

Two jumbo phones from Samsung ahead of expected new iPhone (Update)

August 13 2015, by Anick Jesdanun



JK Shin, president and CEO of Samsung Electronics, holds the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge Plus, left, and the Samsung Galaxy Note 5 during a presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

Samsung has unveiled two new Android smartphones with jumbo screens as it seeks to recapture some of the sales lost to Apple after larger iPhones came out last year.

Samsung said Thursday that the new Galaxy Note 5 and S6 Edge Plus will start shipping Aug. 21. Usually, Note phones don't come out until well after Apple's new iPhone models in September.

The timing reflects a changing smartphone landscape. IDC analyst Ramon Llamas said Samsung needed to beat Apple to the punch, or risk seeing its products drowned out by all the attention on the iPhone.

The new phones from Samsung have screens measuring 5.7 inches diagonally, the same as last year's Note 4, yet both are lighter and thinner. They are comparable to Apple's 5.5-inch iPhone 6 Plus, the larger of the two new iPhones. Samsung's Galaxy S6 and S6 Edge phones, which are closer in size to the regular iPhone 6, came out in April.

Samsung Electronics Co. also said its Samsung Pay mobile payment service will debut in its home country of South Korea this month. Testing in the U.S. will begin then, with a formal launch in September.

Although there's competition from Apple Pay and Google's upcoming Android Pay, Samsung is hoping its payments system will catch on with the inclusion of a technology that mimics the old-school, magnetic signals from credit-card swipes. That allows it to work with a wider range of merchants.

The new phones announced Thursday seek to play to Samsung's strengths.



A product expert demonstrates the Samsung Pay during a presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. The Samsung Pay mobile payment service will debut in South Korea this month. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

GALAXY NOTE 5

Though it appeals to a niche audience, the Note is popular for including a stylus to take notes and annotate images on the screen. The update provides quicker access to apps and features that use the stylus. A clicking mechanism makes the stylus easier to pull out.

One new feature ends the need to print out and rescan electronic forms to sign or fill out. Just write on the PDF document directly before saving

and sending.

Screenshots can get annoying when you're just snapping what's visible on the screen. An article you're trying to save might take four or five shots. A new feature called scroll capture combines all those shots into one image, though you still need to snap them one section at a time.



A product expert demonstrates the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge Plus during a presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

GALAXY S6 EDGE PLUS

The screens on Samsung's Edge phones are curved on both sides. This spring's S6 Edge used one of those sides for quick access to friends and other frequent contacts. Now, you can use it for quick access to favorite apps, too.

There won't be a stylus, though, as last year's Note Edge phone had.



JK Shin, president and CEO of Samsung Electronics, talks about Samsung Pay during a presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. The Samsung Pay mobile payment service will debut in South Korea this month. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

COMMON TO BOTH PHONES

The new phones incorporate the improved camera technology found in this spring's S6 phones. Added is live streaming of video you're capturing, a practice made popular by Meerkat and Twitter's Periscope apps. The front cameras take sharper selfies, at 5 megapixels rather than 3.7.

The new phones also borrow design elements from the S6. They sport aluminum frames and glass backs rather than plastic. The back of the Note 5 is slightly curved for a better grip, while the Edge gets its curve on the front. Either way, it doesn't feel as boxy as the regular S6.

Borrowing another page from Apple's playbook, the phones are coming out just a week after they are announced. It used to take Samsung a month or longer.



The Samsung fast charging wireless charger is on display during a Samsung presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

THE LANDSCAPE

After the larger iPhones came out, Samsung could no longer proclaim to have "The Next Big Thing."

The S6 phones this spring emphasized design instead, but sales fell below expectations, as Apple dominated the high-end market. Meanwhile, rival Android phone makers have been able to offer decent cameras, displays and speeds for less money than Samsung phones. Although it's still the leading smartphone maker, Samsung has reported five consecutive quarters of profit decline.

"There's an urgency to show that Samsung can still stand up to the challenge that is Apple and everybody else out there," Llamas said. "For a while, Samsung was the 'be all and end all' of Android devices. Now, it's a different market."



A product expert demonstrates the Samsung Galaxy Note 5 during a presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

SAMSUNG PAY

With Android Pay coming, Samsung Pay won't be the only way you can make payments at retail stores by tapping an Android phone. But by incorporating magnetic-signal technology, Samsung is hoping more consumers will embrace it.



JK Shin, president and CEO of Samsung Electronics holds the Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge Plus, left, and the Samsung Galaxy Note 5 during a presentation, Thursday, Aug. 13, 2015, at Lincoln Center in New York. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

Mobile payment doesn't currently work with many merchants, especially smaller businesses. When you try to pay, more likely than not, the merchant won't have the equipment to accept it. With magnetic signals, it should work almost anywhere you can swipe a plastic card.

Samsung says it won't get any revenue from the transactions. Rather, the company sees Samsung Pay as another way to set its phone apart.

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