

Amazon's new Alexa speaker has a screen too (Update)

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This photo provided by Amazon shows models of the Amazon Echo Show. Amazon is giving its voice-enabled Echo speaker a touch screen and video-calling capabilities as it competes with Google's efforts at bringing "smarts" to the home. The new device, called Echo Show, goes on sale on June 28, 2017. Amazon says it's also bringing calling and messaging features to its existing Echo and Echo Dot devices and the Alexa app for phones. (Amazon via AP)

Amazon on Tuesday unveiled the latest member of its family of devices

powered by its Alexa digital assistant—this one with a touchscreen.

The new device called Echo Show steps up efforts by Amazon to be part of the connected home, and potentially create a market for a new kind of computing device.

The new device will sell for \$229 and ships starting June 28, according to Amazon's website. It will include the features of its other Echo devices along with video shown on a seven-inch touchscreen.

"With Echo Show, customers can watch video flash briefings and YouTube, and see music lyrics, smart home cameras, photos, weather forecasts, to-do and shopping lists, and more," said a blog post from Amazon developer and chief evangelist for Echo devices David Isbitski.

Users will also be able to call or message others who also have an Echo or the Alexa application.

Last month the US online giant began selling its Echo Look gadget, which includes the voice-activated assistant but with a camera, allowing Alexa to offer fashion advice.

Amazon's latest hardware foray comes after limited success with its Kindle and Fire tablets, but also a failure for its Fire smartphones.



This photo provided by Amazon shows an Amazon Echo Show on display in a living room setting. Amazon is giving its voice-enabled Echo speaker a touch screen and video-calling capabilities as it competes with Google's efforts at bringing "smarts" to the home. The new device, called Echo Show, goes on sale on June 28, 2017. Amazon says it's also bringing calling and messaging features to its existing Echo and Echo Dot devices and the Alexa app for phones. (Amazon via AP)

The new Echo Show "looks like a lot of other products that have been launched in the past," said analyst Avi Greengart of Current Analysis in a tweet. "Unlike those, it will sell."

Ian Fogg of the research firm IHS Markit said on Twitter: "What's most interesting about #Echo Show is the extent it is different & enhanced from simply a combination of Echo + Fire tablet."

More options

Jan Dawson of Jackdaw Research said the new device adds additional features to the Alexa family by giving consumers a screen option.

"I don't think all voice assistants need to have screens, but Amazon is wise to give people the option," Dawson said in a blog post.

"What we're seeing is Amazon using its smart original foray into and early dominance of this space as a beachhead to spread into lots of other areas."

But Dawson echoed comments made by other observers that the Echo Show "isn't attractive."



In this Wednesday, July 29, 2015, file photo, Amazon's Echo, a digital assistant that can be set up in a home or office to listen for various requests, such as for a

song, a sports score, the weather, or even a book to be read aloud, is shown, in New York. Amazon is giving its voice-enabled Echo speaker a touch screen and video-calling capabilities as it competes with Google's efforts at bringing "smarts" to the home. The new device, called Echo Show, goes on sale on June 28, 2017. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, File)

"If there's one area where Amazon's various bits of hardware have always struggled, it's design," he said.

"There's no real consistency or style, and as I said last week, this thing looks like a miniature version of one of those old massive tube TVs."

Amazon has dominated the category of connected speakers since 2014 when it introduced its first Echo, which responds to voice commands and allows users to order goods or rides and control connected appliances.

A survey released Monday by research firm eMarketer found Amazon's Echo speakers held 70.6 percent of the US market, compared with 23.8 percent for Google Home and 5.6 percent for others including Lenovo, LG, Harmon Kardon and Mattel.

The report said 35.6 million Americans will use a voice-activated assistant device at least once a month this year, a jump of 128.9 percent over last year.

Separately Monday, Samsung-owned Harman Kardon announced the release of its new Invoke speaker powered by Microsoft's digital assistant Cortana and integrating Skype for making calls using the device.

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