Apple plans to make it easier to text between iPhones and Androids

November 20 2023, by Mark Gurman, Bloomberg News

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In a major reversal, Apple Inc. plans to adopt a technological standard next year that will allow text messaging to operate more smoothly between iPhones and Android devices.

The company had pushed back on the standard—known as RCS—for more than a year, even as Alphabet Inc.'s Google and others pressed Apple to adopt the technology. RCS, short for rich communication services, is an upgrade over standard SMS and MMS texting that's backed by the GSM Association.

The technology allows more texting features to be shared over phones on different platforms. For instance, Apple users will be able to text Android users over Wi-Fi and not just via cellular networks. They'll also be able to send larger video and photo files, more easily operate group chats, and determine if messages are received and read.

Apple has been protective of its iMessage system, which preserves many of those features for users of its devices—the iPhone, Apple Watch, Mac and iPad.

"Later next year, we will be adding support for RCS Universal Profile, the standard as currently published by the GSM Association," Apple said in a statement. "We believe RCS Universal Profile will offer a better interoperability experience when compared to SMS or MMS."

Apple added that "this will work alongside iMessage, which will continue to be the best and most secure messaging experience for Apple users." Last year, Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook pushed back on RCS at a conference, suggesting that people who want better texting with [family members](link) buy them an iPhone.

Today, iPhone users know they are texting another Apple customer because the chat bubbles are blue, while Android contacts are relegated to the older green style. It's unclear if this format will change when Apple adopts RCS. The company could be planning to make it part of next year's iOS 18 release.

"We're happy to see Apple take their first step today by coming on board to embrace RCS," Google said in a statement. "We welcome Apple's participation in our ongoing work with GSMA to evolve RCS and make messaging more equitable and secure, and look forward to working with them to implement this on iOS in a way that works well for everyone."

The shift comes as Apple faces more scrutiny from regulators. The Cupertino, California-based company is preparing to overhaul its iPhone and iPad software in the European Union to meet requirements from the region's Digital Markets Act.

The announcement also comes the same week that Nothing, a small phone brand with a cult following, said it was working on a way to enable iMessage on Android.

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