

Roku TV will stream video without set-top box (Update)

January 6 2014, by Ryan Nakashima



This image provided by Roku Inc., shows a screen frame grab of Roku's service. Internet streaming platform company Roku Inc. is launching a line of TVs that plays back video from services like Netflix without requiring an extra set-top box. While similar to smart TVs on the market already, Roku's platform with some 1,200 apps is far more comprehensive for those seeking out niche content. Roku plans to showcase them on the sidelines of the annual gadget show in Las Vegas, International CES, starting Monday, Jan. 6, 2014. (AP Photo/Roku Inc.)

Roku Inc. is launching a line of TVs that play video from services like Netflix without requiring a set-top box. While similar to smart TVs on the market already, the company's Internet streaming platform offers

some 1,200 apps and more comprehensive niche content choices.

The Saratoga, California-based streaming set-top box pioneer is partnering with two of the biggest Chinese TV makers in the world, TCL Corp. and Hisense International Co. Ltd. on six models. It plans to showcase them on the sidelines of the annual International CES gadget show in Las Vegas, starting Monday.

The Roku TV will also provide users a way to access feeds from regular live TV providers and to connect to other devices such as Blu-ray disc players.

Roku launched its first streaming video player in May 2008, when the box only played content from Netflix. Since then, the company has sold nearly 8 million units and claims that its device is more widely used than Apple's Apple TV set-top box. Apps available on Roku's devices include everything from Amazon Instant Video to Karaoke Party on Demand.

Anthony Wood, the founder and CEO of Roku, said the TVs will be priced affordably. He expects the sets to be sold in the U.S. at large retailers such as Walmart, Target and Best Buy starting in late 2014.

Wood says he would like the Roku platform to replace those offered by a variety of TV manufacturers. Many TV makers' platforms lack key apps from content providers like ESPN, Fox and the NBA.

Roku shares in the revenue when its partners sell advertisements, rent movies or sign up new subscribers. Within a few years, such revenue will be larger than the sales of the boxes themselves, Wood says.

"We do believe that streaming players are going to be a big business for a long time," he says. "But this is definitely the future of Roku."

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