Boxers, bakers, architects: Your watch, your way with BLOCKS

14 October 2015, by Nancy Owano

London-based BLOCKS has been working on their dream project, a smartwatch that is modular, for some time. Their premise to prospective customers: Why buy a whole new smartwatch when you can simply snap in a new feature of your choice?

Their design enables managing the modules such that the modules are hot-swappable and, they said, easily replaceable. "Swap in and out any module in seconds." They added that no restart is needed when you connect a module. It will work straight away. They believe the future is modular—and in turn customizable. Each module has its own special feature. They see this watch as useful for different professions and lifestyles, including medical, academic and sports..

"The most amazing thing about BLOCKS is that the strap is made of several links (modules) each of which have their own functions. You can choose the modules you want to build a smartwatch unique to you." You choose modules, connect

them and start building up your watch.

The team said you can swap a battery module if you notice that your smartwatch is running low on power.

They have turned to Kickstarter for funding and they have received a quick and hefty response. Out of their goal to raise $250,000 they attracted at the time of this writing $406,595 with 36 days still left to go.

The core watch component has the features of most other smartwatches. At launch, the team will have users covered for all of the basic apps such as notifications, calendars and notes.

One key to the success of this modular watch will be the availability of modules that attract people to utilize this wearable. There would need to be a range of choices to suit different lifestyles and work environments.

BLOCKS has an open platform toward this end to allow developers and companies to create modules. The types can range from gaming, sports, to healthcare, to workplace or even experimental ones for academic research.

"We have already partnered with major tech companies," said the team, to develop more modules. They said they have more than 1,500 developers signed up. The Software Development Kit (SDK) and Module Development Kit (MDK) will be available soon. The Developers Kit will allow developing and testing modules with different sensors.

For $195 you get a BLOCKS core and strap and estimated delivery is May. For $275 you get a core and four modules of your choice. Estimated deliver is also May. After the campaign, they plan to get in touch will get in touch to ask what combination of modules backers would like.

BLOCKS will be compatible with both iPhones and Android smartphones. It works with iOS 8 and above, on iPhone 4s and above. It works with all Android 4.0+ phones including those from LG, Motorola, Sony, Samsung, HTC and Xiaomi.

BLOCKS watches are accompanied with an app that can be downloaded on any iOS or Android device. The app enables you to customize watchfaces, download apps for your BLOCKS watch and select the notifications you want to receive.

BLOCKS is based in London. Close to half of the team are PHD students at Imperial College in mechanical engineering and computer science. The team also includes electrical engineers and product designers.

Tyler Lee said in *Ubergizmo*: "So we have modular smartphones like Project Ara, so why not modular smartwatches?"

  More information: www.chooseblocks.com/

www.kickstarter.com/projects/2 … t-modular-smartwatch

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