

Google Assistant to get multiple new languages, distribution and skills

Google is further ramping up the distribution, scale and capabilities of its Assistant. It's adding languages, handsets, carriers and some new cross-device tricks.

Against the backdrop of intensifying smart speaker competition with Amazon and Apple, Google is taking its Assistant from eight languages to 30 by the end of 2018. In a blog post the company said that will mean the Assistant reaches 95 percent

of Android phones around the world. Previously Google reported that the Assistant is on 400 million devices globally.

The first crop of new languages introduced will be Danish, Dutch, Hindi, Indonesian, Norwegian, Swedish and Thai. The Assistant will also now be able to understand and respond to individuals in multiple languages or accommodate multi-lingual families:

With this new feature, the Assistant will be able to understand you in multiple languages fluently. If you prefer to speak German at work, but French at home, your Assistant is right there with you. Multilingual will first be available in English, French and German, with support for more languages coming over time.

These capabilities will extend to the iPhone version of Google Assistant as well.

Deeper integrations

Google is also planning “deeper integrations” on Android phones and with mobile carriers. The Assistant was initially only “deeply integrated” into the Pixel. Then, in December last year, the company made the Assistant available on a range of Android phones and tablets.

Deeper Assistant integrations will be available on new devices from Sony, Xiaomi and LG. And carriers will also be able to use Google Assistant to help answer user questions about plan details and other carrier-related services. In other words, carriers will theoretically be able to offload some of their customer service functions to Google Assistant: “This gives carriers a new way to support their customers while reducing response time.”

Initial participating carriers include Vodafone, Sprint and Telus. Others will follow. In some ways this is the most

interesting element of the smorgasbord announcement Google is making this morning.

More routines & reminders

Google closed its post with the statement that it's expanding "routines" and reminders. There will be six new routines. And while the company doesn't go into detail, I'm assuming these will be mostly pre-defined. Alexa also offers routines. However most "regular folks" aren't going to set up routines because it's an "IFTTT" manual process.

Finally, there will be new location-based reminders that users can set on Google Home but receive when they are someplace else, on their phones. The example Google offers is a shopping list compiled on Google Home at home, triggered on the phone by arrival at the grocery store.

While Alexa devices dominate the smart speaker market, Google controls the globe's largest computing platform in Android. It's building a cross-device ecosystem for the Assistant (smart speakers, TVs, cars, phones) will enable it to consolidate leadership and potentially create a kind of "lock in" that was once reserved only for Apple.

About The Author



Greg Sterling is a Contributing Editor at Search Engine Land. He writes a personal blog, Screenwerk, about connecting the

dots between digital media and real-world consumer behavior. He is also VP of Strategy and Insights for the Local Search Association. Follow him on Twitter or find him at Google+.

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