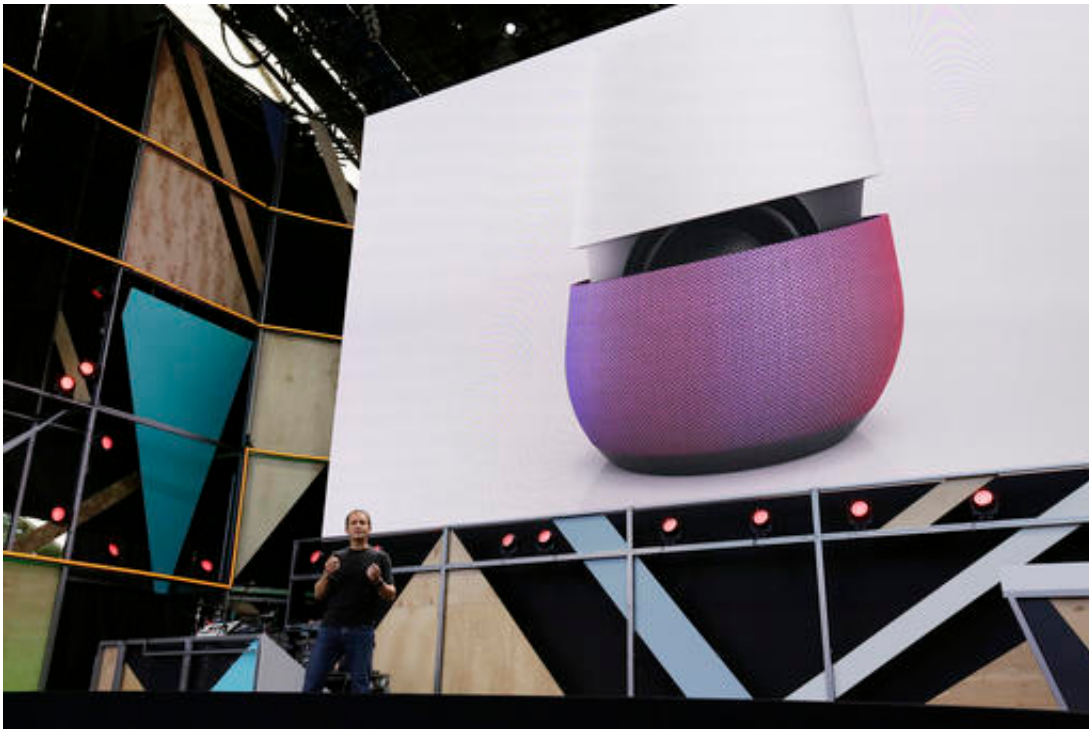


# The Latest: Google doubles down on hardware with new gadgets

October 4 2016

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In this May 18, 2016 file photo, Google vice president Mario Queiroz gestures while introducing the new Google Home device during the keynote address of the Google I/O conference in Mountain View, Calif. On Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2016, the search giant will ramp up its consumer electronics strategy with expected announcements of new gadgets including new smartphones and an internet-connected personal-assistant for the home similar to Amazon's Echo speaker. All are intended to showcase Google's software and online services. (AP Photo/Eric Risberg, File)

The Latest on Google's product event (all times local):

11 a.m.

Google is making a greater commitment to hardware in unveiling new phones, a smart speaker and other gadgets.

The products announced Tuesday also underscore Google's hope that by designing both hardware and the software—the way Apple has long done—products and features will work better, with little input needed from users.

For instance, the new smart speaker called Home will be able to use voice to control Netflix and other video on Google's Chromecast streaming device.

Google also hinted that the approach lets Google take full advantage of capabilities it's designing with artificial intelligence and machine learning. It hasn't offered examples, though, on what users will be able to do on its new Pixel phones that they won't be able to do on Android phones from Samsung and others.

Another theme running throughout the event: Products will get smarter thanks to artificial intelligence technology developed by Google. The features demonstrated seem similar to what Amazon and Apple already offer with their virtual assistants. Google officials have repeatedly emphasized that its AI technology is in the early stages—so it remains to be seen what this new era for Google will lead to.

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10:25 a.m.

Google is promoting its new Home smart speaker as a way to access Google's knowledge—hands free.

It will suggest the best way to get places, thanks to Google Maps, or find answers from other sources, such as Wikipedia. A feature called My Day will also offer a summary of your upcoming day. You'll need to give Google permission to activate that.

Amazon, Apple and Microsoft all have variations of such assistants.

Home will work closely with other Google devices. For example, if you have a Chromecast streaming device, you can use Home to control video on your TV. The feature will be limited at first. In some cases, Google will have to fine tune the software to work with specific services. Netflix will be one of the first to work, so you can simply ask Google Home to start the Netflix show "Orange is the New Black."

Home will be available for almost \$130 and come with six months of YouTube Red, a \$10-a-month ad-free subscription. Orders start Tuesday; Home will be in stores on Nov. 4. The cylinder-shaped Echo costs \$180, though Amazon also sells a smaller version shaped like a hockey puck that sells for \$50.

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10:15 a.m.

Google is ready to start selling its echo of Amazon's Echo.

The Echo is an internet-connected speaker featuring a voice-activated digital assistant. It's moving into more homes and lessening the need to find information on Google's search engine.

As a counterpunch to Amazon, Google has built a similar two-way speaker that it simply calls "Home." It will be able to perform many of the same tasks as Echo, including playing music and fielding questions about everything from the weather to what's playing at the local theater. Google Home will also be able to control lights, appliances and other devices around the house, assuming you've installed "smart" versions of them.

Google teased the Home device at a technology conference in May and is offering more details Tuesday.

Google is betting that the knowledge that it has gained while running the world's dominant search engine will make the computer-powered assistant in Home smarter than Amazon's Alexa in the Echo, which has been on the market since 2014.

If you're feeling creepy about a speaker listening to your conversations, Google says you can turn the microphone off.

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10:12 a.m.

Google is updating its Chromecast video-streaming device for watching Netflix and other online video on big screens.

The new device, Chromecast Ultra, will support a higher-resolution format called 4K. That's a feature already offered by larger, more expensive streaming devices such as the \$100 Amazon Fire TV. Ultra will cost about \$70.

Chromecast's low price has won over a lot of households. But you need a companion phone to play, pause and fast forward video, disrupting

email, Facebook and other tasks you might want to do while watching TV.

Google is facing competition with low-end devices. Roku just announced a \$30 Express model that's about the size of a finger, while Amazon just updated its \$40 Fire TV Stick. Both of those devices come with a remote, making them suitable stand-alone gadgets. But neither streams in 4K.

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10:10 a.m.

Google wants to improve Wi-Fi in the home by creating its own router.

The company says people use internet differently now, with games, video chatting and more on various devices throughout the home. The new Google Wi-Fi system will be modular—just add new components based on how your home and rooms are shaped. Software will help manage the various access points for you as you move around.

It will cost almost \$130 for the main device. A three-pack for larger homes will cost about \$300.

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10:00 a.m.

Google has unveiled its own virtual-reality headset, called Daydream View.

It will differ from other headsets like Samsung's Gear VR in having a companion motion controller and compatibility with a wide range of

phones, including Google's new Pixel phones.

Daydream is a challenge to more sophisticated systems from Facebook's Oculus business, HTC and Sony—as well as to Google's own Cardboard effort.

Cardboard is cheap—available for as little as \$15—but it doesn't offer much control over VR environments beyond pushing a button on the headset as you move your head. The new wireless motion controller for Daydream can function like a fishing rod, a steering wheel or a pointer to permit more sophisticated VR experiences.

Although Google will make its own Daydream headset, it plans to share design guidelines with other manufacturers.

Google says 50 partners are bringing apps and games to Daydream, with more on the way. Google services such as photos, YouTube and Street View maps will also come to Daydream.

The unveiling came at a Google event in San Francisco on Tuesday.

Daydream View and the controller will be out in November for \$79.

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9:50 a.m.

Google is stepping up the marketing of its new Pixel phones, and will offer them through Verizon as well as Google's own online Play store.

Previously, Google phones have largely been limited to online orders.

The new phones will come in two screen sizes—5 inches and 5.5 inches.

The smaller one will cost about \$650, with orders starting Tuesday; the larger version will go for about \$750.

Google says the camera on Pixel phones will be "excellent." Pixel owners will also get unlimited storage of photos at full resolution. Others get unlimited storage at high resolution of up to 16 megapixels; and anything sharper than that gets reduced in quality to qualify. However, Google's Pixels cameras are 12 megapixels, so they would have qualified under the regular plan anyway.

The phones will be the first ones compatible with Google's upcoming Daydream virtual-reality system.

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9:40 a.m.

Google is introducing a new line of smartphones in its most aggressive challenge yet to Apple and Samsung.

The phones unveiled Tuesday in San Francisco will carry the Pixel brand, which Google has previously stamped on a tablet and a Chromebook laptop. The phones will have Google's virtual assistant and artificial intelligence service, Google Assistant, built in. The company says computing is becoming more dependent on AI, not just on being mobile.

Google has released a series of its own phones, dubbed Nexus, since 2010. Those phones had limited distribution and were typically embraced by Google purists. Now, the company is casting aside the Nexus name as it aims to become an even more prominent player in the mobile market

Google, of course, already provides the Android system software that powers more than 80 percent of the world's smartphones.

The new push pits Google against a familiar foe in Apple and its iPhone. But it also poses a new threat to Samsung, the biggest maker of Android phones.

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9:30 a.m.

Google is taking a page from Apple's playbook by making a bigger push to build its own hardware.

Rick Osterloh, head of Google's newly formed hardware group, says that by building hardware itself, Google can take full advantage of capabilities it's designing with artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Apple has long taken a similar approach by designing both iPhone hardware and the iOS operating-system software that runs on it.

Google has designed hardware before, but Osterloh says Google will now get deeper into it.

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9:15 a.m.

Google is opening an event in San Francisco with a prediction that artificial intelligence will play a greater role in our lives.

CEO Sundar Pichai says computing is transitioning to an artificial-



intelligence-first world, just as it moved to a mobile-first world just a few years ago.

Pichai says, "Our goal is to build a personal Google for each and every user. We want to build a Google for each user."

Google services along those lines include Google Assistant, software that's designed to answer questions and retrieve information, conversation-style. Google Assistant made its debut in a chat app called Allo a few weeks ago. It will also be part of the upcoming Home smart speaker. Google is expected to announce more details at the event.

The event—held at the former power plant for a chocolate factory—started with video showing characters from the HBO show "Silicon Valley" bantering about expectations.

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7:35 a.m.

Google will ramp up its consumer electronics strategy Tuesday as it's expected to announce new gadgets at an event in San Francisco.

The products include new smartphones and an internet-connected personal-assistant for the home similar to Amazon's Echo speaker. All are intended to showcase Google's software and online services. Analysts and industry blogs say a virtual-reality headset and a home router could also be on tap.

Google makes most of its money from online software and digital ads. But it's putting more emphasis on hardware as it faces rivals like Apple, Amazon and Samsung. Julie Ask at Forrester Research says new devices could help Google keep its services front and center in the battle for

consumers' attention.

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