

## Qualcomm Suddenly Big Smartwatch Contender

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Samsung was going to be the wireless industry super power that fired the first shot in the newly erupting smartwatch war.

The company had earmarked Sept. 4 weeks in advance as the day it would reveal its Galaxy Gear smartwatch. Deservedly, the OEM got a lot of attention for the launch of its spec- and feature-rich wearable.

Qualcomm didn't garner nearly as much coverage for its Toq smartwatch. Of course, save for a few hints derived from FCC patents, there were few clues about Qualcomm's smartwatch ambitions. So it surprised the crowd at Qualcomm's Uplink developer conference in San Diego when CEO [Paul Jacobs rather casually unveiled Toq at the end of his keynote address](#) [1], at almost precisely the same time Samsung was introducing Galaxy Gear.

Jacobs, along with Qualcomm vice president Rob Chandhok, both reiterated throughout the conference that the Toq is not intended to move big numbers. It will be produced in relatively small numbers—tens of thousands—and retailed to the public, but the device is really meant as a showcase for technologies like the Qualcomm's Mirasol display and WiPower LE wireless charging.

But for a lot of reasons, Toq could end up being much more compelling than the likely blockbuster Galaxy Gear.

Toq doesn't have the impressive guts or nifty camera of Galaxy Gear. But what it does have is the good sense to retain some of the handy features associated with regular old dumb watches.

For starters, the display is always on and it actually shows up under direct sunlight thanks to the Mirasol display. And because Mirasol is fairly low-power, it can go for days without a charge. So while Qualcomm has had a tough go on getting Mirasol displays onto smartphones, it's found a great use for it on a smaller scale.

When it does come time to charge Toq, it comes with a handy carrying case that doubles as a wireless charging station for the watches and its accompanying Bluetooth headsets.

Those headsets, which work can be worn one-at-a-time or together, and use directional microphones to enable phone call capability present another benefit

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over competitors. Sure, they're another bit of hardware to keep track of and they look slightly dorky, but not much dorkier than yelling into your wrist.

Perhaps the biggest advantage over the Galaxy Gear, is that Toq is an Android watch that works with all Android devices, not just Samsung's.

Although Jacobs continually downplayed the Toq's market share-grabbing ability, he insisted if it did really catch on that Qualcomm—on its own or with a partner—would be sure to meet the demand.

We're still in the halcyon days of the new smartwatch era and major players like Apple, Google, LG and more have yet to deploy their own smartwatches. And like Samsung, their respective announcements are likely to be wearable shots heard round the world.

In the early going though, Qualcomm has snuck up and possibly served the first disruption to this still-maturing market. When Toq comes out later this year, we'll have a better idea if it stands a chance at eating anyone's lunch. But for right now, Toq looks like one of the most quietly compelling entrants in the new age of smartwatches.

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