

Facebook Presents Videochatting Device

Written by Marco Attard
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Facebook unveils a long rumoured foray into hardware with the Portal-- a videoconferencing device consisting, essentially, of a tablet-style display, AI-powered cameras able to track users around the room, a 4-mic array and Alexa capability.



The Portal comes in two versions, regular or Portal+. The regular Portal has a 10.1-inch 1280 x 800 resolution display and 10W speakers on the bottom, while the Portal+ has a 15.6-inch 1920 x 1080 display, 20W speakers, 4-inch woofer and a stand able to rotate from landscape to portrait mode with a touch. Both are sold by the social network as primarily a video chatting solution, even if the addition of Alexa makes them rivals to any number of similar devices already available on the market.

Allowing for the aforementioned videochatting are a 12MP camera with a wide 140-degree field of view and what Facebook calls Smart Camera-- an AI technology promising to detect the user and constantly centre them on screen, even while they are moving around during a call. In case 2 or more people are in frame the camera zooms out, ensuring everyone is visible, or simply focus solely on a person of choice. A Smart Sound system does the same with the 4-mic array to ensure all participants are clearly heard during a call. Users can make calls to anyone on Facebook Messenger as well as fellow Portal owners, and calls can also involve the sharing of music and video from Spotify, Pandora, iHeartRadio, Newsy, Food Network and Facebook Watch.

The aforementioned Alexa capability allows for voice control-- for instance, saying "Hey Portal" wakes the device up. It also allows for all the features round in devices such as the Amazon Echo Show, or Google Assistant-powered offerings from JBL and Lenovo. Other features are simple but interesting, such as a clip one can slide over the camera whenever not in use, and buttons to switch the cameras and microphones off. Facebook claims all calls are secured with end-to-end encryption, and Portal devices can be password protected.

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Will Facebook make a dent in the smart display category, especially considering it recently suffered a massive affecting no less than 90 million users? We will know once shipping starts on November 2018.

Go [Facebook Portal](#)