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Reuters details the differences in the approach to smart home adopted by Apple and Amazon--Apple keeps tight control over the use of HomeKit, while Amazon offers an open-systems approach.



The article points out connected home is important to both companies, if for different reasons. Apple built a home automation architecture in order to to keep the iPhone in "the centre of customers' lives," while Amazon wants to provide customers with online shopping without the intermediary of a smartphone or browser built by another company.

Different approaches lead to, of course, different results. Apple demands special certification for vendors wanting to adopt HomeKit, as well as the purchase of special HomeKit-compatible chips and specific wifi/Bluetooth radios. As a result the number of HomeKit-certified devices currently clocks at 100, far behind the 250 devices certified to work with Alexa.

The Amazon approach is the contrary to Apple's, since the online retailer turned cloud giant actively encourages the rapid development of compatible 3rd party applications. No special chips are required for Alexa compatibility, and Amazon even offers financial incentives to some partners.

So, is Amazon the winner in the smart home race? Not necessarily. Apple certification brings about more security, and HomeKit-enabled devices can operate without an internet connection, since only pairing with an iDevice is required. The Home app also leads to an arguably simpler setup process, compared to the multiple apps required by the Alexa app.

As such, it seems the choice between HomeKit and Alexa depends on the kind of customer--although the need for an iDevice remains something the ultimate barrier, especially if one insists on using Android.

Go Apple Strategy in Smart Home Race Threatened by Amazon