

## Chapter 1

# Your BlackBerry Isn't an Edible Fruit

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Getting a BlackBerry history lesson
  - ▶ Checking out your BlackBerry behind the scenes
  - ▶ Seeing what your BlackBerry can do
  - ▶ Finding out the benefits of BlackBerry hardware
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**Y**our BlackBerry can help you do more things than you could ever think of. For example, your BlackBerry is a whiz at making phone calls, but it's also a computer that you can use to check your e-mail, as well as surf the web. We're talking *World Wide Web* here, so the sky's the limit. Help is always at your fingertips, not sitting on some desk at home or at the office. Need to check out the reviews of that restaurant on the corner? Need to see (right now) what's showing in your local movie theaters, or what the weather will be like later tonight, or the best place to shop? Need to get directions to that cozy bed and breakfast, or see the latest news headlines, or look over stock quotes? Want to do some online chatting, or view some pictures online and download them? You can do all these things (and more) by using your BlackBerry.



BlackBerry is also a full-fledged personal digital assistant (PDA). Out of the box, it provides you with the organizational tools you need to set up to-do lists, manage your appointments, take care of your address books, and more.

By arming yourself with a device that's a sleek phone, a camera, a portal flash drive, an Internet connection, and a PDA all built into one, you become a power person. With your BlackBerry (along with this resourceful book), you really can improve your productivity, better organize yourself, and increase your cool factor. Watch out, world! Person bearing a BlackBerry smartphone coming through!

## *Knowing Your BlackBerry History*

Your BlackBerry smartphone is truly a wondrous device, boasting many features beyond your ordinary mobile phone. But its sudden popularity actually didn't happen overnight. Like any other good product out there, BlackBerry has come a long way from its (relatively humble) beginnings.

In the days when the Palm Pilot ruled the PDA world, Research in Motion (RIM, the maker of the BlackBerry) was busy in its lab, ignoring the then-popular graffiti input method to design its own device with the QWERTY keyboard — the kind of keyboard people already knew from working on their computers. RIM didn't stop there, however. It also added an always-connected e-mail capability, making this device a must-have among government officials, as well as professionals in the finance and health industries.

To meet the needs of government officials and industry professionals, RIM made reliability, security, and durability the priorities when manufacturing its devices. Today, the BlackBerry smartphone comes from the same line of RIM family products, inheriting all the good genes, and also boosting usability and especially multimedia capabilities.

## *How It Works: The Schematic Approach*

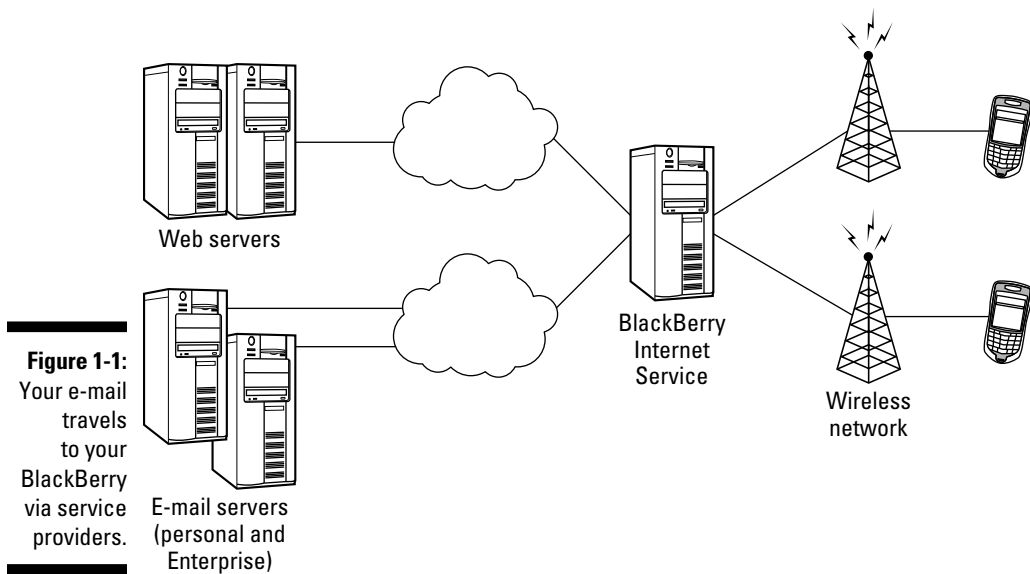
For those of you who always ask, “How do they do that?” you don't have to go far; the following sections answer just that question.

### *The role of the network service provider*

Along with wondering how your BlackBerry actually works, you might also be wondering why you didn't get your BlackBerry from RIM, rather than a network service provider such as AT&T or Verizon Wireless. Why did you need to go through a middle-person? After all, RIM makes BlackBerry.

Those are excellent questions — and here's a quick-and-dirty answer. RIM needs a delivery system — a communication medium — for its technology to work. Not in a position to come up with such a delivery system all by its lonesome, RIM partnered and built alliances across the globe with what developed into its network service providers — the usual suspects, meaning the big cellphone companies.

These middle-providers support the wireless network for your BlackBerry so that you have signals to connect to the BlackBerry Internet Service — which means you can get all those wonderful e-mails (and waste so much valuable time surfing the Internet). See Figure 1-1 for a schematic overview of this process.



Network service providers don't build alliances for nothing, right? In return, RIM gave those providers the right to brand their names on the BlackBerry they offer for sale. For example, a Verizon BlackBerry may look different from a similar model that you can get from Vodafone. This point leads to another question: Do BlackBerry functionalities differ from phone model to phone model? Quick answer: In the core BlackBerry applications (such as Tasks and Address Book), you find no major differences. However, the network service provider might or might not support some BlackBerry features, such as Instant Messaging. (See Chapter 10 for more details on Instant Messaging.)

## *Connecting to your personal computer*

Nowadays, personal computers are household necessities because we spend so much time on them and so much information is stored in them. It should come as no surprise that BlackBerry works hand-in-hand with your computer. The USB cable that comes with your BlackBerry does more than just charge your device. All the chapters in Part V in this book are dedicated to guiding you in making use of this important connection with the help of BlackBerry Desktop Software and all the utilities that come with it. For example, Chapter 19 guides you through how to back up almost anything in your BlackBerry, down to your desktop. Also, Chapter 16 shows you how to use the BlackBerry and its microSD slot as storage that goes where you go.

## *Doing the BlackBerry world-traveler thing*

If you purchased your BlackBerry from Verizon or AT&T, chances are that your BlackBerry will continue to work when you travel to, say, London or Beijing. You need to worry about only turning on your BlackBerry (and maybe the extra roaming charges). Because your BlackBerry is quad band, it can work in more than 90 different countries.



What's quad band? Basically, different cellphone networks in different countries operate in different frequencies. For example, the United States and Canada operate in two frequencies: 850 and 1900 MHz; Europe and the Asia Pacific, 900 and 1800 MHz. Your BlackBerry is designed to work in these four frequencies — 850/900/1800/1900 MHz — so you're covered no matter where you go. Well, almost. Check with your network service provider before you hop on a plane, just to be sure.

Two dominant technologies compete in the worldwide cellphone industry today:

- ✓ **Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA):** Available in the United States through Verizon Wireless.
- ✓ **Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM):** A tad older than its CDMA rival, GSM is available in the United States through Cingular and T-Mobile.

Back in the day, if you purchased a BlackBerry from a GSM-based carrier (for example, AT&T or T-Mobile), you could travel with your BlackBerry without

worrying about losing service because most carriers outside of North America are GSM based. If you purchased a BlackBerry from a CDMA-based carrier (including Verizon and Sprint), then you definitely couldn't use your BlackBerry to check your e-mail while traveling. That was then; this is now.

If you have a CDMA BlackBerry, quad-band technology allows you to run it on a GSM-based carrier as well, making your BlackBerry a phone that can travel the world. So, regardless of whether you have a CDMA- or GSM-based carrier, the only thing you need to do before traveling is call your carrier to make sure you have your international plan activated.

## *Oh, the Things You Can Do!*

Your BlackBerry is a work of art when it comes to smartphones. But besides its looks, the always-connected e-mail is likely first in the long list of reasons why you got your BlackBerry in the first place. And if you need to go global, you can use your BlackBerry in more than 90 countries. Just hop off your flight, turn on your BlackBerry, and *voilà!* — e-mails on your BlackBerry while you're 6,000 miles away from home. (See the preceding section for more info about traveling with your BlackBerry.) Generally speaking, you can receive and send e-mails from your BlackBerry just like you can from your computer at home.



Although e-mail is BlackBerry's strength, that's not the only thing it can do. The following sections go beyond e-mail to point out some of the other major benefits you can get from your device.

## *All-in-one multimedia center*

In the early days of the BlackBerry, many consumers were hesitant about purchasing a BlackBerry because it didn't offer multimedia functions such as a camera and audio playback. But RIM changed all that, adding more features to the BlackBerry than a typical consumer might expect. Not only does the BlackBerry have a high-resolution, multi-mega-pixel camera (see Chapter 14), but it also has a memory slot for a microSD chip (see Chapter 16). So, your BlackBerry can function as an MP3 player, a portal video player, a portable flash drive, and your personal photo collection (see Chapter 14).

## *Internet at your fingertips*

Yup, you can browse the web by using your BlackBerry, which has full HTML5 and CSS3 support (this just means that a site you access on your BlackBerry appears like it would on a computer). Even better, you can continue chatting with your friends through Instant Messenger, just as though you never left your computer (see Chapter 10). You can also get up-to-the-minute information when you want it — or when you need it. Imagine getting an alert when your stock is tanking. True, you don't want that to happen, but you absolutely need this information if you want to act in a timely manner.

If you're not into stocks, how about getting sports and weather information? Or maybe traffic alerts? Say that you want to know the best restaurants in town for that special evening — birthday, anniversary, first date. Many services that you can access on the Internet from a computer, you also can access on your BlackBerry.

Download? Absolutely! BlackBerry supports the downloading of applications and games from the BlackBerry App World's vast selection. For example, you can download more productivity tools than what come standard on your BlackBerry, such as PDF readers, or an exciting game of Texas Hold 'Em.

## *Me and my great personal assistant*

You might be saying, "But I'm really a busy person, and I don't have time to browse the web. What I *do* need is an assistant to help me better organize my day-to-day tasks." If you can afford one, by all means, go ahead and hire a personal assistant. If not, the next best thing is a personal *digital* assistant (PDA). You can find many PDAs on the market today; the most popular ones are marketed by Palm and WinCE. Getting a PDA can really help you get organized — and for much less than hiring a secretary.

So, are we telling you to go out and buy a PDA? No way! Put away that credit card because you don't need to go that route.

Whip out your BlackBerry and take a closer look. That's right, your BlackBerry is also a full-fledged PDA, able to help you remember all your acquaintances (see Chapter 4), manage your appointments (Chapter 5), and much more.

## *Me and my chatty self*

Besides all the features that we describe in the preceding sections, your BlackBerry is also a full-featured phone. By offering voice dialing and the ability to carry out conference calls with you as the moderator, your BlackBerry isn't like standard cellphones. To find out more about your BlackBerry Phone, see Chapter 7.

## *Look, Dad, no hands!*

Your BlackBerry comes equipped with an earphone that doubles as a mike for hands-free talking. This accessory is your doctor's prescription for preventing the stiff neck that comes from wedging your BlackBerry with your shoulder against your ear. At the very minimum, it helps free your hands so that you can eat Chinese take-out. And, if you happen to be residing in the United States, in most states, you're required by law to use a hands-free accessory while driving when you use a cellphone. (Not that we recommend using your cellphone while driving, but if you really need to make that call, going hands-free is safer than trying to divide your attention between the phone and the steering wheel.)

But RIM didn't stop with just your standard (wired) earphones. BlackBerry also supports cool wireless earphones/mikes — the ones based on Bluetooth technology. "But how could a bizarrely colored tooth help me here?" you might ask. Fooled you! *Bluetooth* is a codename for a (very) short-distance wireless technology first used to connect simple devices (such as computer accessories) that's now commonly used on cellphones, specifically on wireless earphones/mikes.

## *Chewing on Hardware*

The main concerns most of us have when buying a product are quality and reliability. Will the product last? Does it perform the way that the flier says? Will I regret having bought this item six months down the road? The following sections look at some of the hardware features that make buying the BlackBerry a wise purchase.

## *Power efficiency*

Now, anyone who's had an ear to the ground regarding BlackBerry knows its reputation as a highly efficient little machine when it comes to power consumption. Even with the colored, high-resolution screen, the power consumption of the BlackBerry still has a 15-day standby time and close to four hours talk time. So, when the salesperson offers you a special deal on a second battery, simply tell him or her that you'll think about it. With the BlackBerry's standard battery, you'll have more than enough power.

## *Memory management*

When you first receive your BlackBerry, the device definitely has ample free memory. However, that memory — which your BlackBerry uses for pre-installed applications and other applications that you download — doesn't grow while you use BlackBerry. You're stuck with a fixed amount of memory, which can prove limiting over time. While you install more and more applications, this free memory gets used up. In fact, you could eventually run out of memory altogether.



Don't confuse this fixed amount of memory with the memory available through the microSD slot. A microSD chip can store MP3s, portable videos, and pictures that you download or load from your PC.

Does your device die when you run out of memory? No, thank goodness. Your BlackBerry is capable of monitoring the free memory on your device. If you're ever in danger of reaching your upper limits, the BlackBerry has a memory management tool that cleans house to free this limited resource.

Right out of the box, BlackBerry applications are capable of figuring out what data it doesn't really need. For example, the BlackBerry Browser caches data to enhance your experience when you browse the web. *Caches* use local copies of web pages to speed up the reloading of previously visited websites, so generally, the pages load faster, and you can view pages you've previously visited, even if you don't have good coverage. However, this cache also takes up memory space. When the operating system (OS) tells the Browser that the device is reaching its upper memory limit and it needs to do some house cleaning, the Browser deletes this cache. Similarly, BlackBerry Messages deletes e-mails that you've already read, starting from the oldest and working its way forward in time.



Curious about how much available space your device has? Follow these steps to find out:

1. **From the Home screen, press the Menu key.**
2. **In the menu that appears, scroll to highlight Options in the list of applications, and then press the trackpad.**

The Options screen opens.

3. **Select the Device option, and then select Device and Status Information from the Device screen that appears.**

In the Device and Status Information screen that appears, the File Free field tells you how much available space is left.

## *A sentry is always on duty*

If you look at the history of human existence, you can see some nasty things that human beings are capable of doing. Unfortunately, the virtual world isn't exempt; in fact, every day a battle is fought between those who are trying to attack a system and those who are trying to protect it. Included among the people attacking the system are those who are trying to steal corporate data for their advantage, as well as individuals trying to steal personal data to carry out identity theft.

A computer connected to the Internet faces an extra risk of being hacked or becoming infected by a computer virus intent on simply annoying the heck out of you or (even worse) wreaking havoc on your computer. Fortunately, security is one of the strong points of the BlackBerry.

RIM has built features into its software that allow companies to curtail activities for their BlackBerry users that they deem risky, such as installing or running a third-party application. Data transmitted on and from the device are encrypted to prevent possible snooping. RIM also has a Signature process for application developers, which forces developers to identify themselves and their programs if they're developing any applications that run on the BlackBerry platform and need to integrate with either BlackBerry core applications or the OS.



The security measures that RIM implemented on the BlackBerry platform have gained the trust of the U.S. government, as well as many of the Forbes Top 500 enterprises in the financial and health industries.

Remember the *I love you* and *Anna Kournikova* viruses? These virtual evils were transmitted through e-mail, a script, or sets of instructions in the e-mail body or attachment that either the host e-mail program or, in the case of an attachment, the program associated with the attached file could execute. Fortunately, BlackBerry Messages doesn't support scripting languages. As for attachments, out of the box, BlackBerry supports few file types, mostly images and text documents. BlackBerry's viewer for such files doesn't support scripting either, so you don't have to worry about threats from e-mails that contain these attachments.