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How Alexa carved out a place in my Siri-only life

Jeremy Horwitz@horwitz December 27, 2017 7:53 AM

<https://venturebeat.com/2017/12/27/how-alexa-carved-out-a-place-in-my-siri-only-life/>

Key #1 to Alexa’s success: A better AI experience

First, Amazon made Alexa more capable of answering questions on its own and introduced Skills so third-party developers could further increase its functionality

Key #2 to Alexa’s success: Many forms + prices

Second, Amazon developed a range of products to house Alexa, from the basic \$50 Echo Dot to a \$230 touchscreen-equipped Echo Show, while lowering the price of the “middle of the road” Echo to \$100. This has turned out to be a critical differentiator between Amazon’s and Apple’s approaches. The least expensive device with full Siri capabilities is the all-but-unadvertised \$199 iPod touch; the \$150 Apple TV with seriously limited Siri is Apple’s only cheaper point of entry.

Key #3 to Alexa’s success: Retailer’s advantages

Amazon is glad to chase high-volume sales with comparatively small profits to build market share.

How Apple can rebuff Amazon’s growing Alexa threat in 2018

Jeremy Horwitz@horwitz December 28, 2017 10:37 AM

<https://venturebeat.com/2017/12/28/how-apple-can-rebuff-amazons-growing-alexa-threat-in-2018/>

1. Lowering the price of entry with more devices

Yet the consumer electronics industry has known for a long time that \$300 is a magic number for mass adoption, and that each \$50 decrease brings lots more customers to the table.

Putting aside Apple's repeated claims about "reinventing home audio" with its speakers, the company needs products that appeal to the bulk of the market, not self-proclaimed audiophiles.

2. Improving the quality and depth of Siri services

Whether it's due to Siri team departures, bad licensing deals, or other factors, it's clear that bad things have been going on behind the scenes with Siri's cloud-based "brain." Far too often, the service is unable to respond reliably to certain requests, only in part because it's misinterpreting words it previously understood. What's the point of an AI assistant if you have to repeat yourself several times, then give up due to failure?

It wouldn't hurt for Siri to have a better personality, either. Apple needs to make an executive decision about who Siri is supposed to be — friendly, somewhat sassy, or downright sarcastic — and implement it. Right now, Siri's rare sparks of humor sound like barbs tossed by an unhappy IT guy, and no one likes an unhappy IT guy. Alexa is similarly awkward when it tosses out lame jokes, but at least it doesn't sound bitter.

3. Increasing the quantity and diversity of Siri services

Unfortunately, Siri's list of sources is short, and it frequently just points in another service's direction, leaving you to find the information you want by yourself. This is particularly awful in a car, where you can't read the screen.

Second, Apple needs to get third-party developers signed up to create equivalent or superior versions of Alexa's skills, which already boast over 25,000 options. So far, Apple's alternative SiriKit doesn't appear to be off to a good start on the development side, and SiriKit for HomePod is surprisingly limited — it requires sending HomePod requests to an iOS device for processing. On the user-facing side, Amazon makes adding Alexa skills easier than Apple makes downloading iMessage stickers. That should be Apple's goal for Siri, as well.

That's all nice, but what will Apple actually do?

Apple once knocked industry giants IBM and Microsoft for misunderstanding the "personal" dimension in computing. They took decades to crumble in the public's estimation, but crumble they did, making room for friendlier computers and apps created by Apple. Similarly, if Apple keeps dithering while voice-controlled, AI-assisted computing matures, while players like Amazon (and Google) keep winning over customers, the competitive landscape could soon look even worse for Siri than it does right now.

How invisible AI shapes our brand relationships

<https://venturebeat.com/2018/01/04/how-invisible-ai-shapes-our-brand-relationships/>

Jessica Lehmann, Brand Union January 04, 2018 12:10 PM

Automation breeds passive interaction

Automation changes our lives in ways people never thought possible, and the way we make decisions and choose products and services continues to evolve dramatically. More and more, we're engaging in a series of silent interactions with brands and products that were predetermined. We no longer give another thought to using predictive text or Google Translate — with its 500 million+ users and counting — to help us communicate more easily. Long gone are the days where we had to painfully spend hours compiling mixtapes; that's all taken care of for us by Spotify, with its predictive analytics along with its algorithmic radio and playlists that have increased listening diversity by 40 percent. And where would I have been while planning my wedding without Pinterest's weekly serving of pins I might like? Forget evil robots stealing our jobs for the moment and notice the influx and adoption of systems that use AI to drive efficiency, promote customization, and support better customer service. They are revolutionizing brand experiences as we know them by silencing the role that louder, more attention-seeking communications play in our decision processes.

As brands become better able to predict proactively what we want and provide us with what we need without prompts, we enter into a new era that rewards a brand's silence over its ability to get your attention. This upends existing ideas about how brands should interact.

It's no surprise people gravitate more toward these silent and seamless interactions. They save us time and often feel more personal. It's as if someone (or something) understands and predicts your needs, ensuring you don't have to think about them amid the million and one other commitments you have every day.

While the topic of silent AI could easily tempt us to plaster a title like "Are brands dead?" on a column like this, that would emphasize the wrong part of this dialogue. Brands are by no means dead, but the rules of play will change dramatically, and at pace. In fact, a [2017 Gartner study](#) predicts that 85 percent of customers will manage their brand interactions without speaking to a single human by 2020.

The current conversation is not about technology killing brands, but about identifying the ways interactions with customers will become as seamless and customized as possible, without asking the customer to do any work. How will brands ease pain points with customer service

According to Gartner, customers will manage 85% of their brand interactions without speaking to a single human by 2020.

NOTE:

This link is terrible but I have yet to find any other links to their source or attribution of the actual study

https://www.gartner.com/imagesrv/summits/docs/na/customer-360/C360_2011_brochure_FINAL.pdf

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By 2020, customers will manage 85% of their relationship with the enterprise without interacting with a human.

Gartner Predicts

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Driving business in a customer-driven world

Essence of Homepod is as a Speaker

<https://www.imore.com/homepod-vs-amazon-echo-vs-google-home-max-vs-sonos-one-speaker-showdown>