

## The Next Wearables Contender is...

Written by Marco Attard  
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The wearables market still be pie in the sky for now, but that is not stopping vendors-- The Wall Street Journal reports Microsoft is also working on "designs for a touch-enabled watch device."



According to anonymous executives Microsoft is shipping smartwatch components while R&D staff talk designs with suppliers at the company's Redmond, Washington HQ.

Microsoft, perhaps obviously, declines to comment.

The news story makes Microsoft the 5th big vendor to take on wearables-- once the "Apple making a smartwatch" rumours started flying similar stories involving Samsung, Google and LG soon followed.

So far only Samsung confirms its intentions, via Bloomberg interview with mobile business VP Lee Young Hee. Lee says "we've been preparing [a] watch product for so long... We are preparing products for the future, and the watch is definitely one of them."

Microsoft might have a head start over the rest in wearables-- you might recall SPOT (Smart Personal Object Technology), the N. America-only subscription service launched in 2003. It used FM radio to beam instant messages, news headlines, stock information and weather forecasts to enabled devices, namely Fossil, Suunto, Tissot and Swatch smartwatches and, bizarrely enough, a Melitta coffeemaker.

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However such devices stopped selling by 2008 before SPOT was on canceled 31 December 2011.

Equally interesting is a Microsoft TechFest 2013 talk by principal researcher Bill Buxton on (what else?) the history of the smartwatch. Buxton describes wearables as "a hot topic" and owns 37 years' worth of smartwatches, from the 1976 Orient Touchtron ("It's an LED watch and you touch it and it turns the LED lights on"), a bevy of calculator watches (including the 1984 Casio AT-550 touchscreen calculator watch) to the 2012 Pebble, arguably one of the catalysts behind the recent surge of interest in such devices.

"I'm not trying to say what's going on today isn't interesting," Buxton concludes. "But it becomes actually more interesting if you drop the hype and view it in context in the history of things and see it as a continuum then you start to see how we're doing and not get dazzled." Judging from the recent news, we might agree Buxton is more than right.

Go [Microsoft Working with Suppliers on Designs for Touch-Enabled Watch Device \(WSJ.com\)](#)

Go [Smart Personal Objects Technology \(Wikipedia.com\)](#)

Watch [Bill Buxton at Microsoft TechFest 2013](#)

Go [Everybody Loves Smartwatches](#)