# Apple faces intensifying pressure to innovate AI with Apple Watch at centre stage



Pressure is mounting on Apple to innovate in the realm of artificial intelligence, especially following the unveiling of Apple Intelligence at the recent WWDC 2024. The tech giant finds itself at a pivotal moment, where consumer expectations are not merely for an enhanced Siri, but for a fully-fledged AI device that can seamlessly integrate with its ecosystem. As competitors like OpenAI and Google develop increasingly sophisticated AI technologies, Apple's challenge is to remain relevant in an evolving landscape that prioritises innovation and user engagement.

OpenAI's recent partnership with Jony Ive, former chief design officer at Apple, underscores the competitive threat Apple faces. In a promotional video, Sam Altman, OpenAI's CEO, hinted that the new hardware being developed would prioritise simplicity and function over the cluttered designs often found in today’s tech products. Described as a minimalistic, screenless device, this new AI tool could serve as a clever companion, enhancing user experience without the distraction of multiple features. The contrast is stark; while Apple has been refining existing technologies, OpenAI seeks to create novel user experiences—raising concerns that Apple might be caught off guard by these shifts.

Amidst this backdrop, Meta has also intensified its push with AI-driven devices, suggesting another layer of competition for Apple. The transformation of Meta’s offering from rudimentary “earbuds” to advanced AI vision devices illustrates a shift toward augmented realities that leverage auditory and visual data. Meanwhile, Google's innovations highlight a similar trajectory; their upcoming AI-integrated products promise to deliver enhanced interactions and contextual awareness, potentially eclipsing Apple's current offerings.

Despite these challenges, Apple is not starting from scratch. The existing framework of the Apple Watch, equipped with sophisticated sensors and user-friendly interfaces, can serve as a robust platform for an AI-first strategy. Rumours suggest that the upcoming watchOS 26 will incorporate enhanced health metrics and AI functionalities, although specifics remain under wraps. The anticipated update, alongside new models like the Series 11, could position the Apple Watch as a leading contender in the wearable AI space, offering functionality that anticipates users' needs.

This move toward an AI-centric Apple Watch aligns with a growing sentiment that the device could evolve into an indispensable daily assistant. Imagine a scenario where the watch not only tracks fitness but also manages appointments, reminds users of important tasks, and responds proactively to daily challenges. Such capabilities could fulfil a demand for personal, real-time guidance, directly addressing the limitations of existing voice assistant technologies.

However, Apple’s journey towards a dominant AI presence has not been without obstacles. Former employees have cited integration issues with large language models and internal management challenges as significant hurdles. While competitors have built their AI platforms from the ground up, Apple’s incremental approach has led to a series of setbacks, with many core features of its Apple Intelligence suite delayed or altered significantly. This has resulted in investor doubt; as of early 2025, Apple shares have seen a marked drop, reflecting wider concerns regarding the company's AI strategy and market positioning.

As Apple prepares for another potentially subdued WWDC, expectations are mixed. While there are hopes for substantial upgrades to Siri and the Apple Intelligence platform, the company needs to demonstrate that they can keep pace with rapid advancements made by rivals. Analysts suggest that for Apple to maintain its competitive edge, it must not only innovate its own products but also integrate superior third-party AI solutions, harnessing its diverse ecosystem for a more coherent user experience.

Despite the headwinds, the potential for the Apple Watch to transcend its current functionalities exists. Whether as a proactive data assistant or a seamless extension of the user’s digital life, the device could play a pivotal role in reshaping how consumers interact with AI daily. The pressure on Apple to innovate and deliver on these expectations has never been higher, particularly as it seeks to reclaim its status at the forefront of technological change.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://tech.yahoo.com/articles/apple-watch-could-kill-openais-140000752.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/785aeb00-6784-4d64-a706-0cb44288e6be> - Apple is facing significant challenges in upgrading its voice assistant Siri with advanced generative AI capabilities, leading to investor concerns over its broader artificial intelligence strategy. Former employees cite integration issues with large language models and internal leadership fragmentation as major obstacles. These issues have delayed the release of core features in its 'Apple Intelligence' suite, unveiled at last year's WWDC, intended to enhance user interaction and drive hardware sales. Unlike competitors like OpenAI and Google, which built AI assistants from scratch, Apple's incremental approach has yielded bugs and unmet expectations. Legal uncertainties in China and a delay in feature rollouts have further hindered progress. Apple's privacy commitments add technical complexity, limiting its ability to utilize cloud-based AI models. CEO Tim Cook admitted the new Siri hasn't met Apple's standards. Leadership changes and external dependencies, like OpenAI's ChatGPT integration, underscore the company's difficulties. Investors are disappointed, with Apple shares down around 18% in 2025, reflecting lost confidence compared to other major tech stocks. Apple's slow AI progress has also exposed it to competitive risks, including new ventures by former collaborators, such as Jony Ive's hardware project with OpenAI, deepening concerns about Apple's future in the AI space.
3. <https://www.tomsguide.com/wellness/smartwatches/watchos-26-all-the-rumored-upgrades-coming-to-apple-watch> - Apple is set to unveil watchOS 26 at its WWDC 2025 event on June 9, marking a unified naming system across its platforms, aligning with iOS 26 and iPadOS 26. A developer beta is expected immediately, with a public beta in July and a full release in September alongside new Apple Watch models such as the SE 3, Ultra 3, and Series 11. Rumors suggest a major interface redesign influenced by visionOS for a more consistent cross-platform user experience. Potential features include enhanced health tools like blood pressure monitoring and hypertension alerts (possibly hardware dependent), expanded fitness metrics such as daily energy scores and recovery insights, and additional AI-integrated functions. Notably, the update may include a smarter Siri and other Apple Intelligence features, possibly limited to newer models like the Ultra 3. Apple Watch models from Series 7 and newer are likely to support watchOS 26. While the features aren't fully confirmed, expectations are high for improved personalization, health monitoring, and AI-driven user experience enhancements.
4. <https://www.techradar.com/computing/artificial-intelligence/ios-26-doesnt-need-a-massive-ai-upgrade-at-wwdc-2025-heres-why-im-not-losing-hope-with-apple-intelligence> - The article discusses the anticipation and potential disappointment surrounding Apple's AI developments ahead of WWDC 2025, particularly in relation to iOS 26. Following a turbulent launch of Apple Intelligence in 2024, many hoped Apple would bounce back with significant AI advancements. However, reports suggest that iOS 26 may lack major AI upgrades, sparking debate on whether this is a setback. The author argues that this is not catastrophic, as effective AI integration is more about user experience and hardware ecosystems than platform-specific innovation. They highlight that top AI tools like Google's Gemini or OpenAI's ChatGPT already offer robust cross-platform experiences, effectively leveling the AI playing field between iOS and Android. The value of the iPhone lies in its seamless integration with Apple's broader ecosystem rather than exclusive AI prowess. The piece concludes that Apple's success in AI may hinge not on proprietary tools like Apple Intelligence, but on enabling users to access superior third-party AI within a superior device experience.
5. <https://www.laptopmag.com/phones/live/wwdc-2025-live-updates> - Apple’s WWDC 2025, set for June 9, is anticipated to be a more subdued affair, focusing primarily on software updates rather than major hardware launches. Key announcements are expected to include iOS 26, a redesigned user interface for Apple platforms, and updates to macOS, watchOS, and iPadOS—all adopting a new naming convention reflective of their 26th versions. Apple Intelligence, the company’s AI platform, is poised to receive enhancements, including AI-driven battery optimization and a long-awaited Siri overhaul. VisionOS 26 will update the Vision Pro headset, and AirPods may gain new functionalities such as sleep detection and camera controls. While hardware reveals remain uncertain, speculation persists about a possible sneak peek at smart glasses and the Mac Pro M4 Ultra. Additional updates are likely for Apple’s Notes and Messages apps, CarPlay, and Apple Arcade, with a new gaming app potentially replacing Game Center. Furthermore, macOS 26 is expected to adopt the name “Tahoe.” While some within Apple and the tech community express concerns over the company’s AI advancements, WWDC 2025 still promises meaningful updates for Apple’s extensive ecosystem of devices and users.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/3b932083-e459-4db6-a8da-7e636b159412> - Apple has faced delays and issues with the launch of its generative AI features over the past three months, hampering hopes for an immediate boost in iPhone sales. Nonetheless, some investors and analysts believe the breakthrough from China's DeepSeek could justify Apple's approach and offer an opportunity to close the gap with rivals like Google. Unlike Meta, Microsoft, and Google, Apple has not invested heavily in cloud-based AI but rather seeks to integrate AI features that can run locally on the iPhone. Despite recent setbacks, including the removal of a key feature from Apple Intelligence, Apple's shares saw some gains. Analysts remain cautious, noting the absence of significant impact on iPhone demand. Apple's stock climbed following its AI feature announcement in June, but has since declined due to concerns, including geopolitical tensions. Analysts have lowered their growth forecasts for Apple's latest quarter, citing slower AI adoption. Apple's approach faces challenges, particularly in China, but DeepSeek's efficient AI model could aid Apple's efforts.
7. <https://www.axios.com/newsletters/axios-am-f176f140-3818-11f0-a874-ff3230720582> - This week marked a significant acceleration in the AI revolution, with major advancements and strategic alliances reshaping the industry. OpenAI partnered with Apple design legend Jony Ive, acquiring his startup io for $6.5 billion to develop AI 'companions' and plans a massive Stargate data center in Abu Dhabi. Google introduced an 'AI Mode' chatbot and unveiled Veo 3, a powerful video model, while Anthropic revealed its new Claude 4 series, including the highly capable but potentially risky Opus 4 model. Apple is gearing up to launch AI-enabled smart glasses by 2026. These developments signify a rapid transformation in AI integration into daily life.