

# A few standouts from the Consumer Electronics Show

January 9 2014, by Troy Wolverton

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Here are a few things that have stood out for me from the past several days at the Consumer Electronics Show.

5G: The rollout of 4G LTE services may be still a work in progress, but that doesn't mean the folks who develop wireless [technology](#) aren't already thinking about the future.

Ericsson, one of the giant telecommunications equipment providers, is exploring ideas for what might be included in a future "5G" wireless standard, Hans Vestberg, the company's CEO, told me in an interview [here](#).

One of the main things users notice about LTE is data speeds. But LTE has another important feature: It divides up bandwidth to different users on the fly, depending on what users need. So if you are downloading video, which requires lots of data, an LTE tower might give you access to more of its available bandwidth than it gives a user who is just sending text email. That was an improvement over how previous data standards worked. In 3G systems, the video user and the email user might get the same share of a cell tower's bandwidth.

In the future, Vestberg imagines expanding on that idea of dynamic bandwidth to other variables, notably latency and energy usage. In an effort to make highways safer in the future, cars may communicate their positions with each other wirelessly. Those communications won't require a lot of bandwidth, but the timing of the messages will be

important, Vestberg noted. To avoid accidents, you'll want them delivered right away.

Many technologists now envision having numerous sensors throughout homes and buildings to measure everything from temperature to the presence of water to detecting who's in the house.

That type of data won't require a lot of bandwidth nor does it necessarily require the immediacy of car-to-car communications, Vestberg said. Instead, what's really important for those sensors is that the transmissions be kept low-power, so the batteries in the sensors last a long time.

A future 5G network might be able to adjust these and other variables on the fly, depending on the requirements of the devices accessing it, Vestberg said.

He noted, however, that these are still early days and declined to predict when we might start seeing 5G networks. Most of the world is still using 2G or 3G networks, he noted, and the rollout of 4G services will be going on well into the future.

"We started with 3G in 1991, and that's still our top-selling product," he said.

**WEARABLE GADGETS:** One of the main themes of CES this year is wearable gadgets, particularly smart watches. These are devices that can connect to the Internet or other devices and have computing power and the ability to run or interact with mobile applications. I haven't figured out if such devices will ever find a mass audience or will remain in the fitness niche for people who want to compulsively track their every workout or footstep.

One reason for my uncertainty is that the devices are the subject of a lot

of experimentation right now in terms of design and features. The only feature of some is that they display alerts in the form of an icon when you receive a new text message or social media event on your smartphone. Some will display short messages. Some track your location or your vital signs. Some run apps or allow you to make phone calls.

There are some interesting ideas out there. Qualcomm's Tok [smart watch](#), for example, uses the company's Mirasol display technology. That technology offers full-color images but, unlike the screens used in the typical smartphone or tablet, it requires very little power. Unlike some other smart watches, its display is always turned on, so you can check the time or check for messages without having to press the power button.

Another potentially useful smart watch is the Filip, which is designed to be worn by kids. It's basically a phone that's limited to calling - or receiving calls from - a handful of phone numbers. And it could alert parents to the location of their children and when they have strayed from approved areas, such as on the walk home from school.

**SOCIALRADAR:** Loneliness may be a thing of the past, if Michael Chasen has his way. So, too, might be certain expectations of privacy or anonymity.

Chasen, the founder of educational technology firm Blackboard, has a new startup called SocialRadar. The company has created an app of the same name that's due out this month. The app is basically a mashup of location apps such as Foursquare, which allows users to share their location, and [social networking sites](#) such as Facebook or LinkedIn, through which users share details about themselves.

Using the SocialRadar app, users can find out in real time if any of their Facebook, LinkedIn or other friends are nearby. But they can also search and find people who have listed particular interests or have particular

backgrounds, such as sharing the same employer or having attended the same school.

The app will first be available for iOS, but it will soon be followed by one for Google Glass. As a Glass user looks at a person, the app could tell him or her in real time all of that person's details - pulled from social networks - such as their marital status, religion or employment history.

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