

Massive US tech show becomes a digital event

January 11 2021, by Rob Lever



The Consumer Electronics Show for 2021 is being held in digital format with a series of streamed presentations for the massive technology event

A digital version of the Consumer Electronics Show kicked off Monday, showcasing technology innovations from around the world as the pandemic has people relying on gadgets and the internet in their daily lives.

Some 1,800 exhibitors are participating in the show—normally staged in

the US gaming resort of Las Vegas but facing a challenge to replicate the glitz of previous years in the new format.

The extravaganza has traditionally pulled in more than 4,000 exhibitors from startups to big multinationals, with upwards of 175,000 attendees wandering a cavernous convention center and other venues.

The event kicked off with streamed video presentations from companies—including bigger and improved TV displays from South Korea's LG and Samsung—as the "digital venue" was being set up to allow industry participants to connect virtually with exhibitors.

LG was among consumer electronics giants showing off immersive, high-definition screens as the pandemic has accelerated a trend toward streaming television shows on demand from services such as Netflix, Disney+, and Amazon Prime.

Among futuristic glimpses offered by LG were a "virtual human influencer" in the form of a software-created woman who spoke glowingly about a new robot being unveiled, and progress developing a "rollable" smartphone screen that can change size.

Health technology is in the focus this year with the pandemic putting a spotlight on technologies for telemedicine, remote patient monitoring and diagnosis and tools to help with early disease detection.

Also on display will be an array of workplace health gadgets, from smart thermometers to air purifiers and sanitizing robots.



Misty, a programmable personal robot, being shown at the digital Consumer Electronics Show, can be used as a companion or a workplace device for information or health screening

Samsung introduced a "bot" that uses artificial intelligence to recognize its human and learn their habits so it can remind them of things.

"Crazy devices such as personal air purifiers that were viewed with amusement last year will be viewed as much more relevant this year," said Richard Windsor, an independent technology analyst who pens the Radio Free Mobile blog.

Technology for COVID-19 detection and mitigation is one of the big themes.

Several autonomous disinfection robots are being shown at CES, and other gadgets include wearables that monitor vital signs and could provide early detection for coronavirus infections.

Wearables, companions

Other devices aim to help cope with the isolation of coronavirus lockdowns including companion robots and monitoring systems for the elderly living alone.

CES has more than 300 speakers lined up, and a heightened focus on sessions diving into issues such as privacy and 5G internet.

Speakers include chief executives Mary Barra of General Motors, Hans Vestberg of Verizon and Corie Barry of Best Buy.



There won't be a show floor for the 2021 Consumer Electronics Show, but exhibitors will be showcasing robots and other gadgetry at the online event

Sessions will be immediately available for replay on demand, and remain accessible until mid-February, according to CES organizers.

When the virtual show floor opens on Tuesday, attendees will be able to click into online exhibition booths for demos and chats.

Some unveilings that would normally draw crowds in Las Vegas are going ahead in the virtual space: Audi is set to launch its electric sports car, while other companies will be releasing gadgets adapted to superfast

5G wireless networks which are gaining traction.

But some analysts say the lack of in-person events has pushed many participants to the sidelines.

Show organizers said they hope to deliver a new kind of experience which can be useful to the expected online crowd of 100,000 or more.

"CES is one of the most experiential events in the world, where attendees can actually see and touch and experience the latest innovations," CTA spokeswoman Jean Foster said during a briefing ahead of the show.

"And while we can't recreate that magic that happens in Las Vegas, we can bring our audiences a new and unique whole digital experience."

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