

## The Fog of a Price War Is Real in AT&T's New Mobile Share Plans

Andrew Berg

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**\$130**  
per month

3 lines  
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4 lines  
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AT&T's new Mobile Share plans are misleading in that they are basically a limited promotion on par with how cable companies offer you an introductory rate, which is then increased at a later date.

I'll start out by saying AT&T's new 10GB Mobile Share plans are a good deal: four lines, 10GB of data at \$160. You arrive at that amount by adding 4 lines at the new reduced rate of \$15 per line ( $4 \times \$15 = \$60$ ), regardless of device, plus \$100 for that 10GB bucket of data.

And that's exactly what I got.

However, a day after having switched to that plan on February 3, I upgraded one of my lines to a new iPhone 5C. When I checked my bill, I found that the monthly per-line fee for that line had increased from \$15 to \$40.

When I called customer service, I was told that the new plans were only good for existing customers on plans active on or before February 2. Upgrading to a new device is essentially initiating a new plan/contract, which means that any time I upgrade a line, I'm going right back to that \$40 per-line monthly connection fee. For a plan with 5 lines, that will eventually mean an extra \$125 per month if I upgrade. Which means my \$160 plan eventually increases to \$285 per month.

Covering this industry on a daily basis, I'll admit that I should have known better. There's no way to get around device subsidies. Sure, with this offer, AT&T was partially doing away with a portion of some subsidies, and new customers switching from another carrier can also get this deal. But that's just a temporary discount, in

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part I'm guessing to deflect T-Mobile's aggressive strategy, and not something AT&T can maintain.

What's irksome here is that AT&T hasn't actually changed its pricing structure, rather it's conveniently playing down facts in its messaging that are important to customers. When I upgraded that line, no one, and I mean no one, told me that I would be paying a \$40 connection fee for that line.

When I look at the front page of AT&T's website, I see the embedded advertisement, which makes it seem like a straight-forward, 4-line, 10GB, \$160 family plan is a real option. It's not. It's a limited-time promotion, unless you intend to keep the same device for the rest of your life, or you want to finance your device through AT&T's Next program.

The thing is, I probably should have known better, but people not as well-acquainted with the industry are being strung along on this one. In looking at one of AT&T's [forums](#) [1] on this topic, I am not the only one confused by exactly how this plan works.

To be fair, AT&T did make it right with me. Because I'd upgraded only a day after February 2, the customer service agent changed the date of my upgrade and in turn, got me the \$15 rate on that line.

[If you're confused by any of this, I don't blame you.](#) [2] As this price war continues, with Verizon now in the mix, the carriers are depending on confusion as a way of keeping the water murky. Subsidies have made American consumers ignorant of what it is they're actually paying for when they sign a wireless contract, and carriers intend to continue leveraging their confusion in an effort to make a big bill look like a steal.

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<http://www.wirelessweek.com/blogs/2014/04/fog-price-war-real-ts-new-mobile-share-plans>

### Links:

[1] <http://forums.att.com/t5/Wireless-Billing/Mobile-Share-Value-Plans-Questions-and-Discussion/td-p/3900689>

[2] <http://www.wirelessweek.com/blogs/2014/03/new-wireless-plans-could-mean-billing-nightmare-customers>