NEWSLETTER

iOS Wi-Fi Tools NEED a Hardware Sensor

By **Keith Parsons, CWNE #3** · 2026-09-16 · originally on LinkedIn

Apple put a wall around the Wi-Fi radio in iOS, and that one decision explains the entire iOS Wi-Fi tools market.

No public interface lets a third-party app put the radio into monitor mode, which is the listening mode that captures every frame in the air rather than only the ones addressed to you. No public interface hands an app the list of neighboring networks.

So on iOS you cannot buy your way past the wall with software. You buy your way past it with hardware, and the ladder is steep.

At zero dollars you get the client's point of view and nothing more. nOversight, Wi-Fi Check, or our own WLAN Pros Toolbox. That is not a small thing. Most tickets start with one question, which is whether the problem is the Wi-Fi or the internet behind it, and a free app answers that in about ten seconds.

Around a hundred dollars buys a Wi-Fi neighbor scan on 2.4 and 5 GHz with Ubiquiti WiFiMan Wizard. Simple and no ability to export to anything but to the WiFiMan Wizard app.

Between five hundred and a thousand dollars, the wall comes down. A WLAN Pi Go, or a Hamina Clip paired with WiFi Explorer Pi, gets you a real passive scan across all three bands with full information element analysis, which means the actual contents of the beacon rather than a summary of it.

Then there is the top of the ladder, and the top of the ladder just changed.

Ekahau has introduced three role-based annual packages. Plan, for people who design and never survey, is $1,495 a year. Measure Pro, for people who survey and troubleshoot, is $1,495 a year. Software Suite, which includes both, is $2,495 a year. The Sidekick 2 is $4,995 and you buy it once.

For the iOS use case, Measure Pro is the line that matters, because it carries the Survey and Analyzer apps.

Here is the part worth sitting with, and it is not the discount. Compare the annual software cost across the field. Hamina Onsite is $780 a year and Hamina Planner is $980. Sidos Wave is $2,388 a year per device. Sidos bundles the hardware into that annual figure and will not sell it separately. Ekahau at $1,495 now sits in the middle of that range instead of above it. On software, the gap closed.

On hardware it did not move at all. The Sidekick 2 is $4,995 and the Oscium Nomad is $1,710. The Hamina Clip is $990 and does not come as hardware alone: that price is the Clip with six months of Onsite, and $1,180 gets you twelve months and a year of warranty.

The choice at the top of this ladder was never about the annual license, and now it obviously is not. You are choosing a measurement instrument. Four tri-band radios doing simultaneous capture across 2.4, 5, and 6 GHz with real spectrum output from an Ekahau Sidekick 2 is different from a Hamina Clip with two tri-band radios and no spectrum analyzer. If you need that, the software line was never what stopped you. If you do not need it, you can save thousands of dollars on hardware.

Every rung on this ladder buys something specific. The jump from free to five hundred buys you past the platform wall. The jump to $6,490 ($4,995 + $1,495) buys you spectrum and four-channel simultaneous capture in one box.

Spectrum is the one capability worth being precise about. The Sidekick 2 is the only rung with a spectrum radio built in. You can also get spectrum analysis lower down the ladder, and it works: a Wi-Spy Lucid on a WLAN Pi Go, or an Oscium Nomad plus a NetAlly NXT-2000. Every one of those is a second device at a second price, and one more thing to pack in your kit. That is a real option and it is not the same as opening one case and having it already there.

Prices here are Ekahau MSRP from September 2026. Everything else is as of July 2026, and vendors move, so confirm before you buy.

Which rung are you on, and when did you last check whether you needed the one above it?

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