Kyocera Showcases Durability, While High-End Players Remain All Wet

Andrew Berg

As a manufacturer of mid-range Android smartphones, Kyocera has had to get creative with how it differentiates its products. That creativity is realized in late August U.S. launch of the Kyocera Elite

verizon
1:00 PM
Google
1:00
PM
90°F 92°/85°
New York
JUN 30
SUN
AccuWeather.com
Updated 06/30/2013 1:00
Voicemail
Email
Gallery
Chrome
Phone
Contacts
Camera
Messaging
KYOCERA

(Verizon). On the phone side of things, this is vanilla Android with run-of-the-mill specs thrown in for good measure. That said the Elite is about as practical a phone as the budget-minded smartphone user will find.

I've been playing around with the Elite and thought it was worth noting for the simple fact that it proves that the upper part of the market could be doing more to make pricey smartphones resistant to the elements.

I dropped the Elite ($349 - unsubsidized) in a vat of water and left it for about 10 minutes. After removing the phone and drying it off, everything was in working order. Try that with an iPhone 5S ($649 - unsubsidized) and see what kind of results you get. My guess is you'll be heading over to your nearest Apple Store for a replacement (hope you bought that AppleCare!).

According to Kyocera, the Elite's waterproofing protects against blowing rain and the phone can be submerged in up to 3.28 feet of water for up to 30 minutes. The phone also features Kyocera's patented tissue-conduction technology for clearer voice calls, as well as wireless charging. Kyocera seems to understand that these are the little novelties that matter when you're trying to be seen.

The move to durability especially is a good one for a company that serves up phones for the budget-conscious. For those phone shoppers with price at top of mind, it seems a feature like waterproofing, which reduces the cost of damage to their device, would definitely pop as they peruse a throng of devices that are otherwise pretty similar.

It's really disappointing that the big name, higher-end smartphone manufacturers haven't done more with waterproof technology. Aside from Sony's flagship Xperia and Samsung's Galaxy S4 Active, there's been little movement in this area from the Android camp, and Apple is notorious for putting aesthetics above practicality (i.e. Gorilla Glass, Antennagate etc.). In the end, however, I'm guessing Apple and others' lack of waterproofing has more to do with the profit involved in disposability.

Bottom line: Devices like the Kyocera Elite, which accentuate durability, exploit a hardware differentiator, while the higher end of the market moves to software as a way to make their products stand out. After seeing the Elite take a swim and emerge no worse for wear, I have to hope that features like water resistance eventually become standard on all devices, especially the expensive ones.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/25/2014 - 5:43am*):
http://www.wirelessweek.com/articles/2013/12/kyocera-showcases-durability-while-high-end-players-remain-all-wet