

# RIM: Signs of life for struggling BlackBerry maker?

Jon Swartz, USA TODAY



(Photo: GEOFF ROBINS  
AFP/GETTY IMAGES)

**3:27PM EST December 2, 2012** - SAN FRANCISCO — Research In Motion's recent renaissance in stock price just might resuscitate demand for fresh new BlackBerrys.

The contrarian theory goes like this: If RIM has a heartbeat, and flustered customers are convinced it can stick around for awhile, consumers and businesses may snap up the phone/organizer — and ditch their iPhones and Androids in the process.

It sounds far-fetched, mobile analyst Carl Howe admits, but not implausible. Early versions of BlackBerry 10, RIM's new phones and the software platform running them, have generated positive feedback.

RIM has "a good chance of surprising people," says Howe, vice president of research and data sciences at Yankee Group. But the new BlackBerrys will strongly appeal to a small slice of the smartphone audience — about 10% — that prefers a hard keyboard and easy-to-use productivity tool, he says.

That meshes with RIM's plan to offer consumers and corporations a contemporary alternative to iPhone and Android. RIM executives have traversed the globe for three months, huddling with developers and analysts, to promote BlackBerry 10, Chief Marketing Officer Frank Boulben says.

The new crop of BlackBerrys, expected sometime after Jan. 30, are considered essential to RIM's survival. They feature a touch-screen, Web browsing and apps that consumers have come to expect on iPhone, Android and other smartphones.

RIM is betting big on BlackBerry after its PlayBook tablet computer flopped.

RIM shares are in motion. They surged as much as 10% in trading Thursday before cooling, sparking talk of rejuvenation in the beleaguered company. The stock closed Friday at \$11.60.

The stock, which is up nearly 80% since late September, perked up after Goldman Sachs analyst Simona Jankowski upgraded RIM to "buy" from "neutral" and said there is a "30% chance" that RIM's much-heralded BlackBerry 10 smartphones will be a hit.

Or is it all a mirage, as some analysts contend?

Francisco Jeronimo, research manager for European mobile devices at IDC, and others contend the market is reacting positively because of the forthcoming new BlackBerry models, but it isn't nearly enough to compete with Apple, Samsung and others.