

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

## Turing launches AI-powered, concierge-equipped smartphone

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*The Turing Appassionato phone comes with an AI concierge called Sir Alan. Image credit: Turing Robotics*

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By DANNY PARISI

Turing Robotic Industries, a San Francisco-based company focused on mobile technology, is releasing a new high-end smartphone that comes with a built-in concierge service.

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Turing's smartphone is called Appassionato, meaning "enthusiast" in Italian, as well as being a play on words with the word "app." Appassionato's main selling point however is an on-board digital concierge named Sir Alan who, Turing boasts, can assist in managing every part of an owner's life.

### Digital concierge

Digital concierge services are not an entirely new concept.

Apple's Siri and Microsoft's Cortana have both been a part of the smartphone package for several years, giving customers the ability to have more direct control over their lives by letting an artificial intelligence companion deal with some of the logistics.

But these AI features are framed as voice-activated commands rather than a true concierge service.

This is where Turing aims to be different by offering a phone whose AI can actually handle complex requests in an intelligent way.



*The Turing Appassionato. Image credit: Turing Robotics*

Turing claims that Sir Alan, the concierge that comes with the Appassionato phone, can handle complicated requests such as making a reservation at a restaurant, finding and making purchases online and even searching for and booking a flight. Turing says that in a test, Sir Alan successfully booked a \$385,000 charter flight from San Francisco to Honolulu, HI.

The goal, ultimately, is for Sir Alan to be able to predict what users need and do it for them before they even ask.

To gain access to Sir Alan, Appassionato smartphone owners have to pay a subscription fee to make use of its services. For \$1,000, users can get two full years of Sir Alan's services.

The smartphone itself costs \$1,600, but Turing is counting on the phone's marketability to high-end customers as making it worthy of that price tag.

### **Mobile luxury**

Luxury smartphones are not terribly common. Even the wealthiest of patrons is more likely to use a standard iPhone or Android than anything special.

British smartphone manufacturer Vertu, for example, had been one of the only players in the high-end sector, but the brand announced in July it would be liquidating its production arm following the failed attempts of its new owner to turn the company around.

Earlier this year, the technology company was sold to its fourth owner, Baferton Ltd., in a \$61 million deal. Facing increasing pressure and competition from other companies, Vertu, which manufactured multi-thousand-dollar handcrafted devices, had recently seen financial struggles ([see story](#)).

Vertu recently shut down operations, leaving the market open for Turing's new phone to thrive.



*Two models of the Appassionato. Image credit: Turing*

But iPhones remain strong among wealthy customers.

In Verve Mobile's "2016 New Smartphone Release Report," the location-based insights agency gleaned insights on the types of consumer who were among the first to upgrade their devices to iPhone 7. Increasingly, Apple devices have been a status determinator, and the consumer electronics maker has done well at positioning itself with luxury heritage brands through marketing, collaborations and in-store experience ([see story](#)).

Turing is looking to create something that can pull luxury buyers away from iPhones and Samsung phones by providing something with more value to it.

Sir Alan is meant to offer a service that customers cannot get from using a regular smartphone and in this way, Turing is hoping to tap into the relatively small market for luxury smartphones.

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