

# Google virtual home assistant to challenge Amazon Echo

MOUNTAIN VIEW - Google on Wednesday unveiled a virtual home assistant device that brings together the Internet titan's strengths to challenge Amazon Echo.



Google Home, about the size of a stout vase, will hit the market later this year, vice president of product management Mario Queiroz promised at the opening of the Internet giant's annual developers conference in the Silicon Valley city of Mountain View.

Home devices will incorporate new Google virtual assistant software introduced by chief executive Sundar Pichai.

{{IMAGE}}

"Our ability to do conversational understanding is far ahead of what other virtual assistants can do," Pichai told a packed audience at the Shoreline Amphitheatre, a venue known more for concerts than for gatherings of developers.

"We are an order of magnitude ahead of everyone else."

Home devices combine machine learning, online search, voice recognition and more to allow people to get answers to questions, manage tasks, or control devices by speaking naturally, demonstrations showed.

"When I walk into my house, I should be able to interact with Google assistant hands free, using voice, without taking out

my phone," Queiroz said.

"Google Home will become more and more a control center for your whole home."

Home will synch with Chromecast devices that allow remote control of televisions or stereo systems, and with "smart" devices made by Google-owned Nest and other companies, according to Queiroz.

"It's like having a voice-controlled remote control to the real world whenever you need it," he said.

He demonstrated Home answering homework questions, changing restaurant bookings, checking commute traffic, playing music selections and more.

"It is really exciting to see Google assistant come to life with Google Home," Pichai said of the artificial intelligence capabilities being built into the company's mobile offerings.

Google did not disclose pricing on Home devices. When Home hits, it will challenge Amazon Echo voice-controlled assistants that have proven to be a hit since the Seattle-based online retail colossus unveiled them two years ago.

*Source: AFP*

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