Brainstorm: Holiday Wish List

Edited by Jason Lomberg, Technical Editor

With the holidays approaching, what product or technology is on your wish list?

Keith Curtis, Microchip Technology, www.microchip.com **[1]**

I have been wracking my brain for the last week, trying to figure out what I want for Christmas. I had considered everything from a single-chip PC in a TQFP package, to a BMW-style, center-column upgrade for my van; and then it hit me first thing this morning. I want, and feel I justly deserve, an Internet Clock Radio for my bedroom. I am sick and tired of listening to the local DJs and their feeble attempts at humor. I would much rather wake up to an all-music channel, such as Pandora.

If it could also display my Microsoft Outlook schedule for the day, that would be perfect. That way, I could hit the snooze button with confidence—secure in the knowledge that I don’t have a European conference call at 8:00 a.m.

Oh, and it should have a simple system that would allow me to set different alarms for holidays and weekends, plus sufficient security to prevent the introduction of weekend/holiday to-do lists from “unauthorized parties.”

Matt Kurtz, Texas Instruments, www.ti.com **[2]**

Between my kids, my wife and I, our family's house contains around 12 connected mobile devices – including smartphones, iPods, tablets – at any given time. Combine that with our Wi-Fi-enabled TVs, and the number goes to 15. That's 15 data-hungry, feature-rich devices, all synced to the "cloud" that hovers over our home.

This Holiday season, I'm wishing for more. Not more devices, but more connections. I want my smartphone to talk to my alarm system, to stream real-time video monitoring to me when I'm away. I want my thermostat to "learn" the temperature patterns in my house, to intelligently turn up or down and save energy. I want my tablet to connect to my sprinkler system, so I can get a reminder to turn it off if rain is on the way. And, I want it all to happen without wires.

All I want for the Holidays is a smarter house, with the kinds of connections that make it easier to track energy consumption – and the elements that make up my family's life. A bigger collection of our family's "Internet of Things," per se, helping us connect to each other and the world in all-new ways.

Robert Surmani, TE Connectivity, www.te.com **[3]**

Hello Ladies,

Are you fed up with your man watching game after game of football on Sundays? Is your Honey-Do List too thick for a stapler? Does he always say he'll get to it during the next commercial, which doesn't come soon enough for your liking?

Then you need new FauxCom. With this tiny remote hidden inside this feather duster you can trigger the TV to launch into a fake commercial when YOU decide. Simply act like you're dusting in the adjoining room, hit the remote hidden in the handle and the game launches into a fake commercial about tampons. I guarantee you he will not sit through that! Then you can assign him a chore. When he returns, he'll be too intoxicated to realize when the commercial broke it was in the middle of a play and the score was 14-7, the commercial just ended and the score is 28-24.

Now you would expect to pay $500 for this fabulous marriage-saver but if you act now, it's yours for a mere $19.95. And for the next six callers we'll throw in Zap-o-matic for the stubborn hubbies. Don't be the last desperate housewife to get one. Operators are standing by.

Scott Avery, Atmel Corporation, www.atmel.com **[4]**

For Christmas this year, I am requesting the following from Technology Santa:

1) A smartphone that not only includes touch, stylus and voice support but one that has the intelligence to answer general questions and more importantly will anticipate my next question based on previously asked questions and provide a response. Of course, for some, this could be annoying, so you would also have the ability to tell the smartphone to turn this feature off.

2) I commute over 250 miles a week and I have always dreamed that while I am still in my working career, I could have a vehicle that can drive itself. One that can take me from the East Bay Areato Silicon Valley while I am working on the phone and on my computer. The vehicle will require minimal driving from me since it would utilize a vast network of sensors. The vehicle could drive in a straight line, at the right speed and stop as required.

3) I feel the ultimate Christmas gift from Santa would be a truly networked home. Yes, everyone talks about how to deploy this technology in the home but we still have very little we can remotely control in our homes. Imagine your kids call and say “Hey dad, I am locked out of the house, let me in please.” You call up you Home Control Interface on your smartphone, access the Security menu and presto, you let them in. Better yet, how about using your tablet or smart phone to heat up your hot tub as soon as you get off your international flight. Someday this will happen, but the only technology that has a viable implementation of this technology is Smart Metering. And, sadly, we consumers are still waiting for our access to this

technology.

Frank Tobe, The Robot Report, www.therobotreport.com **[5]**

This holiday season, people need to get their money's worth from gift giving. Gifts need to be either truly phenomenal or practical. In the phenomenal category, what's more exciting than getting a robot as a holiday gift? As the editor/publisher of The Robot Report, a site which tracks the business of robotics, I compiled this list of robotic gifts to please almost every family member.

• For Grandparents and teenagers: Parrot AR.Drone QuadriCopter - $299
• For Mom: iRobot's Scooba bathroom floor cleaning robot - $299
• For science-interested kids 10+: LEGO Mindstorms NXT kit - $273
• For robotic gadget geeks 16+: Willow Garage's TurtleBot starter mobile robot - $1,499 -- OR -- Bilibot starter mobile robot with arm and gripper - $1,200.
• For girls younger than 10: Penbo the affectionate waddling penguin - $45 -- OR-- Fijit the squishy dancing friend - $42
• For Dad: Adaptive cruise control robot option for new cars - $599 - $2,495
• For the philanthropic: MyKeepon - $49 (part of the proceeds go to support autism research) -- OR -- donate a $280,000 PR2 to your alma mater's robotics lab
• For readers of all ages: Selected books about robots and robotics - $10-$221

Jon Beall, Texas Instruments, www.ti.com **[2]**

The holidays are a time when I start thinking of cool tech gifts I should get for my family and friends, though they know I usually choose electronics so I can get a closer look at the market's latest and greatest. Personally, I am blessed with lots of "comfort" electronics, so I am always hard to buy for. But this year might be different, as a certain technology has caught my eye: wireless speakers/speakerphones that connect with my smartphone/tablet.

This exciting technology creates more social music or movie experiences with friends and family by taking the audio out of our ear buds and moving it to wireless speakers to be shared. Because my smartphone or tablet is the center of my computing experience, I crave more sharing capabilities, including CD-quality wireless audio streaming over a rock-solid radio frequency (RF) link for a headphone-less speaker option . New wireless speakers would allow me to share my music and movies while the wireless speakerphone feature allows multiple people to join my conversation at one time, creating many environments where the wireless speaker/speakerphone can be used. We shall see if my family reads this article so this wish-list item is fulfilled!

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