

Taser renames itself as it promotes body cameras

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Taser International was officially re-branded as Axon Thursday as the company broadens its focus from its controversial stun guns to police body cameras.

Axon has offered free body cameras to all US police, part of its effort to develop a technology business around a law enforcement practice that has been broadly embraced after several controversial police shootings of African-American suspects.

Company executives were set to ring the closing bell of the Nasdaq exchange later Thursday following the company's debut under the ticker "AAXN."

"We are going 'all-in' to empower police officers to more safely and effectively do their jobs and drive important social change by making body cameras available to every officer in America," said founder and chief executive Rick Smith in a statement.

The cameras "hold the potential to change police work as we know it, by seamlessly collecting an impartial record and reducing the need for endless paperwork."

A January survey by the Pew Research Center showed majority public and police support for body cameras.

Pew found 93 per cent public support for police body cameras, while 66

percent of [police officers](#) surveyed supported adding the technology.

The shift also permits Axon to deemphasize its sale of Taser guns, designed to temporarily incapacitate suspects with an electric shock before [police](#) arrest them.

Taser has long maintained that the technology is safe, citing studies that show they prevented death or serious injuries in 178,000 cases.

However the guns have been linked to many deaths. A 2015 Washington Post investigation found that such weapons were connected to about one death per week.

Smith said that the Taser gun would remain a "flagship" product, but that the company has evolved.

"Times are changing - and so are we," Smith said. "We are changing our name from TASER to Axon to reflect the evolution of our company."

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