

Silk Labs makes Sense with monitoring, automation actions

February 17 2016, by Nancy Owano



Electronic devices in our homes are becoming smart but technology leaves a lot to be desired. Steven Shankland in *CNET* looked ahead to what might be a day in the life of a smart home: "Once it [our electronic

world] matures, your music could pause when mom calls, your garage door could open when you pull into the driveway, and your door could unlock for an authorized package and delivery man."

Thinking about it might turn up an even less complex picture: Fred is home. Lights on. Music on. Are we really there yet?

Computer smarts are spreading to anything with a power cord or battery. Said Shankland, however, "Good luck finding your way through that jumble of [products](#)."

One company, Silk Labs, knows improvements could be made. Their product on Kickstarter is a single device, a smart home sensor. The new device from Silk Labs is called Sense. "The Wi-Fi-connected Sense notices when you enter a room and initiates actions like turning on lights and music," said *CNET*. "It's designed to provide a smart-home network's central coordination."

The item is a camera-based home product running Silk Labs' "intelligent device" platform, Silk. Described as a programming framework, Silk was developed by the team behind Mozilla's Firefox OS.

Silk apps run on Silk-enabled products with simple APIs for computer vision, advanced hearing and deep learning. (And the video makes a targeted pitch to developers, telling them that you can make your life easier. "If you can write JavaScript, you can write a Silk app.") Silk was built on Node.js.

The CEO and co-founder of the company is Andreas Gal, former CTO of Mozilla. He co-founded San Mateo, California-based Silk Labs in June last year.

They care a lot about making things work and keeping it simple. "Have you noticed that today's Internet of Things is bonkers?" That is what a presenter asked in their promotional video. That is because the idea of the Internet of Things is based on 100-year old technology, the remote control, she said. Plus, the information is not very secure. She said that is why the company developed Sense, as the eyes and ears and brain of your home, "and powerful enough to run apps, just like your smartphone." No more [remote control](#). No more "pointless" notifications.

Silk Labs' Sense has a camera and network abilities to see who is in a room or house and to automate actions such as turning on lights.

Sarah Perez of *TechCrunch* went into more detail about what Sense was designed to do, "things like turn on or off the lights, adjust the music or thermostat, and more. But what's different about how this device operates, versus other smart home hubs on the market today, is that it acts on your behalf by developing an understanding of the people in the home, and their specific [needs](#)."

She said it can use facial recognition to identify who is entering; it can turn on the lights for you; set a thermostat; and start playing tracks on a Sonos speaker system. (The device uses computer vision for facial recognition and Bluetooth LE for proximity.)

In understanding who it's looking at, Sense can detect when to alert you if something is wrong. Sense can tell when there's truly a concern warranting an alert.

According to *TechCrunch*, "Sense will work with [smart home](#) devices including lights from Philips Hue and LIFX, thermostats like Nest, and Sonos, with more integrations to come."

In the promotional video, CEO and co-founder Andreas Gal stepped forward to ask viewers to please join them in their mission to build a secure operating system for the Internet of Things through support of their first product, Sense. *CNET* said they had developers and "tech types" in mind, who would want to try the technology and hook it up to more household devices.

Gal told *Engadget*: "'We are not a hardware company.' Instead, Gal hopes the device will drive [interest](#) from both developers and manufacturers, especially since Sense and the software powering it are going to be open source. "

Sense has been given early bird pricing and is up on the Kickstarter site at \$225. Estimated delivery is December.

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