

Alexa voice software to offer Fitbit progress updates

March 17 2016, by Anick Jesdanun



In this Monday, Feb. 29, 2016, file photo, Brett Broviak, a manager of respiratory and sleep services at IU Health North Hospital, shows off his Fitbit fitness tracker for the camera on the hospital's campus in Carmel, Ind. Starting Thursday, March 17, 2016, Amazon's voice assistant will tell you how well you slept and how much more exercise you need, at least if you have a Fitbit fitness tracker and an Alexa-compatible device, such as Amazon's Echo speaker and Fire TV streaming devices. (AP Photo/AJ Mast, File)

Alexa, what can you tell me about my health?

Starting Thursday, Amazon's voice assistant will tell you how well you slept and how much more exercise you need—at least if you have a Fitbit fitness tracker and an Alexa-compatible device, such as Amazon's Echo speaker and Fire TV streaming devices.

Alexa—Amazon.com Inc.'s answer to Apple's Siri, Google Now and Microsoft's Cortana—is part of the online retailer's ambitions to control your living room, as people start embracing a "smart," automated home. You can already use voice commands to ask Alexa for weather, movie listings and sports scores. Fitbit is adding several commands to Alexa's vocabulary.

Ask about your sleep, and Alexa will tell you when you fell asleep and for how long. Ask about your daily walks, and Alexa will reply with how many more miles you need to reach your goals. Alexa might also add some encouraging words, such as "I believe in you."

In recent weeks, Alexa has acquired such capabilities as paying Capital One credit card bills, ordering pizza from Domino's and getting a ride through Uber. Amazon now has more than 100 third-party integrations, known as skills.



This July 29, 2015, file photo made in New York shows Amazon's Echo, a digital assistant that continually listens for commands such as for a song, a sports score or the weather. Starting Thursday, March 17, 2016, Amazon's voice assistant will tell you how well you slept and how much more exercise you need, at least if you have a Fitbit fitness tracker and an Alexa-compatible device, such as Amazon's Echo speaker and Fire TV streaming devices. (AP Photo/Mark Lennihan, File)

"You never know what developers are going to do," said Rob Pulciani, director of Amazon Alexa. "They have a knack for creating experiences that we would never have thought of."

Fitbit already works with Cortana, but not Siri or Google Now. You can do more with Cortana, such as using voice commands to log your food intake. Fitbit is keeping things simpler with Alexa because the service isn't tied to your phone. It's meant to give you a snapshot as you're

walking by the Echo speaker on the way to the kitchen. For advanced tasks, you still need your phone app.

To enable the functionality, you need to turn on the Fitbit "skill" in the Alexa app on your phone.

For now, Alexa won't do much during your workouts, such as yoga in front of a TV or a jog on a treadmill at home.

"This is a starting point," said Tim Roberts, Fitbit's executive vice president for interactive. "We as an industry are still in the early days of experiencing and understanding voice interactions with technology."

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