Google may be working on an answer to Apple’s device-locating network

Google may be working on turning Android phones into a hivemind capable of finding lost devices, similar to Apple’s Find My network, according to analysis done by *9to5Google*. A toggle for the feature showed up in a beta of Google Play Services, with code referencing the ability for phones to help locate other devices, potentially signaling that Android phones could soon become easier to find.

According to Google’s support page, the current Find My Device system can only find phones that are powered on, have a data or Wi-Fi signal, and have location services enabled. At this early stage, it’s unclear which, if any, of those limitations the relay network feature — apparently called Spot — would solve, but when you’re looking for a lost phone any advantage is good to have.

Google has other projects that involve using a network of Android phones — notably, its earthquake detection feature. While the implementation is different, the underlying concept is likely very similar: there are more than 3 billion active Android devices, which is a large crowd to source information from, be it accelerometer data, or the location of a misplaced phone.

9to5Google did find a setting that would allow users to turn off the feature, making it so their phone wouldn’t help locate other devices. Given the limited information, it’s unclear whether the Find My Device network will be able to find things other than phones, like Apple’s Find My network or Samsung’s

Galaxy Find network are capable of doing. And of course, this being unpacked code from a Beta release, these changes may never see an actual public release.

Google did not immediately respond to request for comment about the prospective feature.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/6/18/22540625/google-find-my-device-android-spot-location-network