

Verizon Wireless is at it again. Just months after it got busted blocking applications in the Android Market, the carrier confirmed it is restricting consumers' ability to download and use Google Wallet ? the search giant's new mobile payment app ? on the new flagship Galaxy Nexus phone.

New mobile payment systems such as Google's are designed to offer consumers opportunities for flexible, fast and convenient transactions using their mobile devices. But Verizon is apparently limiting all third-party mobile payment systems in order to force its wireless subscribers to use Isis, the mobile payment technology being developed by Verizon in partnership with AT&T and T-Mobile.

This is a dangerous path for Verizon to go down. By so casually abusing its gatekeeper position to block applications that compete with its own offerings, Verizon is sending a message to all entrepreneurs and developers: If you come up with an interesting, disruptive new application, Verizon just may block it and promote its own version instead.

Needless to say, Verizon needs to stop pressuring third parties, including its own business partners, into removing competing applications from consumers' hands. These actions restrict consumer choice, stifle competition and kill innovation ? whether the application is a mobile payment system, offers a competing phone service, or allows you to use your phone as a mobile Internet hot spot.

Of course, Verizon would know it couldn't get away with its blocking action if the FCC had adopted meaningful consumer protections for mobile services in its Net Neutrality proceeding last year. And ironically, those weak rules were blessed in a joint statement from Google and Verizon, who argued that no rules were needed to protect innovation on the mobile Internet. How's that going for you now, Google?

Meanwhile, Free Press will continue to fight for real Net Neutrality protections on the mobile Internet.