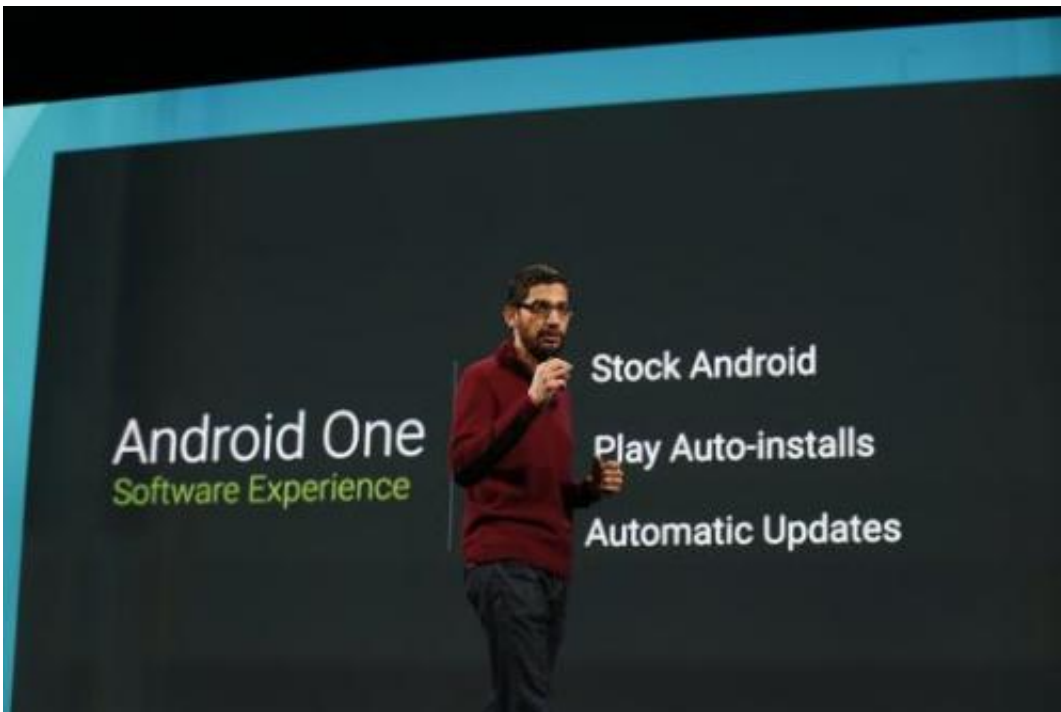


# Google making low-cost smartphone for emerging markets (Update)

June 25 2014, by Glenn Chapman

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Sundar Pichai speaks on stage during the Google I/O Developers Conference at Moscone Center on June 25, 2014 in San Francisco, California

Google announced Wednesday it was working on a low-cost smartphone aimed at emerging markets as part of an initiative called Android One.

The Android-powered handset will be built with a basic set of features including FM radio, have a screen slightly smaller than five inches (12.7

centimeters) and be priced at less than \$100, Google senior vice president Sundar Pichai said at the start of the technology giant's annual developers conference.

"We are going to be launching it around the world, but will launch in India first in the fall of this year," Pichai said.

He added that Google was working with carriers in India to provide affordable telecom service packages to go with the smartphones, which could in many cases provide Internet access for the first time.

The Android One initiative sets out to work with smartphone makers and others in the "ecosystem" to pool resources and standardize hardware platforms to provide "turnkey solutions" for making handsets, according to Pichai.

"There are many people—billions of people, in fact—who still don't have access to a smartphone," he said.

"We want to change that."

Low-cost phones powered by Android have proven popular in developing markets, but have been vexed by "fragmentation" because handset makers customize the software to suit different hardware or set themselves apart from rivals.

The variations result in popular third-party applications typically not working across the array of Android devices, frustrating users who want the latest fun, hip or helpful mobile mini-program.



An Android one sign is seen on stage during the Google I/O Developers Conference at Moscone Center on June 25, 2014 in San Francisco, California

Android One software for low-priced smartphones in emerging countries could bring some consistency across devices, according to Gartner consumer technology research director Brian Blau.

"Google really needs to have a solution for emerging markets with low-cost devices," Blau told AFP.

"It is going to be a long, tough road to have an impact there; it is going to take years to bring the next two to three billion people onto the Internet."

## **Internet everywhere**

Google is collaborating with handset makers and others in the industry to

field affordable smartphones that are high quality and come with reasonably priced data plans.

Handsets will be made by Google partners and launch with an initial range of "sub-\$100" smartphones.

"We've long wondered what potential could be unleashed if people everywhere had access to the latest technology and the world's information," Pichai said. "It's time to find out."

Google and Silicon Valley rival Facebook have made priorities out of connecting with people in parts of the world where Internet connectivity is slow, unreliable or just non-existent.

Having more people tune into websites or services mean expanded opportunities to make money from online advertising or providing tools that connect shops with customers.

Google does not make money from hardware, with its own branded gadgets meant to set standards and show off software capabilities with an eye toward inspiring electronics manufacturers to raise their games when it comes to Android or Chrome devices.

Developing countries have become prime targets for smartphone makers, and Android software made available free to handset makers has proven to be popular with budget-conscious buyers.

The news came a day after Microsoft said it would sell an Android-powered Nokia smartphone at a price of \$135, a device also apparently aimed at emerging markets customers.

In April, Google acquired Titan Aerospace, a maker of solar-powered drones that could be used to boost Internet access to remote areas.

Google also is developing Project Loon, which uses large balloons for transmitting Internet signals to regions that are not currently connected.

"They are to some degree becoming an ISP (Internet service provider) because they have to," Blau said of Google's efforts to provide online connectivity through projects such as Loon and even Fiber high-speed broadband lines in the United States.

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