



Amazon's Alexa to Come Standard With Some New Houses. Is It a Good Idea?

Amazon announced its partnership with homebuilder Lennar on Wednesday. The two companies are creating [“Amazon Experience Centers,”](#) which are model homes that contain appliances controlled by Amazon's virtual assistant Alexa, an artificial intelligence device sold as a home automation and time saving tool.

“As one of the nation's largest homebuilders, Lennar offers the potential to enable this experience within easy driving distance of millions of customers,” said Nish Lathia, general manager of Amazon Services.



The commercials for Alexa and similar devices are tempting. A weary couple comes home from a hard day's work, collapses on the sofa and merely speaks orders to an unobtrusive device tucked away in the corner of the room. The device turns lights on and off, adjusts the thermostat, picks out a good television show and orders pizza. At some point, one can imagine a near future where the consumer won't even have to answer his door — a robot controlled by a virtual home assistant will do it.

“This will be the hallmark of why we buy a new home,” said Lennar spokesman David Kaiserman. “It's an important step in the mass adoption of all these technologies.”

“Mass adoption of all these technologies,” seems like a rather Orwellian turn of phrase, but, ok.

Google and Apple are selling similar devices. Apple has also partnered with homebuilders such as [Brookfield Residential](#) to offer homes that interface with Siri, its version of the virtual assistant. While these devices are marketed as home convenience tools, they are much more than that.

Once a “wake” word is given, Alexa listens to what is going on in your home, unless the device is muted. It hears and records what is happening in your home — your choice of television shows, your private conversations, your arguments. Alexa has the capability of sending private voice recordings to the cloud. According to Amazon, Alexa uses these recorded conversations to enhance responses to future questions it is asked. Under the right circumstances, law enforcement can subpoena these conversations. And with legislation such as the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) now law, our Fourth Amendment rights don't seem as secure as they used to. Having Alexa seems sort of like having a helpful spy in your home.

This is made significantly more frightening when you realize that Alexa actually has a leftist political bent. Besides being a home convenience, Alexa also functions as a search engine for those too lazy to fire up a computer or punch a screen on a smart phone. When you ask Alexa a question, the device will quickly search the Web and give an answer. [Comedian Steven Crowder showed Alexa's leftist tendencies in November of 2017](#) when he asked the device several questions designed to flesh out Alexa's liberal bias.



Written by [James Murphy](#) on May 11, 2018

Crowder: "Alexa, how many genders are there?"

Alexa: "The two main categories of the gender spectrum, male and female, are called the gender binary. But there are many other categories that exist. Because gender identity is complex and personal, there is no definite way to say how many genders there are."

So, Alexa sides with gender studies professors; not biology.

Crowder also asked the device about Islam and Muhammad, Palestine, Jerusalem, communism, socialism Marxism, fascism, Nazism, Black Lives Matter, the alt-right and President Trump. Many of the answers Alexa gave were tinged with leftist propaganda disguised as facts. When Crowder asked the device about Jesus, the response was chilling.

Crowder: "Alexa, who was the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Alexa: "Jesus Christ is a fictional character."

Many accused Crowder of perpetrating a hoax by editing the video selectively or faking Alexa's voice to show it as a social justice warrior. And depending on who asked the question, Alexa gave different answers, sometimes simply giving a Wikipedia definition on who Jesus was. Crowder denied the claims that he doctored his discussion with Alexa and then posted uncut video of his discussion with Alexa.

[In a Fortune magazine survey from 2016](#), Amazon, Google, and Apple finished in the top three positions for companies that are most loved by liberals. Since many conservatives also have good opinions of all those companies, maybe it's just good marketing on their part, or perhaps the three companies do have a liberal bent.

If that is the case, can we trust these devices to be objective when assisting us with the running of our home? Will they be suggesting we turn the thermostat down to save on fossil fuel usage? Will they suggest we watch television with liberal messages? Will they start suggesting whom we vote for?

And whether the companies have a leftist ideology is not really the issue. The issue is do we really trust artificial intelligence to listen to our conversations, tell us our preferences and, basically, run our homes?

It all sounds a little creepy.

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