

Tech[nology]News:

Pantech Element tablet impresses

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At a school dominated by iPads, sometimes other smart tablets do not get the attention they deserve. One such tablet is the Pantech Element, an Android 3.2 tablet with an 8-inch screen. I have spent two weeks playing around with and using the Element for a variety of tasks, and here are my initial impressions.

The Pantech Element is exclusively carried by AT&T, one of the nation's largest wireless service providers. The tablet used in this review had a 4G LTE mobile data plan from AT&T, which proved to be a lot faster than I expected. The 4G service was quick to load Web pages and the tablet never had to buffer a movie or a song on the Pandora app.

The 4G service was tested in multiple places in Chicago, including Bridgeport, IIT campus, and downtown, near the lake. 4G LTE service had full bars the entire time, which was pleasantly surprising. Because of the fantastic coverage in this area and reliably fast data speeds, I highly recommend AT&T if you are looking for a service provider for a new tablet.

As far as the physical aspects of the tablet go, it has an 8-inch screen with no physical buttons on the front. On the side/top (depending on how you hold it) is the volume rocker and lock button. Viewing the tablet in portrait orientation is much more pleasant than the iPad.

Having owned both, I can safely say that while the iPad feels clunky and large while

holding it in portrait orientation to read eBooks, the Element is quite the opposite, feeling natural and well-fit to my hands, which are on the small side.

The tablet sports a rather unusual 1,024x768 resolution, which is a 4:3 aspect ratio. Because of this, the tablet uses letterboxes for widescreen content. However, the 4:3 ratio is also a blessing in disguise, because the Element performs well in both orientations. Most 16:9 tablets (including the iPad) tend to feel long and skinny when held in portrait orientation, so the Element is more comfortable to rotate and use in either orientation.

Another feature worth noting is that the Element is submersible in water up to 1 meter. Although the touchscreen is inoperable while water is present, the waterproofing can be useful if you use the tablet near a pool or other body of water, because most electronics these days are extremely hydrophobic. The Element's waterproofing can bring you some peace of mind that your beautiful piece of technology won't be ruined by a rain shower.

The Element was also impressive in its performance. It is powered by a 1.5GHz dual-core Qualcomm Snapdragon S3 processor, which is more powerful than almost every other tablet in its class. It also comes loaded with a full 1GB of RAM and 16GB of internal storage, so keeping your entire music collection or maybe a few HD movies loaded on the internal memory is entirely feasible. There is also a slot for a microSD card, if you are craving more storage for media.



Image courtesy of whowired.com

Graphically-intensive games, HD video content, and lossless audio all performed perfectly on the Element. Also worth noting is the Android 3.2 operating system. It is mostly untouched by Pantech, and the Honeycomb build of Android performs well. The subtle, quiet robotic sounds that come along with a swipe to another home screen were undeniably cool, and the haptic feedback of the tablet was incredible, sporting a variety of different vibrations for different actions.

Front and back cameras, at 2MP and 5MP respectively, both took acceptable quality pictures. The LED flash was surprisingly good for a tablet camera, lighting a medium-low light

situation quite well. Altogether, the Pantech Element is a solid contribution to the world of Android tablets. Its strong performance, good physical build, and lightning-fast 4G LTE service make it a pleasure to own and operate.

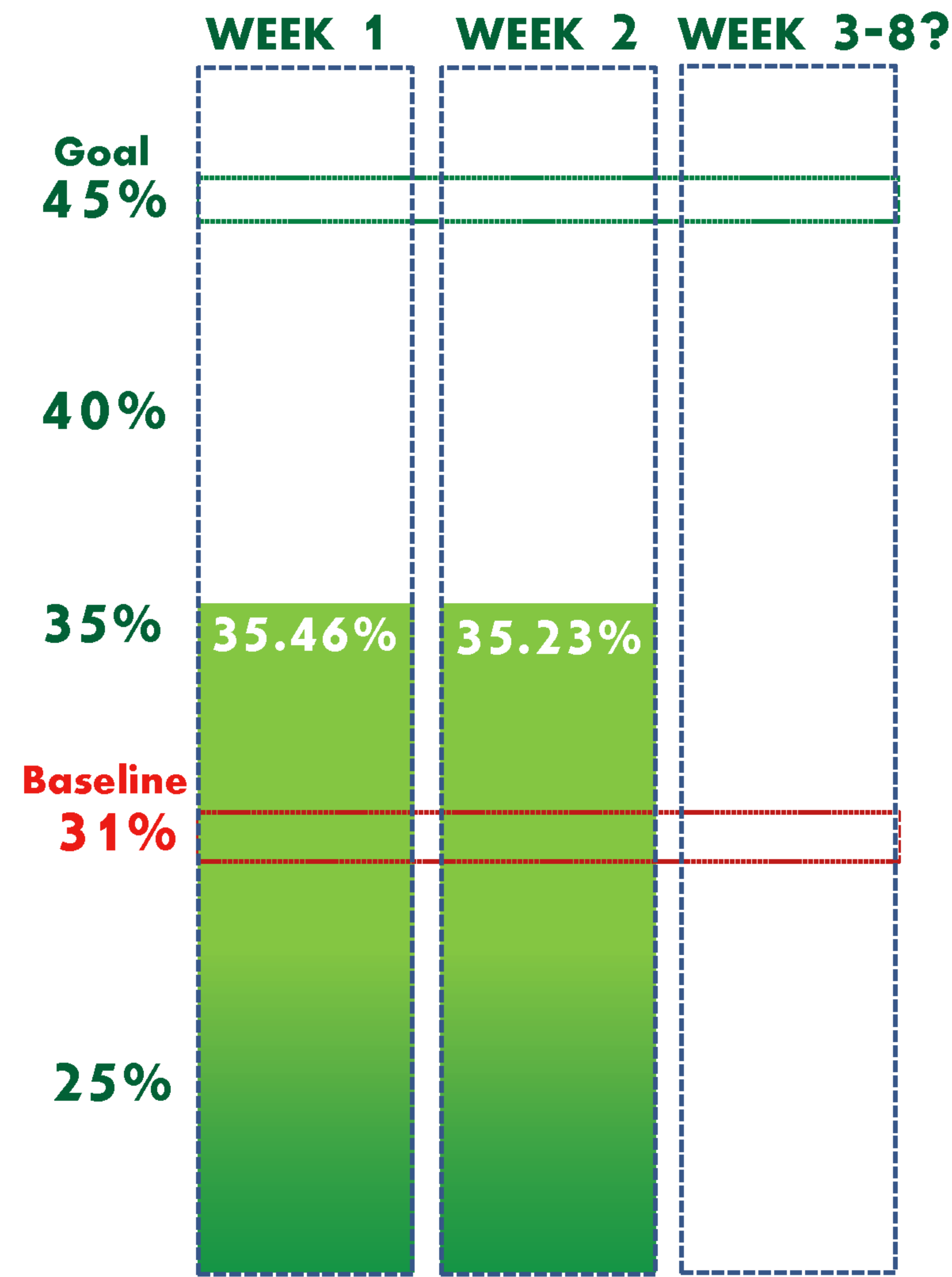
Being a former iPod touch, iPad, and Mac owner, I can safely say that transitioning over to my Android phone and tablet (and Windows PC) was a fantastic technological decision. I highly recommend the Element to anyone who is looking for an iPad alternative, because it goes above and beyond the iPad in usability, power, and speed. If you're on the fence about switching over to Android, consider trying out the hardware in an AT&T store before you buy.

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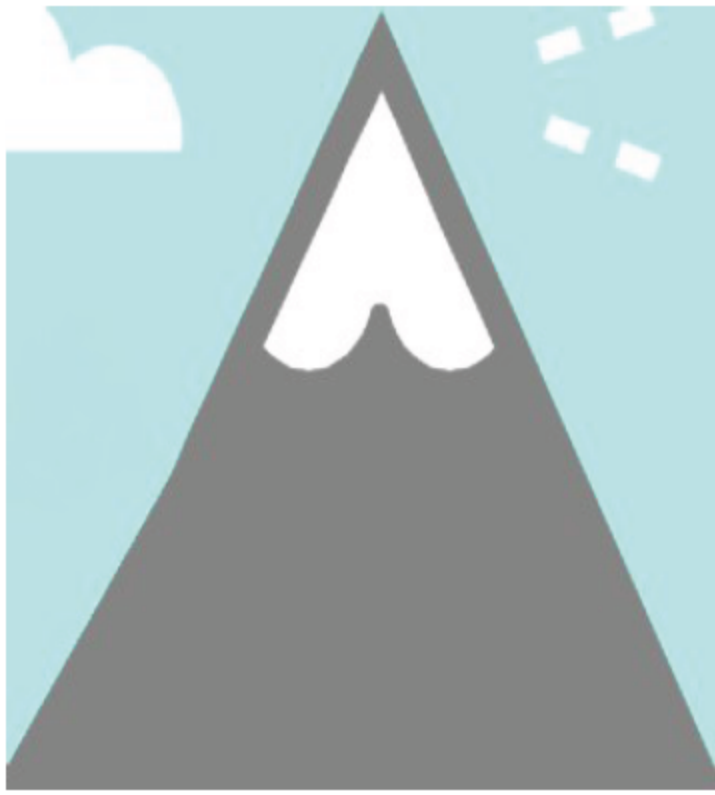
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