

Classic BlackBerry mobile phone keyboard to live on

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The BlackBerry's physical keyboard could be on its way back

The BlackBerry keyboard dethroned by touchscreens will live on in a new 5G smartphone planned for release next year, according to a deal announced on Tuesday.

Texas-based OnwardMobility will work with a Foxconn Technology Group subsidiary on a BlackBerry [smartphone](#) powered by Android software and tailored for 5G networks, the companies said in a joint release.

BlackBerry announced early this year that Chinese electronics group TCL will no longer have rights to design, make or sell its smartphones as of the end of August.

The new smartphone will make its debut in Europe and North America, and be designed to appeal to the increasing number of people working remotely, according to the release.

"Enterprise professionals are eager for secure 5G devices that enable productivity, without sacrificing the [user experience](#)," said OnwardMobility chief

executive Peter Franklin.

"BlackBerry smartphones are known for protecting communications, privacy, and data."

Franklin added that the deal would "deliver a new 5G Android BlackBerry smartphone with a physical keyboard."

BlackBerry's share of the global smartphone market has fallen to virtually zero since it dominated the market with its keyboard design a decade ago.

The rise of Apple's iOS and Android-powered handsets with touchscreens prompted BlackBerry to abandon the market to concentrate on software and services.

BlackBerry, based in Canada, licensed its smartphone technology to TCL in 2016 in a failed effort to revive its fortunes.

The agreement announced on Tuesday gives OnwardMobility the right to develop, engineer, and market a BlackBerry 5G smartphone.

FIH Mobile, a subsidiary Taiwan-based Foxconn, is to design and manufacture the new device.

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