

## IF YOU WANT A SMART HOME, YOU MAY NEED TO START WITH AMAZON ECHO



The next frontier in tech may be in smart homes, and Amazon has set itself in prime position to be the king of the castle.

At this year's Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, many of the new home gadgets on display relied upon Amazon Echo and its voice-command operating system Alexa as the central hub of it all. Most of the companies at CES talked about creating what they call an ecosystem in the "Internet of things," and it's clear that Amazon has put itself at center of it.

Amazon left footprints everywhere—from the smart homes convention to the [Ford keynote speech](#)—without ever actually showing up in Vegas. As [The Verge](#) put it, it was a "stealth attendee" of this year's CES.

[Try Newsweek for only \\$1.25 per week](#)

Considering that the smart home relies on, well, smarts, conceding the brain part of the gadget to a third-party device like Amazon Echo is a slight surprise. Ambitious startups are normally keen to develop everything in-house to foster a brand of their own.

But Amazon wooed over startups by providing Alexa's simple but powerful technology at little cost. And considering the [Echo was a best-selling product for Amazon this Black Friday](#) (although Amazon won't disclose sales numbers), startups were tapping into a very popular product.

"Echo is currently the industry leader for in-home voice interaction," Nexia General Manager George Land tells *Newsweek*. "The ability for consumers to use one device to interact with a wide variety of services is truly transformational and akin to the proliferation of the app ecosystems that made mobile devices such powerful tools."

[Google's Brillo](#) and [Apple's HomeKit](#) also displayed smart home gadgets that use their software at this year's CES—but have not made the splash Amazon did with Echo and Alexa.

The Verge argues that Amazon has no interest in ruling a holistic smart home by itself. [Alexa is an open platform for](#) companies to build it into their hardware. The companies build new skills for Alexa to grow, according to an Amazon spokesperson. This symbiosis allows Amazon to weave itself into more smart home gadgets as startups do the heavy R&D lifting. It's similar to how the smartphone has become the most important device we own by letting just about anyone program an app.

While strides are being made, a fully connected smart home still looks to be a few years down the road. Some startups and larger companies, like BMW, are keeping their options open with different smart home software. But for now, Alexa first is a no-brainer.

"We see smart home startups using many devices as the central hub, not solely the Echo," says Jody Privette Young from HomeAdvisor, an app that may connect house remodelers and plumbers to homeowners. "We believe consumers will love the Amazon Echo and all the conveniences it brings—such as being a trusted source for nearly any home service you may require."