

Samsung envisions wearables using common system

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Health sensors and devices can get better if rival companies work together, Samsung executives said Wednesday.

The South Korean company pushed for a common system so that different manufacturers—from startups to established companies—can interchange key components such as the wristband. It would be similar to how different computers are built using the same processors and memory chips, some of which Samsung makes. The company believes

developing such building blocks will speed innovation and get products to market more quickly.

The system would also include ways to exchange and analyze data. Samsung believes that could help detect heart problems and other medical conditions sooner. Third-party app developers could also tap that data, with a user's permission, to recommend exercise and diets, for instance.

Samsung expects to make "beta" test versions of its Simband wristband and SAMI data service later this year. It has been partnering with scientists from the University of California, San Francisco and other institutions to test its devices and offer suggestions.

Samsung Electronics Co. presented its vision for wearable devices at a San Francisco event Wednesday, ahead of next week's developers conference by rival Apple Inc. There's widespread speculation that Apple has been working on wearable devices, and its products tend to use proprietary technologies.

But an open system would be a departure for Samsung as well. Its Gear wristwatches and fitness devices currently work only with Samsung phones. Smartwatches from Sony and other manufacturers tend to work with a wider range of Android phones.

Young Sohn, Samsung's president and chief strategy officer, described the Gear devices as a second-generation product. The first generation consisted of fitness-tracking apps downloaded on smartphones. Future devices, he said, would be able to collect more vital signs and send you to a doctor before you get symptoms. He compared them to cars embedded with sensors to warn you of low air pressure and other troubles.

Samsung is also trying to improve usability by allowing users to recharge the Simband while wearing it. With current devices, users typically have to remove their devices for recharging every few days.

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