

Dueling platforms at CES on wireless charging

January 11 2013, by Rob Lever



Just Wireless booth is seen at the 2013 International CES at the Las Vegas Convention Center, on January 10, 2013. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, runs from January 8-11 and is expected to feature 3,100 exhibitors showing off their latest products and services to about 150,000 attendees.

Smartphone battery running low? You are not alone. With millions of mobile devices handling more tasks, batteries are draining faster, forcing the industry to look for solutions including wireless charging, which can give consumers a power boost on the go.

Many solutions to this problem were on display at the [Consumer](#)

[Electronics Show](#) this week, but consumers may be confused by the number of competing platforms and standards.

The Wireless Power [Consortium](#), which includes some 100 companies and has 130 products certified under its standard known as Qi (pronounced CHEE), has been using the CES to promote the concept this week.

The consortium works with makers of smartphones and producers of charging pads, furniture and automotive consoles that enable a consumer to simply place a device on top for a charge—without worrying about plugging in.

"This is the only consortium that has real products on the market," said CJ Moore of Fulton Innovation, one of the [technology firms](#) behind the group that also includes Nokia, LG, Panasonic and [Texas Instruments](#).

The members are deploying charging pads and stations which can be used in homes and also at airports, [coffee shops](#) and other locations.

Moore, who was showing CES visitors the variety of charging pads and sleeves in use, noted that members have some 130 certified products and 10 million devices in use.

The consortium said Qi [chargers](#) will be available this year in the Toyota Avalon, as well as in audio and video products and furniture.

IHS analysts expect the industry to grow to nearly 100 million shipments by 2015.

The French firm Gidophone, whose 100 Qi charging stations in Europe allow customers to pay for a wireless charge, said at the CES show it is planning to deploy in the United States.



Visitors are seen at the LG booth during the 2013 International CES at the Las Vegas Convention Center, on January 8, 2013. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, runs from January 8-11 and is expected to feature 3,100 exhibitors showing off their latest products and services to about 150,000 attendees.

"The reaction to our kiosk, thus far, has been phenomenal," said Christian Pineau, Gidophone's vice president of sales.

But at CES, two other competing alliances offered their own platforms for wireless charging, using different technical norms.

The Alliance for Wireless Power, whose 30 members include Samsung, Qualcomm and Deutsche Telekom, said it would launch its own products using what it called a superior platform.

"Consumers prefer to charge multiple devices at the same time," said alliance president Kamil Grajski, as he showed a news conference various planned devices, such as coffee tables and auto consoles.

Grajski said the previous efforts have failed to generate enough participation over the past few years, and said his group is offering "a next-generation" [wireless charging](#) option.

He acknowledged that consumers may end up confused by the different, incompatible standards but added that "this is a competitive marketplace. No company or group can declare itself the winner."

Some companies, including chip and component makers, are members of both alliances. So is Samsung, though representatives of the South Korean firm said it is committed to AWP.

A third group called the Power Matters Alliance, backed by Google, AT&T and Procter & Gamble, announced in Las Vegas the addition of 30 new member firms.



Attendees are seen visiting the Samsung booth during the 2013 International CES at the Las Vegas Convention Center, on January 8, 2013. CES, the world's largest annual consumer technology trade show, runs from January 8-11 and is expected to feature 3,100 exhibitors showing off their latest products and services to about 150,000 visitors.

PMA said its membership has tripled in the past month, and its board now includes AT&T, Starbucks and the US government's Federal Communications Commission as an observer.

The PMA standard is being tested at Boston-area Starbucks with Duracell, a P&G unit. Delta Air Lines has installed PMA-compatible charging spots in airport lounges, and General Motors is planning to put in compatible charging consoles, according to the alliance.

Ariel Sobelman, president of the PMA, said the group includes

"undisputed global leaders in their respective category" and is working on "a real-world [wireless power](#) ecosystem here and now."

Jack Black, a scientist with Qi alliance member DLS Electronics, said the Qi system remains an open platform, which allows more companies to easily participate.

"It's like the battle between VHS and Betamax," said Black, whose firm does compliance testing for products. "At the end of the day the market dictates the standard—and this (Qi) technology has a lot of play."

NXP, a Dutch semiconductor firm, is producing components that can allow chargers to bridge different standards.

"We are thinking about a solution which recognizes your device and charges it," said NXP's Kai Neumann, who showed a multistandard charger at the NXP booth.

But the future may have other options, including more durable batteries, improved antennas and devices that manage power better.

Stu Lipoff of the Institute for Electrical and Electronics Engineers said firms are also eyeing technologies "where you can put a transmitter in the room and it will charge the device" from several feet away.

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