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## Verizon iPhone Tests AT&T Customer Loyalty

By [Seth Fiegerman](#)

NEW YORK ([MainStreet](#)) — If all the hype about the newly released [Verizon iPhone](#) is to be believed, this could prove to be a tough year for AT&T, but one new study offers a glimmer of hope for the communications giant.

AT&T (Stock Quote: [T](#)) beat out Verizon (Stock Quote: [VZ](#)) as the wireless phone company with the most customer loyalty for the second year running, according to Brand Keys' 2011 [Customer Loyalty Engagement Index](#).

Brand Keys, a brand consulting group, surveyed adults across the country to determine the strength of their relationships to more than 500 brands in 71 different categories ranging from automobiles to allergy medications. As part of this, Brand Keys analyzed the results for the big four wireless providers, and found that AT&T and Verizon ranked first and second for customer loyalty, with Sprint and T-Mobile coming in third and fourth, respectively.

According to the report, this means that AT&T is by definition more likely than Verizon to have customers who will choose to remain engaged with its products in the next 12 to 18 months. But this loyalty will certainly be tested now that AT&T has lost exclusivity over the iPhone, Apple's (Stock Quote: [AAPL](#)) hugely popular smartphone.

Already, one [survey](#) found that 26% of AT&T customers plan to switch to the Verizon iPhone on day one, which would seem to undermine AT&T's supposed brand loyalty.

Part of the reason for this may simply be that while AT&T's brand loyalty is the strongest in the wireless category, none of the wireless providers actually have exceptional customer loyalty. Neither AT&T nor Verizon ranked among [Brand Keys' top 10 brands](#). Instead, this list was dominated more by tech companies like Apple and Samsung that produce smartphones, rather than the companies that administer contracts for these phones. This makes sense: Consumers are more likely to have loyalty to the company whose logo is on the back of their favorite gadget, rather than the company whose name is on the phone bill they get every month.

Still, there is good reason for both AT&T and Verizon to be happy, as Apple turns out to be the brand with the second highest customer loyalty on this list. As long as these carriers continue to partner with Apple to sell products like the iPhone and iPad, they can be sure customers will keep shopping at their stores.

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