

Facebook Announcement Stirs More Handset Speculation

Andrew Berg

Speculation is running rampant around the Facebook media event scheduled for tomorrow. The hubbub around a possible big announcement has even sent the company's struggling stock up above \$30 per share.

Perhaps the biggest surprise possible tomorrow would be if Zuckerberg and company announced a Facebook-branded smartphone. Rumors of such a device have long persisted, but Facebook has panned them all. Perhaps the closest we've gotten to such a device is HTC's dedicated Facebook button on a now nearly forgotten ChaCha handset.

Industry analyst Jeff Kagan took time to consider the possibility, as well as the implications of a Facebook phone, asking exactly what would be so special about a Facebook phone compared to others like Apple iPhone and Google Android?

"Remember, Facebook is not a mobile company. And mobile is a very complicated business," Kagan wrote in emailed comments. "Not every mobile player is doing well."

Still, Kagan reminds how fast the wireless industry moves and how quickly change can happen. He reminds us that Apple and Google were not even in the wireless business at all six years ago. "Today they are leaders," Kagan said.

Chances are Facebook has something else up its sleeve. The company has been accused in the past of over promoting its announcements. When Zuckerberg announced Facebook's Timeline product, the response was underwhelming on the whole, while some users of the social network reacted with anger that they would be forced to adopt the new format.

Other possibilities for tomorrow's announcement have included an update on a new headquarters being built, a possible messaging app for iPad, which was posited by TechCrunch, or more information on how the company plans to proceed with monetizing its vast social network on both the PC, as well as mobile devices.

Source URL (retrieved on 02/01/2015 - 7:15pm):

<http://www.wirelessweek.com/news/2013/01/facebook-announcement-stirs-more->

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Published on Wireless Week (<http://www.wirelessweek.com>)

[handset-speculation](#)