Google now lets third-party products include custom Google Assistant commands



Google is opening the gates to something that should ultimately make the Google Assistant a lot more useful: it'll now allow other companies to create custom commands when the Assistant is built into their products. So the manufacturer of a smart dishwasher that supports Google's voice assistant could add a command to "start a hypercycle," even though that's not a universal feature found on other dishwashers.

Right now, devices with Assistant built in are limited to a number of universal commands that Google has set up on its own, like "on," "off," and "dim." Additional functionality can be added via Actions (apps, basically), but that requires an extra step for owners every time they want to use it. That's obviously pretty limiting if you're trying to build a more advanced product. Google seems to hope that by handing off some of that work to manufacturers, it'll give them a lot more flexibility and make Assistant more helpful at the same time.

Manufacturers can choose how extensively to build out commands
Google suggests, for instance, that an oven manufacturer could use this ability to program in voice controls for specific settings, like “set the oven to convection and preheat to 350 degrees.” On one hand, Google could probably universalize that and have all ovens use the same commands. But on the other hand, a manufacturer that’s serious about making Assistant useful could go a lot deeper than that if they wanted to, allowing even more control by voice than Google’s standard commands would cover.

LG already seems to be taking advantage of this. Before today, you’d have to invoke an Action by saying “talk to LG” before issuing a command, but now you’ll just be able to say what you want LG’s connected appliance to do. That’s a much faster and more natural interaction.

What may be more interesting is the quirkier devices that this will enable. Google has built a robotic arm that sorts socks and responds to voice commands to illustrate just how serious it is about letting Assistant do anything a developer codes in.

In addition to opening up Assistant to custom commands, Google is also announcing a couple other new features today: you’ll now be able to have specific Assistant Actions send you notifications on your phone. Actions are also getting improved media playback abilities.

https://www.theverge.com/2018/3/9/17100588/google-assistant-custom-actions