

What are the best rooting apps

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Root Metrics on Wednesday will start offering an Android app that lets users compare coverage of the various mobile operators and contribute to Root’s network performance service. “Root collects data about wireless network performance, sharing some with consumers and selling more detailed reports to operators. It collects the data in two ways, including hiring people who drive around cities in cars equipped with phones from all the large carriers running Root’s data collection software. In addition, Root lets iPhone and now Android users download software to their phones that collects and sends Root data about network coverage and performance and also shares with users some of the same data. Root had offered a bare-bones beta app for Android and BlackBerry users more than a year ago, but it didn’t have much of a user interface, said Paul Griff, co-founder and CEO of Root. With the new Android app, like the iPhone app, users can view a map of their location that shows the coverage of their operator, using a color-coded scheme where green is the best coverage and black is the worst. Users also get a basic comparison of coverage of the other operators in their area. Anyone can view the maps on Root’s website. The apps also let users test the speed of their data connections. On the Android app, that test uses an updated method. On the iPhone client, the app tests data rates by downloading a relatively small 64K bit file to the phone. “The way people use their phones and what they do with the data network has changed dramatically,” Griff explained. “It used to be you’d grab a Google search page or get directions or e-mail.” The 64K bit test was designed to mimic the most common use of data on phones. Now, however, people are downloading movies and music to their phones and uploading photos. Using the small packet size doesn’t give a fair measure of the higher-speed data networks, he said. So the new Android app measures speed over a period of time and by opening multiple concurrent sessions, which is the way that the Android browser works by default, he said. In addition to download speed, the app measures performance by collecting data about whether the connection gets broken, how quickly the session opens and what are the minimum and maximum speeds during the test period. For now, only the basic download speed data will be displayed to phone users. Root expects to soon update the iPhone client to test data downloads in a similar way. Also, in the second quarter, Root expects to update the maps to display additional network measurement information. That could help in instances where the map may show excellent coverage while a user is unable to make a call because the network is overloaded. “We are developing and will start introducing in the public maps some new ways of filtering data that will give you a look at congestion and other dimensions of performance,” he said. In both apps, the only time it collects data is when the user interacts with the application. The original beta applications collected data in the background without user involvement. “The feedback was people didn’t want anybody collecting anything without overt involvement,” Griff said. However, now that tens of thousands of iPhone users have the app, that’s changed. “Ironically, the most common request on the iPhone app is ‘can you enable persistent data collection,’” he said. Users want to be able to turn on data collection for a specific period, for example, during their commute. Griff said Root plans to add a feature like that in the future. Next week, Root expects to release its first full-scale market profile, starting with Seattle. The report, some of which Root will release publicly, will rank carriers by voice and data network performance. The company hopes to release such reports, which it will sell to operators and other interested companies, for more than 130 markets this year. Targeting operators with such products has kept Root busy enough that it has put off one of the initial goals of the company: offering a service for enterprises. “We will get there,” Griff said. “It was the original genesis of the company. But frankly I don’t foresee us focusing on that enterprise market in the coming couple of quarters.”Nancy Gohring covers mobile phones and cloud computing for The IDG News Service. Follow Nancy on Twitter at @idgnancy. Nancy’s e-mail address is Nancy_Gohring@idg.com

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