

Google And Apple Go To The Mattresses

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Dmitry Bagrov Managing Director UK of global technology consulting firm DataArt



JUSTIN SULLIVAN VIA GETTY IMAGES

Last week Google announced the end of the mobile wars and the start of the ecosystem wars. Well not exactly. But by announcing its move into hardware with its own phones, its own wifi, its own VR/AR products and Google Home, all combined and controlled as one system with Google Assistant, the world's second largest company by market cap is making its ambition very clear.

Up until now new innovation has focused on making things smart, from your phone to your TV and now even your boiler. However, with Google and Apple's most recent moves the tech world is replacing smart with everyday. Technology will very soon be catering to all our stupid tasks, within one simple ecosystem all controlled by you talking to technology. Think Samantha in the film *Her*, though I can't promise Scarlett Johansson's voice will answer back... that may be for the best.

The impact of this shift cannot be overestimated. Right now, it is relatively easy to use an Android Samsung phone (explosions notwithstanding), an Apple computer and use both to control a plethora of smart devices and appliances. However, with its new focus on hardware Google has called time

on this fragmented approach. Their new ecosystem, much like Apple's, will encompass every device you need or want and fulfil every task you have. Including those tasks you haven't even considered technology doing yet.

So get ready to make a choice, when stupid is the new smart, when technology ecosystems encompass your entire life, only two companies are really in contention. It is Apple vs Google from here on in.

While Amazon has a presence in all our lives, the spectacular burn out of 'Fire' serves to show that the first-mover disadvantage theory holds true for much of Amazon's recent innovations. When Google launched Home they followed Amazon's example of partnering with other firms, but more effectively. Amazon's future in this new war is as a tool, with open APIs, that both Google and Apple can use as weapons as they battle it out for supremacy over your ecosystem.

The one looming threat to this new technology duopoly is the undisputed king of our working lives, Microsoft. Rumours are running wild in the tech world that a Surface phone is on its way that will attempt to replicate the all-encompassing success that is Windows 10 - one system, multiple platforms.

Microsoft, however, suffers a clear problem that there is no gap. Unlike the original Surface, which really did meet that halfway house between tablet and laptop, a Surface mobile has no unmet need to meet. I struggle to think that a CEO like Satya Nadella, who has increased share price by over 43% in two years and this year exceeded revenue and earnings per share estimates, would spend billions of dollars developing a product that is all but destined to failure.

With Amazon soon to become the weapon both sides use and Microsoft off to one side, all other companies are being left behind as Google and Apple pitch to be your only non-work tech company. To put it bluntly, no one has the stamina to keep up with these behemoths. Samsung especially with the explosive failure of Note 7 is facing a crisis of their own making just when the market is shifting out from under them.

The simple truth is no one has done this before. In the past technology companies went head-to-head on particular devices, solutions or programmes. Xbox vs Playstation, Microsoft Windows vs Apple OS, Betamax vs VHS.

Google and Apple have well and truly changed the game. Competition will now be for whose technology can now fulfil all your tasks. Consumers will have to choose, do they want to be in Google's ecosystem or Apple's. From Google's press conference the new war is on.

Time to get some popcorn.

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