administers about 500 funds, some over $1 million with numerous at the $10,000 minimum.

Contact reporter Roger Yohem at ryohem@azbiz.com or (520) 295-4254. Focus on Nonprofits is a regular quarterly feature of Inside Tucson Business. Email suggestions for future articles to editor@azbiz.com. The next Focus on Nonprofits column is scheduled to appear in the June 29 issue.