

Samsung upgrades folding smartphone in move to rev up sales

August 5 2020, by Glenn Chapman



The Galaxy Note20 Ultra—the latest offering from Samsung as it tries to regain ground against Huawei

Samsung on Wednesday unveiled a second-generation folding smartphone along with other new gadgetry aiming to jump-start sales in a market hit hard by the global pandemic.

The consumer electronics colossus unveiled its latest lineup at a streamed "Galaxy Unpacked" event, aiming directly at remote work and education trends supercharged around the world by the coronavirus outbreak.

"Our mission is to give you new ways to communicate; new ways to get your job done," said Samsung Electronics mobile communications president T.M. Roh.

"Maybe even to help you play hard when you should be working hard."

Samsung also unveiled two versions of its oversized smartphone, the Galaxy Note20 and Galaxy Note20 Ultra, upgraded tablets called Tab S7 and S7+, a new Galaxy Watch3 smartwatch and its ergonomic wireless earbuds called Galaxy Buds Live.

"Never before have we relied on technology like we are today," said Roh.

"It's how we are staying connected as we navigate the extraordinary challenges faced around the world," said Roh.

Samsung maintained that folding phones and compatibility with super-fast 5G networks are the "pillars" of its mobile device future.

Samsung in the second quarter saw smartphone sales slip 29 percent compared with a year ago, according to research firm IDC, as the firm lost the top position to China's Huawei in a slumping global market.

Total smartphone sales were down 16 percent in the quarter, as

consumers pulled back in the face of a pandemic-induced economic crisis.



The new Samsung Galaxy Z Fold2 smartphone was unveiled at a livestreamed event

Sweeping the fold

The coming Galaxy Z Fold2 serves as a premium smartphone while closed, then opens to provide a more tablet-like sized screen for immersive viewing, the presentation showed.

Samsung executives said they upgraded the hinge, including adding a

"sweeper" to remove pocket debris, to avoid problems experience with the first Fold phone.

Fold2 was "completely re-engineered for greater durability," according to Samsung.

"I am incredibly excited about these improvements as they came so quickly," said Moor Insights and Strategy analyst Patrick Moorhead.

"The Fold2 improved on nearly everything I thought it needed, including making it thinner."

Pricing and availability for the new-generation folding phone were not disclosed, with more details promised for early in September.

The upgraded folding device features a cover screen of 6.2 inches (15.7 centimeters) and a main screen of 7.6 inches.

The Galaxy Note20 will be available later this month in the US starting at \$999.99.

"Samsung gambled that consumers who did need a new phone would pay ever-more-expensive prices," said Techsponential analyst Avi Greengart.

"There is nothing wrong with super-premium products, but relying exclusively on them was a bad bet."



This handout photo obtained August 5, 2020 courtesy of Samsung, shows the wireless Samsung Galaxy Buds

Connecting to Xbox

Samsung and Microsoft teamed up to synch the Xbox cloud gaming service to the South Korean company's mobile devices.

"Our vision for gaming is to empower every player in the world to play the games you want, with the people you want, across all your devices," said Xbox team head Phil Spencer.

"Our partnership with Samsung is an important step forward for gaming."

The Samsung launch follows the release of budget-priced smartphones from Apple and Google starting under \$400 offering an alternative to the high-end devices.

Apple's flagship iPhone 12 is expected to launch later this year.

Samsung also took aim at Apple's popular smartwatch and wireless ear buds with updated offerings of its own.

Health features such as electrocardiograms are being added in a new Galaxy Watch3 to be available starting Thursday with a starting price of \$400.

"Samsung finally brings some health features that the Apple Watch doesn't have, namely blood pressure," said analyst Moorhead.

"Apple owns the premium category, but this is the first time I think Samsung is giving (Apple) Watch a run for its money."

Galaxy Buds Live will also launched this week, priced at \$170.

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