Microsoft, Qualcomm take Windows 10 to ARM

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Steve works across all of Mobile World Live's channels and played a lead role in the launch and ongoing success of our apps and devices services. He has been a journalist...More

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Microsoft inked a deal with Qualcomm that will see the Windows 10 platform running on ARM-based processors, promising customers "a truly mobile, power-efficient, always-connected cellular PC".

The companies announced in a statement that the deal will enable device makers to deliver Qualcomm Snapdragon-powered Windows 10 PCs which – importantly – "run x86 Win32 and universal Windows apps", including Adobe Photoshop, Microsoft Office and popular Windows games.

New devices are expected to be in the market "as early as next year".

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"Bringing Windows 10 to life with a range of thin, light, power-efficient and always-connected devices, powered by the Qualcomm Snapdragon platform, is the next step in delivering the innovations our customers love – touch, pen, Windows Hello, and more – anytime, anywhere," Terry Myerson, EVP of the Windows and Devices Group at Microsoft, said in a statement.

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In an interview with *The Verge*, Myerson said that customers are demanding devices with better battery life and improved connectivity, which is where Qualcomm and Snapdragon come in.

Some observers suggested the move will better position Microsoft to target the Chromebook market for lower-cost computers.

Microsoft's efforts to push Windows into markets where ARM-based processors dominate has not been an unmitigated success. For smartphones, its Windows Phone platform has seen its market share reduced to a blip on the radar due to the failure of vendors to support the OS, and Microsoft's own hardware efforts in this sector have hardly impressed.

In tablets, Microsoft's Windows RT efforts, which led to a Surface device running ARM processors, struggled due largely to application issues – it did not have the supporting content ecosystem of rival devices, primarily Apple's iPad. Since then, Microsoft has turned Surface into a solid business, powered by x86 processors from Intel.

Mobile connectivity
Microsoft said it is working to "enable connectivity that is always within reach", with its intention to enable customers to buy mobile data connectivity directly from its Windows Store.

The company will adopt eSIM technology to enable manufacturers to build devices with integrated cellular connectivity, without the need to include "an exposed SIM slot". This will also enable customers to activate data plans from the device.

Earlier this year, Microsoft announced a partnership with mobile virtual network enabler (MVNE) Transatel, to support the launch of paid mobile data services for Windows 10, although this was for devices using a SIM card.

The US computing giant has not named partners for its current efforts.

New wave PCs
Microsoft also announced a new collaboration with Intel, code-named Project Evo, which it said will enable devices that "leverage Microsoft and Intel innovations" in areas such as "far field speech communications", enabling the Cortana virtual assistant to be accessed across a room; and security, including biometrics, "sophisticated insights from Microsoft's Intelligent Security Graph, and additional world-class security intelligence and analytics from Intel".

Other technologies on the agenda include "mixed reality experiences through affordable PCs and head-mounted displays (HMDs) that blend the physical and virtual realities in ways no other platform can", and gaming development such as e-sports, game broadcasting, and support for 4K, High Dynamic Range (HDR), Wide Colour Gamut (WCG), spatial audio, and Xbox controllers with native Bluetooth.

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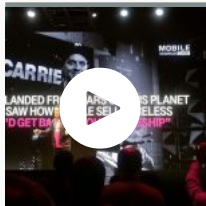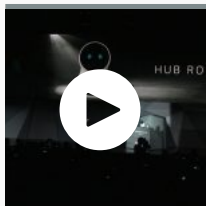Why broadband for all = opportunity for all
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