

By [BEN CHARNY](#) from the Wall Street Journal

Carlsbad, Calif.--AT&T Inc. Chief Executive Randall Stephenson on Wednesday said U.S. wireless networks aren't prepared for the surge in smart phones use that has already shown signs of choking their networks.

He defended his company's wireless network's performance, though, which has come under fire for not being prepared for the popularity of [Apple](#) Inc.'s iPhone, which the company sells on an exclusive basis in the U.S.

For example, AT&T has begun to nearly double the speed of its wireless network in some areas, and it invested more than \$9 billion last year to buy speedier, more efficient cellphone spectrum. The results can so far be found in the amount of customers leaving AT&T for other operators. AT&T's churn, as its known, is among the lowest in the industry in the last three months.

"I feel like we are closing the gap on this, but we're not there yet," he said, at the D: All Things Digital conference hosted by The Wall Street Journal. "We are about to see these issues manifest themselves industry wide."

Yet there's work to do, Mr. Stephenson said, both at AT&T and most other wireless operators that are now featuring smart phones. Smart phones, like the iPhone and BlackBerry, have significantly ramped up the amount of wireless Internet surfing that's been going on.

In the next few weeks, for example, [Sprint Nextel](#) is expected to begin selling the [Palm](#) Inc.'s Pre. Meanwhile, BlackBerry maker [Research In Motion](#) Ltd. is touting the wireless Internet experience of its latest BlackBerrys.