

Japanese partnership results in palm recognition security for smartphones

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Credit: Tech-on

(Phys.org)—By now everyone knows that the only way to protect the stuff you keep on your smartphone is to password protect the screen. Unfortunately, we all also know how easy it is to crack that little system as evidenced by various phone hacking scandals and stolen celebrity photos. Clearly a better way needs to be found, and now it seems Japanese mobile giant Softbank Mobile Corp, after teaming up with Universal Robot Co Ltd, might have found it; phone software that is able to recognize a person's unique palm patterns.

Palm patterns are made up of both the unique way each person's palm is arranged (all those lines and ridges) and the [veins](#) and [capillaries](#) that reside just beneath the skin. Over the past couple of years, some

companies have developed palm readers that match [vein patterns](#) for securing computer systems, but they have all been too big to use on cell phones. The new approach dispenses with the old way of looking at a person's palm and uses nothing more than software analysis to identify to whom it belongs, paving the way for use on smartphones because each already comes equipped with a camera. To use such an outfitted phone, all a person would have to do is hold their hand out flat, palm down, over the phone to identify themselves as an allowed user of the phone. No muss, no fuss, and no password.

The phone will be able to identify the user by their palm terrain using only a photo taken in ordinary light, which of course will present a problem for those using their phone in the dark. The company hasn't said how it will handle that situation, but it seems plausible that they'd have the screen flash some light to reflect off the palm, rather than revert to the old password system.

The downside to the development of the new software security system is that it's proprietary, which means that when it's rolled out by the end of the year to customers in Japan, only they will be able to reap its benefits. The rest of us will have to wait for the two companies to license the technology to others, or worse, for others to develop the same functionality on their own.

More information:

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