

# Samsung goes after Google, Apple, Amazon and your home with new voice assistant Bixby



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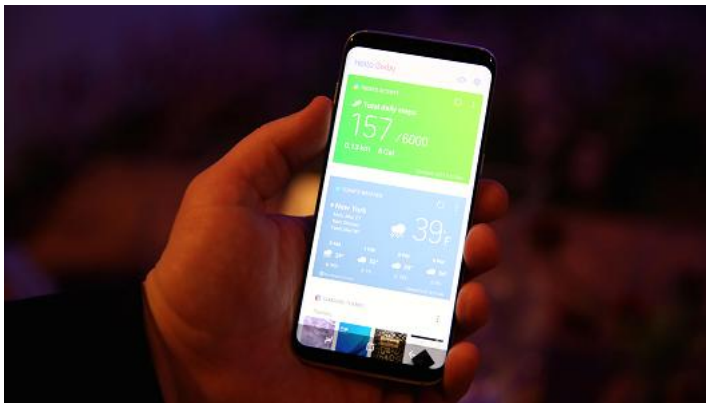
Arjun Kharpal | @ArjunKharpal  
Wednesday, 29 Mar 2017 | 11:00 AM ET

Voice assistants have been all the rage in the past few months, and when **Samsung** took the wraps off its **flagship Galaxy S8 smartphone**, it also acquainted the world with Bixby.

It's Samsung's attempt to take on the likes of **Apple's Siri**, **Amazon's Alexa** and **Google Assistant** in a move described by one analyst as the "most important" in the company's history.

Technology giants are in a race to take the lead in voice, which is seen as one of the key ways people will be interacting with not only their phones, but all connected devices, particularly in the home. The house has become the latest battleground, and Samsung's entrance is significant because it's the world's largest smartphone player and is a massive manufacturer of TVs and appliances.

At Wednesday's launch event for the Galaxy S8, the company showed what Bixby could do, which will be limited at the start then grow. Users can take a picture of something such as a monument and Bixby can recognize the place and provide information about it. Bixby also can handle complex requests such as finding all the pictures in your photo album that were taken in London.



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Competition is intense from Samsung's rivals, **including Google Assistant** which will be on the S8 because it runs Android. But Jean-Daniel Ayme, Samsung's corporate vice president for mobile in Europe, said the fact that Bixby is so integrated with the S8 will set it apart.

"It's not only about searching the web, it's about interfacing with your phone. So ultimately it will be able to use every interaction possible, everything you will be able to do on your phone with your finger you will be able to do with Bixby and much more," Ayme told CNBC.

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"The integration we will have is deeper than anybody else will be able to do. The integration with the camera will be much deeper as we are the hardware manufacturer. In the camera you can use Bixby vision without going out of the camera interface, that is something that will be different."

Indeed, Bixby currently has features many of its rivals don't. Samsung will be hoping to build on that through technology from [Viv, a company it acquired](#). Viv was founded by the inventors of Siri. Samsung has not said how Viv will influence future versions of Bixby, but it will be crucial.

Bixby is also about the home and the internet of things. [Amazon made the first move](#) in IoT when it released the Echo in 2014, a smart speaker able to link up with internet-connected devices. Google Home is the search giant's version while Apple has an app called HomeKit on its devices.



### What we know about Samsung's S8 launch

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The Samsung Connect app, the South Korean giant's offering, was unveiled at the S8 launch, allowing users to control a number of internet-connected devices.

"We think that the smartphone can be a gateway to all this ecosystem, it's the one place you will be able to interact with all these things," Ayme said.

Samsung, of course, is one of the world's biggest manufacturers of appliances — refrigerators and washing machines — as well as TVs. These are increasingly becoming internet connected. Bringing the entire ecosystem of Samsung products together could put the company in a position it's never been in before, analysts said.

"They are in a much better position than Apple, as Apple does not manufacture appliances. When it comes to connecting to other products, Samsung can start developing the roadmap of this category in line with the phone and Bixby," Francisco Jeronimo, research director of mobile devices for Europe at IDC, told CNBC by phone.

"That is an ecosystem no other company in the world is as well-positioned as Samsung to lead."

Of course, Samsung is up against the might of its rivals, particularly Google, which has a trove of user data and information, and Amazon, which has been the market leader for some time. Some analysts are skeptical about Samsung's ability to stand out.



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"To truly differentiate with Amazon Alexa or the Google Assistant, it has to be more integrated with third-party brands, beyond the few pre-installed apps. We'll see how Samsung leverages its acquisition of Viv over time, but I think the brand will struggle to compete in the longer term with the broader digital ecosystems from Google, Amazon or Apple," Forrester analyst Thomas Husson said in a recent note.

Samsung's S8 release comes just months after the Galaxy Note 7 debacle in which it was forced to recall and eventually discontinue because of battery fires. It is still fresh in the mind of consumers, but innovation in areas like voice with Bixby are key to keeping the brand and its devices looking fresh.

"Bixby is the most important announcement that Samsung will make in their entire history. If you think about the gigantic problem with Note 7, this is the most challenging time and why it is so crucial for the company to be able to lead the market again in ways they have never led before," Jeronimo said.

*Correction: This story was revised to correct that the Samsung announcement was Wednesday.*



**Arjun Kharpal**  
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