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## This Week's Stories

### Samsung Makes Critical Decision On Galaxy Note 7 Due To Reports Of Explosions

September 2, 2016

That sexy new Galaxy Note 7 you stood in line for will have to go back to Samsung, unfortunately, amid reports of devices catching fire while charging. The technology giant is planning a global recall of its latest flagship phablet and has confirmed it is aware of at least 35 incidents with handsets.

On Friday, Samsung released a statement saying it was halting further shipments while it carried out additional tests on the hardware.

The recall comes as the company was due for a glitzy launch of the phone on Friday in countries including the UK.

Users in India, who had pre-ordered the handset, received text messages earlier in the day, saying that their phone shipments would be delayed.

The Note 7's hardware issues are most likely related to battery issues. Rechargeable batteries are the chief cause of explosions and overheating issues in a variety of devices, from smartphones to hoverboards.

The battery in the Note 7 is made by Samsung SDI, its battery arm.

Word started going around that the phone's batteries were faulty after a user named Ariel Gonzalez uploaded a video to YouTube earlier this week claiming that his phone caught fire after he unplugged it from the charger supplied with the handset.

Samsung's Facebook page in Singapore has been inundated with hysterical complaints demanding an explanation for the recall. Some users have also noted that battery life on their new Note 7 has not been lasting long and some are saying their devices get noticeably warmer to the touch while charging.

It will take two weeks to replace devices that have already gone out, Samsung said, but it's unclear if the two-week period applies globally.

[bloomberg.com](http://bloomberg.com)

### 43 Million Passwords Hacked In Last.FM Breach

September 1, 2016

Crikey: 43,570,999 user accounts were breached in a hack of Last.fm that occurred in March of 2012, according to a report from LeakedSource. Three months after the breach, in June of 2012, Last.fm issued the following statement:

"We are currently investigating the leak of some Last.fm user passwords. This follows recent password leaks on other sites, as well as information posted online. As a precautionary measure, we're asking all our users to change their passwords immediately."

The number of passwords and the severity of the hack were not uncovered until today. The passwords were stored using unsalted MD5 hashing. Rather than storing passwords in plaintext, nearly every site that stores critical user information utilizes some form of hashing. Hashing is a method for encrypting data, but some methods are far superior to others.

MD5 is seriously out of style, in part because it is not mathematically intensive enough to resist modern methods of brute-force cracking. Moreover, Last.fm didn't use salt in its hashing process. Salting is the practice of adding a random string of numbers to the hash for each individual password, making them more secure and decreasing the likelihood that they will be cracked if the passwords are ever leaked online. Unfortunately, Last.fm did not take that step, and LeakedSource reports that most of the passwords were easily cracked.

For the second time this week, our advice is that you change your password immediately if you have an account on Last.fm. The most popular password pulled from the Last.fm database was 123456. Seriously, it's 2016 people — use a platform like LastPass to generate randomized, complex passwords that are unique to every service for which you sign up.

[techcrunch.com](http://techcrunch.com)

## Products & Services

### ZTE Axon 7 Mini Is A Cheaper, Smaller Version Of The Company's Flagship

September 1, 2016

This summer, ZTE launched the Axon 7, the company's new flagship phone — which in ZTE's case pretty much means affordable but solid.

Now, ahead of the IFA show in Berlin, the company followed up with the ZTE Axon 7 mini, a smaller version of the Axon 7, with an ever lower price but also a significantly weaker set of specs.

The ZTE Axon 7 mini has a full-HD, 5.2-inch screen, a Qualcomm Snapdragon 617 octa-core processor, a 16-megapixel rear camera (plus an 8-megapixel selfie cam), 3GB of RAM, 32GB of storage memory and a 2,705mAh battery. Make no mistake, this is not just a smaller version of the Axon 7; this device will not perform as good as its older, bigger brother, but it should still deliver solid performance for the not-too-demanding consumer.

ZTE points out the phone's sound as one of its main strengths; the Axon 7 mini has dual, front-facing stereo speakers with a Dolby Atmos signature, which should mean listening to tunes on it should be a bit more enjoyable than on an average smartphone.

On the design front, the Axon 7 mini is quite similar to the Axon 7, with an all-metal body and 2.5D glass (meaning curved edges).

The ZTE Axon 7 mini will hit Russia, Germany, Spain, Poland, Japan, Australia, India, Saudi Arabia on Sept. 7; it will come to the U.S. at an unspecified, later time. The global price will be 299 euros (\$333).

[mashable.com](http://mashable.com)

## Sony's Home Robot Is The Cutest Way To Order Coffee

September 2, 2016

*“The bots were connected to a sound system, a TV, and a coffee machine, and under the instructions of Sony's assistants, were able to play music, pull up movie trailers, and order a steaming double espresso.”*

Sony's Xperia Agent is just a prototype, but it's the nearest thing I've seen to a home robot I might actually want to buy. The core of the Agent is a digital assistant like Siri and Alexa, which lets you complete tasks like checking your calendar and calling contacts. But, Sony being Sony, there's also a cute hardware element — a little robot companion with animated eyes that dances when you play music. This doesn't add any extra functionality, but it's just, well, fun. And why shouldn't robots be fun?

The Agent was first unveiled by Sony last year, but the company has added some functionality to it since then. At IFA in Berlin, a couple of demo units were on display, showing how the Agent could act as a hub for your smart home. The bots were connected to a sound system, a TV, and a coffee machine, and under the instructions of Sony's assistants, were able to play music, pull up movie trailers, and order a steaming double espresso.

First, you get the Agent's attention by pressing down on its spherical head (which also contains a camera). This part is just for the demo, says Sony, as was the use of a microphone to compensate for the crowded show floor. The Agent then asks if you want a coffee, and options pop up on the touchscreen display for you to specify how strong you want it. Then just pop a cup under the machine and away you go. Useful and time-saving? No. Adorable and futuristic? Absolutely.

[mashable.com](http://mashable.com)

## Emerging Technology

### LG Put Windows 10 On A Fridge

September 2, 2016

Samsung unveiled a smart fridge with a giant 1080p touchscreen attached to it earlier this year at CES. Not to be outdone, LG is at IFA today in Berlin with its own smart fridge, except it goes one step further. While Samsung opted for Tizen in its own fridge, LG has gone for Windows 10. That means you can launch all kinds of Windows apps on the fridge, and even classics like MS Paint and regedit if you desire.

LG is using a 29-inch touchscreen that's also translucent. It's actually really impressive to simply look at, and it's fast and fluid to use. LG's own Windows 10 apps are designed so you can stick notes to the fridge, set a timer, add recipes and healthy information about meals, or simply mark food that you can see through the translucent display. It seems slightly bizarre to have an Intel Atom processor and 2GB of RAM inside your fridge, but once I flicked over to Microsoft Edge to watch some YouTube videos I was intrigued at the idea.

As LG has opted for a full version of Windows 10, you can even install apps from the Windows Store on here, play music out of the speakers, or use Cortana for voice control. While the Windows 10 Start menu blocks out the contents of the fridge behind when you use it, apps simply blend into the translucent display so you can have the weather on display while checking how much milk you have left. It's all super ridiculous and I don't need Windows 10 on my fridge, but I really want it on there now.

LG isn't revealing exact specs of the fridge just yet or pricing and release information, but the Smart Instaview Door-in-Door fridge should launch later this year.

[theverge.com](http://theverge.com)

## Virtual Reality Massage Is The Ultimate Way To Chill Out

September 2, 2016

*In Fragments of a Hologram Rose*, William Gibson's first published short story, the protagonist has insomnia. To induce sleep, he uses a virtual reality tape that takes him to a yoga class on an exotic beach.

I remembered this story as I leaned into a massage chair and put on a VR headset that took me to a similar beach, a masseur in front of me telling me to relax and showing me how to breathe properly.

The five-minute experience, courtesy of a health-oriented, German company called Medisana, was not long enough for me to completely forget that I was actually surrounded by dozens of people visiting the IFA trade show in Berlin, but it was definitely one of the better uses of VR tech I've experienced.

After the masseur walked out of view, it was just me and the waves. The point of view is positioned low, so you feel like you're lying in the sand, which felt surprisingly nice. The field of view, at only 180 degrees, wasn't that nice; one look to the side and the illusion is lost.

There's no tech breakthrough here; it's just an Oculus Rift running a pre-recorded movie. The massage chair, while definitely the best I've tried, was nothing groundbreaking, either. But the combo makes perfect sense. If you can't actually be at a faraway beach getting a massage, the chair and the VR experience are likely the next best thing you can get.

A Medisana rep told me that what I've tried out was a prototype, but the company hopes to have a product in stores soon. And while the chair I tried out is likely too expensive and too bulky for most, Medisana also sells cheaper variants of massage chairs, which are wrapped over a regular chair.

These will also work with the VR experience, the rep told me, but he could not give me the pricing or an exact date of availability for any of the VR products I've seen.

[mashable.com](http://mashable.com)

## Mergers and Acquisitions

### Cisco's Buy-Up Of ContainerX Reveals A Larger Game Plan

September 1, 2016

Cisco announced Tuesday that it is buying ContainerX, a two-year old orchestration and management platform used in the emerging market of distributed containerized microservices (e.g., Docker).

Although the terms weren't disclosed, ContainerX has a relatively small number of customers, so the cost to Cisco was likely not very high. But why would Cisco acquire a company that is mostly directed at enabling the next generation of cloud-based virtualized services?

There are a number of reasons. First, Cisco is becoming a software and cloud enablement company. It rightly understands that the future of networking is not in "big iron" as in the past, but rather in software defined and virtualized network functionality. The emergence of the public and private cloud has fundamentally changed the networking business. Cisco, as well as its network competitors, needs to adapt or die a slow death. And moving to a more cloud-centric approach makes Cisco a player in the broader enterprise cloud marketplace. In a containerized cloud-enabled world, Cisco gains some real advantages by having ContainerX as part of its core capabilities.

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*"ContainerX gives Cisco the ability to manage its own microservices in a distributed cloud environment as well as those on competing platforms."*

The way software-defined networks and network function virtualization (SDN/NFV) will be deployed in the future as part of Cisco's core business is in a cloud environment where small software components in distributed computing environments will be tied together to define the entire network infrastructure. These components will often be deployed as microservices, which can easily be tied together to create a larger service. This is fundamentally different from creating a virtual machine for each function.

Specialized services like security, identity management, BI/analytics, storage management, data leak prevention, etc., will all be components that are available to the virtualized system. ContainerX is built to make these microservices deployable and manageable through an automated process. It provides an ability to configure the microservices on the fly no matter where they are located (on-premises, private cloud, public cloud, hybrid cloud, etc.). Being able to mix and match and create systems at will through a Lego-like approach is very important to Cisco going forward, as it is to the functioning of the greater cloud infrastructure.

Beyond its own internal needs, Cisco will likely not be the only creator of cloud-based components and services deployed in its solutions. It's likely that third party microservices providing specialized capabilities, often targeted at specific industries will be important to Cisco's customers. By owning the orchestration platform, Cisco keeps ultimate control and can provide oversight, and perhaps even a "toll road" for these microservice components. If Cisco doesn't create such a capability, it's very likely third parties will, diverting potential revenues (and control) from Cisco.

Finally, Cisco knows it must ultimately become a cloud company that offers not only network services, but other generalized compute services as well. Many enterprises are now moving to a containerized approach to make cloud more adaptable, although it will be many years before this is the most common approach to deploying corporate apps. Nevertheless, getting ahead of the curve is critical. The ability to allow corporate apps to run in the componentized cloud network can allow Cisco to extend its presence and compete with the likes of AWS, Azure, Google Cloud, etc. by fully utilizing the available compute resources. Ultimately, this lowers costs and increases versatility for its customers. And it's likely that the above-mentioned competitors will also seek to offer equivalent container/microservices capability.

ContainerX gives Cisco the ability to manage its own microservices in a distributed cloud environment as well as those on competing platforms. It provides Cisco with a competitive advantage longer term by providing the "glue" that can make the myriad of virtualized processes and corporate apps work together seamlessly no matter where the cloud is physically located. Ultimately, this will create a competitive advantage for Cisco. I'd expect other networking and cloud hosting companies to follow in a similar vein.

[venturebeat.com](http://venturebeat.com)

## New Partnerships Will Let You Tell Your Sonos Speakers What Music To Play

August 31, 2016

The wireless audio company announced it would roll out Amazon Alexa integration early next year, enabling voice control for Sonos systems. It's also pushing out a host of other software updates, including one that will let Spotify users control their Sonos systems with Spotify's mobile and desktop apps.

Overall, the changes are all part of Sonos's effort to become the sound platform for the connected home.

"We believe Music is killer app of connected home." said Sonos President Patrick Spence.

[mashable.com](http://mashable.com)

## Industry Reports

### Amazon Expected To Launch Echo In The UK On September 14th

September 2, 2016

*"Amazon originally launched the Echo in the US last June, but has not yet made it available in Canada or internationally. The company's invite doesn't drop too many hints, but if you ask Alexa (Echo's voice assistant) what's happening on September 14th, you get a good idea."*

Amazon sent a mysterious invite out to UK publications this morning, hinting that the company might be about to launch its popular Echo voice-controlled speaker. Amazon originally launched the Echo in the US last June, but has not yet made it available in Canada or internationally. The company's invite doesn't drop too many hints, but if you ask Alexa (Echo's voice assistant) what's happening on September 14th, you get a good idea.

"I promised I wouldn't tell," replies Alexa, in a video posted by Engadget editor Matt Brian. "A visit to London has always been on my bucket list." The press invite comes just weeks after a blogger found that Bing was caching a mysterious URL on Amazon's UK site for Echo preorders with a September 16th release date. That caching might have been a mistake for another product, but Alexa is clearly dropping hints we'll see the Echo launch internationally for the first time since its debut last year. The Verge will be covering Amazon's UK event, so stay tuned for more information on September 14th.

[theverge.com](http://theverge.com)

### India's Newest 4G Carrier Reliance Jio Shakes Up The Entire Country

September 1, 2016

The launch of Reliance Jio's 4G LTE network in India has jolted the telecom market in the country. The impact of Jio's free and unlimited voice calls and cheap data tariffs is not only helping the new entrant win new customers, but is also reflecting on how the market perceives other incumbent carriers.

In the aftermath of Jio's nation-wide commercial launch in the country, India's largest telecom operator Airtel is seeing a significant dip in its market value. Bharti Airtel's stocks were down by 6.48 percent at the time of writing this story. Idea, which has over 100 million subscribers took a 10.9 percent hit.

Stocks of Tata Communications, another major player in the country, is down by 2.55 percent, whereas Vodafone, which has over 150 million mobile subscribers in India, is observing a drop of 1.87 percent on the London Stock Exchange. India is one of the biggest markets for Newbury, U.K. based Vodafone.

In the meanwhile, existing telecom operators are treading carefully with how they react to Jio's arrival in the market. "We welcome Reliance Jio's entry to the digital world and wish them the very best. We also welcome Jio's call to leading operators to work together. As a responsible operator we will fulfill all our regulatory obligations as we have always done," Airtel said in a statement.

"Over the last 20 years, Airtel has been contributing towards building a digitally enabled India and remains fully committed to and take leadership in supporting the Government's Digital India vision. We will continue to innovate and deliver best-in-class products and services to our customers," the company added.

Without acknowledging Jio, Vodafone said it will continue to offer “great value” to its subscribers in the country. “We have always offered great value to our customers, backed by excellent customer service, a nationwide presence, and Vodafone SuperNeT our best network ever. We will continue to do so for our hundreds of million customers across the country.”

Vodafone, Airtel and Idea recently revised their data plans ahead of Jio's commercial launch. But even after cutting some of their data tariffs by more than 50 percent, they can't seem to be matching Jio's 1GB data for 75 cents offering.

In the meanwhile, Jio has been the talking point on social media all day today, and nearly everyone seems pleased with Jio's commercial launch. Following are some tweets that offer more insight into what today's announcement means to them and others.

[mashable.com](http://mashable.com)



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