

A mobile phone too smart to mess with social media

When, three years ago, I introduced the first version of this artfully simple phone from Switzerland, it could have been argued that a voice-and-text-only phone that worked solely on the original 2G network – thus knew nothing of data – was something of a reverse status symbol: place your sub-fusc Jasper Morrison-designed Punkt MP-01 on the boardroom table and you state quietly: a) you are too important for the triviality of social media, apps and all that; and b) the few important people close enough to you to have your number will call or text when they have something significant to say.

As a workday phone, it makes sense. I doubt that when you are, say, negotiating Brexit head-to-head with Michel Barnier, he spends much of the time fiddling around with his Instagram – OK, the president of the United States, I'm not so sure. But a simple phone (don't upset it by calling it “dumb”) shorn of fancy features “adds value”, as the phrase goes, for serious people. However, 2018 is very different from 2015. Today, apps – and social media in particular – have become, for a lot of us, a kind of passive-aggressive existential threat. They track you,

they distract you, they are insidious in dozens of ways. And yet most of us would probably feel unarmed during the business day without a 4G smartphone – no email! – and a little naked in our downtime too... no Google Maps!

Welcome, then, to the second generation Punkt, the MP-02, which is a substantially improved and still-smoother take on the MP-01, but with 4G on board. The MP-02 is a beautiful device, the call quality is superb, the screen and interface pleasing. It has security by BlackBerry. Yet it still doesn't offer any 4G-dependent functions on its monochrome screen. Here is the MP-02's new proposition, which you will regard either as cool or annoying depending on your status, disposition and philosophy of matters digital: the MP-02's 4G is for tethering only. So you can use it to create a mobile hotspot and go online with your laptop or tablet when you want to connect to the world beyond your phone contacts list. But doing that becomes, as Punkt's publicity puts it, “a choice, not a reflex”.

Punkt MP-02, £295, from punkt.ch.



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