

## Half-Caf Latte with a Shot of Google?

Andrew Berg

Google's recent move to provide Wi-Fi at all of Starbucks's 7,000 company-owned stores is intriguing. It seems to portend a continued encroachment on the connectivity market from the Internet giant. After all, Google has already launched its uber-fiber project in Kansas City, and Provo, Utah, with more markets on the way.

Perhaps most significant is that Google is promising Wi-Fi that is 10-times faster than what AT&T is currently offering in Starbucks shops across the country. It's no small deal that Google, which until now has primarily focused on search, software and online advertising, has just claimed territory previously held by one of the largest wireless and wired connectivity providers in the world. No, providing Wi-Fi to a few thousand coffee shops might not be the biggest deal ever, but I don't think Google has even begun to reveal its true ambitions in this area.

It will be interesting to see how Google leverages these hotspots, whether they're planning any kind of additional services or promotions for those who use them. AT&T was pretty straightforward with its Starbucks service. It provided the connectivity, threw in some branding and called it a value-add for customers. Google's aspirations on the other hand, with its trove of data and massive ad network, could be looking to innovate around what it means to provide free, fast Wi-Fi.

None of this is a surprise. Google is on the way to building a massive network of high-capacity fiber—a project that is most definitely in its best interests considering the portion of its revenue that comes from online advertising.

The product is already packaged and ready to go. Take a look at how it stacks up to existing packages from Verizon and AT&T. In those markets where Google is offering its in-home fiber service, Google includes the following for \$120 per month (2-year contract): 1GB upload & download speeds, full-channel TV, no data caps, Nexus 7 tablet, 1 TV Box, storage box, network box, 1TB of storage across Gmail, Drive and G+ photos. In my humble opinion, that sounds like a better deal than anything I've seen on the market today.

Whether Google will toss its hat in the ring with the wireless providers, or how it might go about offering a competing service, remains unclear. What's crystal clear is that if Google can build out a major fiber network, with considerable coverage, it

## **Half-Caf Latte with a Shot of Google?**

Published on Wireless Week (<http://www.wirelessweek.com>)

---

harbors the potential to be disruptor on many levels. I'm not saying I have any idea how Google might go about shaking up the wireless industry (partner with Dish? build its own network?), but I don't think it's too much of a stretch to say Mountain View is surveying the situation.

Wireless carriers right now are pretty much talking amongst themselves. AT&T is scrapping with T-Mobile. Verizon bickers with AT&T, and Sprint boasts that it has the rest beat with unlimited. There's certainly no need to throw Google in there right now, but I'm increasingly interested to see if Google is planning a strategy to insert itself into the conversation.

**Source URL (retrieved on 01/28/2015 - 5:15pm):**

<http://www.wirelessweek.com/blogs/2013/08/half-caf-latte-shot-google>