

Latest Features of iOS 10: Apple's Predictable iPhone Future Revealed

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As expected, Apple CEO Tim Cook and his team took to the stage at [the recent Worldwide Developers Conference](#) (WWDC) to announce the latest version of Apple's mobile operating system. The tenth major version of iOS continues its evolutionary approach to this vital building block, adding in a number of new features and applications while polishing the edges that have become rough and unkempt over the last few years.

Developers already have access to the current beta versions, and a public beta will be available over the summer and certainly ahead of the general availability in September – first in the new iPhone 7 and iPhone 7 Plus models, and then available as an over-the-air update to older iOS devices.

It may still be at the pre-release stage, the major features that will help iOS 10 stand out are already on show. What can consumers expect in their iPhones and iPads before the year is out?

It's All About The Voice

Apple has opened up its voice-powered assistant to developers. Siri's SDK will no doubt be used by developers to increase the utility of voice in third-party applications, and as more apps use the service it will become more prevalent and [more likely to be used](#). That should allow Apple to gather more data on Siri's accuracy and the situations it is used in, contributing to greater 'intelligence' from the voice.

With Amazon's Alexa, Microsoft's Cortana, and Google's Now voice, the audio interface is the next battlefield. Opening up Siri to developers is Apple's play to build a bigger ecosystem than it can provide on its own.

Messaging As A Platform

Alongside voice, the short- and medium-term innovation in communication is going to come though instant messaging morphing from simple conversations into a platform. This is not something that Apple can accomplish on its own,

so once more we have a previously locked down service being opened to with developer access through an SDK.

Allowing third parties to extend iMessaging will allow more functionality to show up in the apps, and tie third-party developers closer to iOS. It's also the next step in moving away from '[the grid of apps](#)' that currently drive smartphone UI thinking.

On top of those features, Apple has increased the eye-candy available, with increased font sizes, bigger emoji, and interactive features. iMessage is where Apple is placing a lot of big bets.



WWDC 2016 (image: Getty)

Rich Notifications

Along with the changes to iMessage, notifications are being opened up to be richer. Instead of an app's icon and a short textual message, developers can now code rich notifications. This could be to show more media-rich notifications (such as an image or video), or to reply to the notification from inside the notification box, bypassing the need to open an application.

The latter will certainly speed up interactions with your smartphone, and again have developers create a stronger experience for users that pulls the user closer to iOS and keeps the developer engaged with Apple's platform.

Polishing The User Interface

While it was never a big focus in the presentations, Apple has taken a number of steps to improve the user interface of iOS. [The addition of 'dark mode'](#) gives an alternative theme to the bright white dialog boxes that currently infest the OS. It's a nice cosmetic touch at the moment, but when Apple switches to OLED screens in 2017 there will be a significant saving of battery power in dark mode. Expect it to be the default setting in next year's iPhone.

Apple has long maintained a number of applications bundled into the OS that could never

be deleted – the Stocks application is the flagship interloper here – and most iOS users have a ‘rubbish’ folder of these apps they never use and want to be out of sight. In iOS 10, Apple will give users the chance to delete these apps and their data from the phone.

Which leads to the curious question of reinstalling applications. To do so they will have to appear in the App Store, which means they can also be updated outside of updating the OS. I wonder if that trick is going to apply to all of Apple’s first-party iOS apps?

Conclusions

Although Apple spent time walking through ten features of iOS 10 (presumably the team has fallen in love with the BuzzFeed way of doing things), many of the new features and additions to iOS are evolutionary rather than revolutionary. They polish the way that things are already done in iOS, they offer developers similar access to Apple’s applications to user interfaces, or they give a first-party app the same options and features as other commercial rivals.

There’s no gee-whizz feature, it’s all ‘steady as she goes, Mr Cook!’ [That might lead to issues about Apple’s ability to innovate when the new iPhones are revealed in September](#), but that’s a discussion

for another time. iOS 10 is a competent upgrade to Apple's mobile operating system which offers Apple the chance to grow into a number of new areas, albeit areas where the competition has already become established.