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Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, and Sam Altman Declare the End of Smartphones — but Tim Cook Isn't Buying It Just Yet

Tech giants are quietly moving to kill off the smartphone, betting on radical new devices that bypass screens entirely. While Apple plays it safe, others are pushing brain chips, digital tattoos and AI wearables.



Arezki Amiri

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CEO Of Apple, Tim Cook. Credit: REUTERS/Manuel Orbeozo | The Daily Galaxy --Great Discoveries Channel

Smartphones, once the crown jewel of tech innovation, may finally be approaching their twilight. According to recent data from *IDC* and *Statista*, global smartphone shipments have **slowed** significantly over the last five years, with a plateau in consumer demand and fewer compelling reasons to upgrade. At the same time, some of the most influential names in technology — *Elon*

Musk, Mark Zuckerberg, Sam Altman and Bill Gates — are no longer talking about the next phone. They're talking about *what comes after*.

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These figures are investing heavily in technologies that sidestep traditional smartphones altogether. Brain implants, augmented reality glasses, and skin-worn digital interfaces are now in the spotlight. And while *Apple CEO Tim Cook* remains committed to refining the smartphone with incremental updates, his counterparts are preparing for a post-screen world.

The Rise of Ambient and Embedded Computing

Elon Musk's *Neuralink* recently confirmed that two human subjects have received its **brain-computer interface implants**, marking a major milestone in direct thought-to-machine communication. The aim is radical: to eliminate physical interaction with devices entirely. No more tapping, swiping or even speaking — actions could be triggered by neural signals alone.

Meanwhile, *Bill Gates* has thrown his support behind *Chaotic Moon*, a Texas-based startup developing **digital tattoos** equipped with nanosensors. These skin-mounted devices collect and transmit data, serving applications from **health monitoring** to secure identification. They represent a vision where **the body itself becomes the interface**.

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Not to be outdone, *Meta's Mark Zuckerberg* is staking his company's future on **augmented reality (AR)**. His team is working toward mainstream **AR glasses** by 2030, claiming they could become our "primary computing platform." These glasses would overlay navigation, messages, and other digital content directly into a user's field of vision, aligning with Meta's broader *metaverse* ambitions.

All this activity suggests a seismic shift away from physical devices toward **ambient, embedded systems** — an idea backed by recent research from *MIT Media Lab*, which explores how wearables and near-body interfaces can reduce cognitive load and increase real-time decision-making capabilities.

Tim Cook Holds the Line as Apple Bets on Refinement Over Reinvention

In contrast to these bold experiments, *Apple* is taking a more cautious — some say conservative — path. The recent launch of the **iPhone 16** highlights this. The device integrates sophisticated on-device AI, enhancing usability and performance, but keeps the familiar form intact.

Forbes contributor *Bill Fischer*, a senior lecturer at IMD Business School, notes that **Tim Cook's legacy** as a world-class operator is secure, but his reputation as an innovator may hinge on how Apple navigates this looming transition. While Apple has invested heavily in AI — acquiring 21 AI startups since 2017 — its ecosystem remains tightly controlled. Critics argue this "walled garden" model could limit the company's flexibility in a world increasingly powered by open innovation.

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Still, Apple isn't standing still. Its upcoming **iOS 18** and continued development of the *Vision Pro* headset suggest it is hedging its bets. But whether incremental updates can keep pace with radical redefinitions of connectivity is a question that could define the company's next decade.

Minimalist Challengers and the Return of Disruptive Simplicity

While giants debate the next paradigm, a wave of smaller players is already pushing into the space. Devices like the **Rabbit R1**, **Humane's AI Pin**, and the **Oura Ring** don't look like smartphones, but they perform many of the same tasks — often more simply, and without the distractions.

These gadgets leverage voice commands, context-aware AI and minimal interfaces to offer **frictionless interaction**, a trend that *The Economist* noted in 2023 as an early warning sign of industry disruption. In many cases, these minimalist tools aren't just accessories — they're intended to **replace specific smartphone functions**, from messaging to health tracking to navigation.

Samsung has moved quickly to respond, introducing the **Galaxy Ring** and rolling out AI enhancements to its **Galaxy S24** line, including real-time translation and gesture-based search. But as *Forbes* warns, entrenched leaders often struggle to respond nimbly to such insurgencies, bogged down by internal complexity and legacy dependencies.

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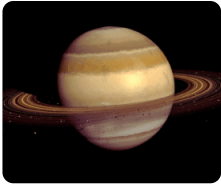
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