

The Tech Event that Mixes Business and Pleasure

By **Andy Marken**
andy@markencom.com



Source – CTA

Chips are important...*DUH*, but there's more to CES than present/future technology. There's also the practical side for home and the office.

While chips are in everything today, most of us feel the first place to experience them is in productivity, personal tools.

At CES, the work/play/communicate device makers were at their best and compute, notebook folks rolled out so many outstanding devices that picking faves wasn't easy.



Dell Latitude 9420



Dell Video Conferencing Monitor

We zeroed in on the Dell Latitude 9420 and 24-, 27- or 34-inch video conferencing monitor (it's all in the budget) because the notebook includes their new Dell Optimizer software that uses AI to tune the system/apps to the way you work. The system has amazing performance and the Optimizer simplifies connectivity, collaboration, background noise-cancelling and auto-mute.

And for your WFH peace of mind, it also includes safeguards that prevent, detect and handle attacks across the system.

Since video conferencing is an integral part of business, the new Dell monitors are certified for Microsoft Teams and are easy-on-the-eyes for daily work.

Equally good portable systems were:

- ASUS Zenbook Pro Duo 15 OLED
- Lenovo Ideapad 5G
- Acer Aspire 5
- Alienware m15 R4 and m17 R4
- Lenovo ThinkBook Plus Gen 2



Asus ROG Zephyrus Duo 15



Lenovo Legion 7

According to NPD's Mat Piscatella, gaming was one of the few industries to thrive during the pandemic and the new hardware/software that was unveiled at CES proved these organizations came to play ... and win.

With the assistance of our son, we picked two notebooks from the wide array that deserve strong consideration – the Asus ROG Zephyrus Duo 15 and Lenovo Legion 7.

For a gaming system, the ROG Zephyrus Duo 15 with its dual screen looks like it is the future of gaming. The secondary screen gives plenty of gaming support like extra menus, map previews, and inventory options that will help for a smoother, more seamless gaming experience. It features AMD's next-gen Ryzen mobile processor and Nvidia's RTX 3000 mobile GPUs.

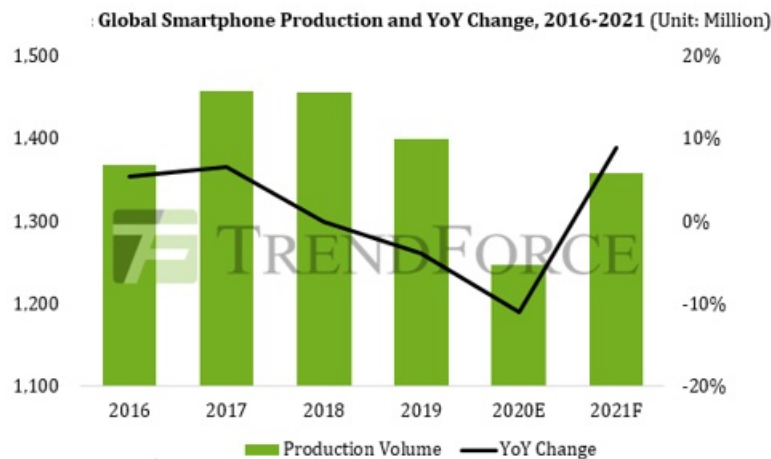
The Lenovo Legion 7's 16-inch IPS display touts a 2560 x 1600 resolution, 165Hz refresh rate, HDR 400, and Nvidia G-Sync. With about the same price as last year, it comes with AMD Ryzen 5000 chips and Nvidia GeForce RTX 3000 GPUs.

Others that bear considering are:

- MSI Stealth 15M
- Asus TUF Dash F15
- Razer Blade 15
- Razer Blade Pro 17
- Gigabyte Aorus 17G
- MSI GE76 Raider

Samsung came out with a huge show within a show--the next best thing to a powerhouse computer and enhanced monitor.

But they had to because they want to maintain their leadership ahead of Apple in a tough, spec heavy, multi-lens market that continues to grow – especially as people stream more content to their smallest screen.



Refresh – 2020 wasn't a great year for folks upgrading their smartphones because let's face it, they were adequate but 2021 has opened with new devices, new features, new capabilities and new apps.

While everyone seems to be trying to keep up with/ahead of Motorola and the other foldable phones, TLC surprised a lot of folks with a rollable phone. It extends from 6.7-in to 7.8-in with the tap of a finger. It can store or be used as a square device or expand to a more traditional phone shape.



TLC Rollable Phone



LG Rollable Phone

LG may be the king of the rollable TV screens but now they're taking the technology to a smaller scale. The new rollable phone looks like a standard-size phone and then slides out into a small tablet for better stream viewing. And yes, it will be available this year.

And since it appears that the most widely used application on your phone is the "play" button, there was a seemingly endless array of headphones and earbuds with a wide range of claims and prices. Sometimes we believe implants might be easier/cheaper in the long run.

With home security, robotic vacuums, intelligent kitchen appliances, voice activated everything; CES has rapidly become the place to show off what is new, special with a strong dose of panache.



Kohler Stillness Bath



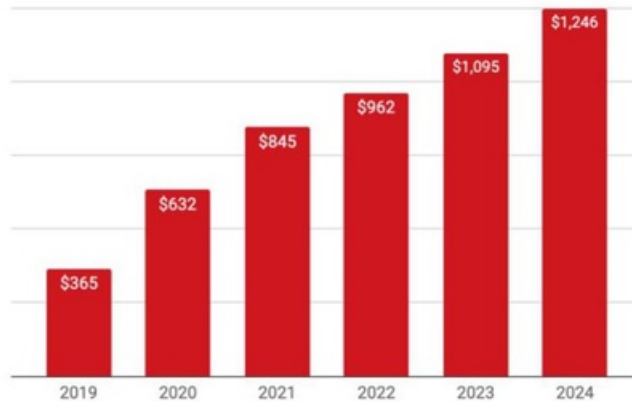
Toto Wellness Toilet

You're accustomed to pampering yourself after a tough day of video conferencing and nothing says relax like Kohler's stillness bath. It's a square tub with light, fog and aromatherapy that will transport you to Japan's shinrin-yoku (forest bathing).

It's so inviting we're glad we're a shower person because the price for a fully loaded with all the bells and whistles is \$16K. And, of course, they have intelligent faucets, toilets, smart water monitors and more.

Toto has been preoccupied with your “going” for years and when you look at their new Wellness Toilet you might mutter, “Holy ****!” They’ve been working on a toilet that analyzes, records and tracks the health information of your output for years. The unit will be available in a couple of years but in the meantime, they have a full range of e-water and smart toilets to help you through the day.

Connected health monitoring device revenues, in millions



Source – CTA

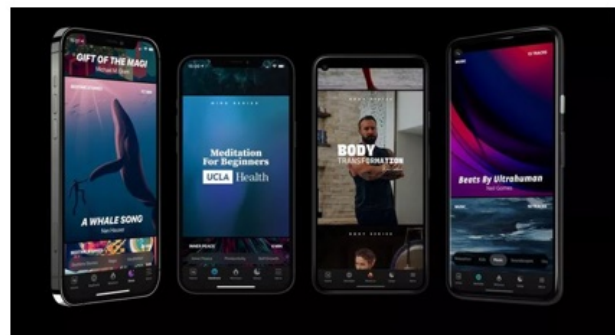
Personal Healthcare – Personal wellness devices and applications have been around for a couple of years now, but the pandemic “encouraged” hardware/software organizations to develop new products, systems and applications to check and make certain everything is working properly.

Personal/family health, a relatively small market segment, grew in leaps and bounds in the past year as companies rushed to develop new hardware/software/smartphone apps, you name it. to help people monitor and improve their health and physical being.

Whether it’s for the home or office (when you return), smart air purifiers and possibly even UV-C light solutions should be at the top of your “gotta have” list.



Brondell Pro Air Purifier



Ultrahuman Wellness, Fitness Applications

A wide range of air purifiers from established companies and new firms made their appearance at CES this year. They all seemed to focus on energy efficiency, environmentally friendly and some with removable, washable filters to protect your environment. Most are priced under \$1K.

Multiple companies offered families of health and wellness products and applications for home exercise as well as a fast, easy method of controlling your exercise/activities, food intake, and health/body monitoring on your smartphone.

They're nice but nothing beats getting up off the couch, venturing out to walk/run/do sit-ups/push-ups while forgoing junk foods, eating right and the best exercise of all ... pushing away from the table.

We know ... it should be easier.

Our key issue was that we didn't know how safe/secure our personal data was with these products/applications and if they were stored on my device/system or somewhere else.

Of course, the challenge is we use our smartphone for everything – starting/locking the car(s), home security, system monitoring/tracking, banking/payments, texting and ... oh yes, occasionally making a call.

That's a lot of valuable personal information in one device!

More importantly, that's a lot of really different, really unique, really easy to forget passwords.

Before the pandemic, the tech-based tools/toys were dominated by smart speakers and impressive screens; but this year, the products and related apps became essential tools and will become increasingly so as we enter the new century.

But with CES; 5G, transparent/rollable screens, home/office safety/security, pandemic tech and preparing for tomorrow all seemed to come together in the transportation segment in this year's event.

Everything from giant farming equipment; AI-controlled land/sea/air transportation solutions and the heartthrob of men/women alike - the auto - have become mainstays of the CTA event.

As we stared at each new vehicle, the one thing that stuck us was they always showed you the "dramatic" front of the car first.

Designer after designer gushed over the dramatic statement their vehicle presented as you saw it coming at you or in your rearview mirror ... big, bold, dramatic, different.



Source – Davis Entertainment



Source – historyextra

It's probably just us, but the Lexis front end looks like the slobbering face in *Predator* that hopped down to earth to have a little fun hunting folks.

As proud as BMW is of its double-bubble grill, for some weird reason it reminds us of an 18th century woman torturing herself to squeeze her middle and produce a big bump above and below the constriction ... ouch.

The big mesh grills? They look like the veggie cutters you see on the TV infomercials...slice thru anything as easy as butter.

But the clear message this year was that EVs are here; and in a few years, they will not only be the primary driving force for industrial and personal vehicles, they will feature elegant and functional screens.

In the middle of a \$27B shift, GM highlighted a new electric drivetrain that will be the foundation for many of the company's more than 30 EV models that will be delivered over the next three to four years. The introductions will include trucks, delivery vehicles and obviously, cars to compete with Ford, Mercedes, Tesla, Toyota and the growing roster of emerging buzz-friendly firms.

Suddenly the industry is serious – very serious – about weaning the world off fossil fuels.

But once you climb into the vehicle (commercial or personal) the first thing to strike your eyes is that it's digitized, electrified and elegantly functional.

Mercedes replaced the buttons, switches, itty-bitty screens with a 56-inch pillar to pillar digital control center ... the Hyperscreen.



General Motors

The curved-panel OLED screen includes digital instrument clusters, touchscreen, high resolution display and more. Behind the screen is advanced voice command and eye-tracking technology so you never have to take your eyes off the road as it keeps you on the straight-and-narrow.

We showed a picture of the console to our Jag and swear there were tears of envy in her headlights ... soon we hope.

The event of tomorrow

Having helped put on smaller and less complex in-person events, we know pivoting to a four-day CES wasn't easy on CTA or the exhibitors; but the virtual show proved that changes will take place in the exhibit industry in the years ahead.

Not just in-person or virtual, but more than likely a hybrid event that will be the launching pad for new technology, new products, new companies.

And what was the very best take-away from the show?



Mercedes-Benz



Source - ColdSnap

There's always something that just suddenly appears at CES that makes you want it ... now!

This year it was ColdSnap, a Keurig-like machine that produced a personal serving of soft serve ice cream or the cold drink of your choice before your eyes.

Just pop a recyclable ice cream pod in and **BAM!** in 90 seconds a delicious (they say) cup or cone with the fruit or candy topping of your choice. When ColdSnap begins shipping in the second quarter, they plan on having pods for smoothies, frozen coffee, protein shakes, non-dairy ice cream, frozen cocktails and more ready to eat/enjoy.



Source – Shutterstock

Binge CES – One of the benefits of a virtual version of something as massive as CES is that you can see it again and again just by relaxing on your couch and searching the web for new products and new technology from the industry leaders.

The great thing is you'll be able to enjoy your comfort food or beverage in your living room with your giant screen and surround/immersive sound and go back to this year's CES as many times as you want to figure out what products, tools, systems, stuff you want to add to your consumer technology arsenal without spilling a drop or feeling guilty because...

We'll never know, never tell!

###

Andy Marken – andy@markencom.com - is an author of more than 700 articles on management, marketing, communications and industry trends in media & entertainment, as well as consumer electronics, software and applications. An internationally recognized marketing/communications consultant with a broad range of technical and industry expertise in storage, storage management and film/video production fields; he has an extended range of relationships with business, industry trade press, online media and industry analysts/consultants.