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Swiss watchmakers take analog approach for smartwatch entrance

March 3, 2015



Fredrique Constant Horological Smartwatch

By JEN KING

As the development of wearables has continued to move forward there have been ample opportunities for Swiss watchmakers to enter the space through collaborative efforts.

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Collaborations, in any space in the luxury market, allow the partnering brands to explore their own heritages and best practices in a new way that may amplify their offerings. Oftentimes, these collaborations connect brands that seem like an unlikely duo such as Silicon Valley and Switzerland's watch manufacturer partnership to create the first Swiss Horological Smartwatch.

"It's the beautiful Swiss watch that you love to wear and now it's connected and smart," said Philippe Kahn, CEO of [Fullpower](#), Santa Cruz, CA.

"MMT is a joint venture between the Union Horlogere and Fullpower, the leading Silicon Valley company for wearable and IoT," he said. "Now these beautiful watches will be beautiful, not just another phone appliance strapped on a wrist.

"We built the MotionX platform so that we can enable many quality Swiss brands with their own iconic identity. It's really the best of both worlds; no compromises on beauty and

design, and with a battery life of 2+ years, we can enable every Quartz movement."

Smarten up

The Swiss Horological Smartwatch acts as a bridge between Silicon Valley and traditional Swiss watchmaking. The joint venture brought together Swiss watchmakers Frederique Constant, Alpina and Mondaine with technology brand Fullpower Technologies and investment firm Union Horlogere Holdings to create Manufacture Modules Technologies.

Based in Geneva, MMT, a new Swiss Joint Venture SARL, will provide management to the Swiss watch movement development, production, listenings and general support for Switzerland's horology industry. Also, MMT will work to bring the MotionX Horological Smartwatch Open Platform to the industry.

MotionX's platform allows the Swiss Horological Smartwatch to provide its wearer with a comprehensive summary of data points such as activity and sleep.

Custom app experience



Swiss watches with MotionX technology and accompanying apps

Frederique Constant, Alpine and Mondaine's will launch 10 different smartwatch models for men and women in 2015, all of which will be powered by MotionX and will have bi-directional communication with iPhone and Android applications.

At first glance, the watches outfitted with the MotionX platform appear to be traditionally designed timepieces. By creating a smartwatch that does not look futuristic, the partnering watchmakers are able to maintain their heritage and the defining characteristics of a Swiss-made timepiece.

The watches will have no digital screen, but instead the Horological Smartwatch will have laser cut hands on an analog display.

Functionality of the Horological Smartwatch includes more than two years of battery life, MotionX activity tracking and alerts, Sleeptracker sleep monitoring and sleep cycle alarms, adaptive coaching, cloud backup and restore as well as never losing time.

Essentially, these watches will help wearers get to know themselves better and improve their lifestyles based on the data provided by MotionX.



Modaine Horological Smartwatch powered by MotionX with app screenshots

For Frederique Constant and Alpina, this is not the first time the watchmakers have implemented wearable technologies into their strategies.

As Google Glass became a sure reality and less a futuristic vision, Alpina and Frederique Constant worked the technology into their marketing strategies. The two watchmakers were part of the Official Google Glass Explorer Program and aimed to change how timepieces are marketed and shared ([see story](#)).

Keeping up with the techies

Incorporating brand aesthetics and elements into a new technological-focused endeavor ensures that enthusiasts will be receptive to the design and functionality.

For example, Germany's Montblanc has embraced wearable technology with the introduction of the e-Strap, a device that can be added to any traditional timepiece.

In general, watchmakers were not inherently threatened by the emergence of smart wearables due to their dedication to craftsmanship. But, as the technology was developed some watchmakers, as well as retailers and accessories makers, have realized the potential of collaborations to maintain relevancy in a changing marketplace ([see story](#)).

Also, precision cut-crystal maker Swarovski entered wearable tech with an activity and sleep tracker, the Swarovski Shine, unveiled during trade show CES.

The wearable is a functional crystal along with a line of accompanying jewelry pieces in the brand's trademark style. Tech companies are still working to get fashion-conscious consumers to adopt wearables, and designing them to look like regular accessories may help convince them ([see story](#)).

"This is a very interesting partnership between a United States high tech company and traditional Swiss watchmakers," said Simon Buckingham, CEO of [Appitalism](#), New York. "These smartwatches look like traditional timepieces but have app connectivity and built

in sensor technology.

"For those customers, many likely of an older demographic, that want some smartwatch functionality to monitor their health and other functions, but don't want to wear a technology piece, these models and designs could well be of interest," he said. "Instead offering alerts on the watch screen, consumers use the companion app to monitor their vital signs.

"Some consumers want their smartwatches to be Swiss-made rather than made in China. These brands get to offer updated technology whilst preserving and evolving their brand and traditional designs, bridging their heritage with their future. Only Apple can build a new category from next to nothing with the April launch of the Apple Watch, but a rising tide helps all boats so why not piggy back on Apple's awareness and interest building campaigns."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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