

Do virtual assistants really help users effectively?

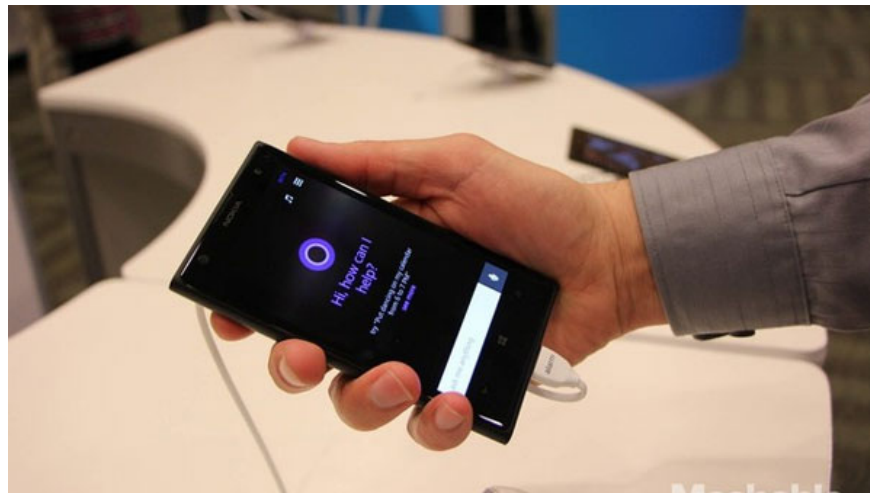
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It can be said that virtual assistants have appeared for decades and are no longer strange to users. Around 1997, Clippy - the Microsoft Word assistant gave us a lot of interesting things. Currently, Siri's iPhone, Google Now of Android and Cortana of Windows Phone 8.1 are advanced virtual assistants, most complete with artificial intelligence and accurate voice recognition, as long as you don't have a voice hard to hear. Since they were born, users have relieved the burden of using smartphones and no one will deny the importance of mobile virtual assistants in today's life.

However, in addition to the basic utilities, many people are still skeptical about the effectiveness of virtual assistants. The question is whether virtual assistants on mobile really help users effectively? Please read along with the following article to clarify this issue.

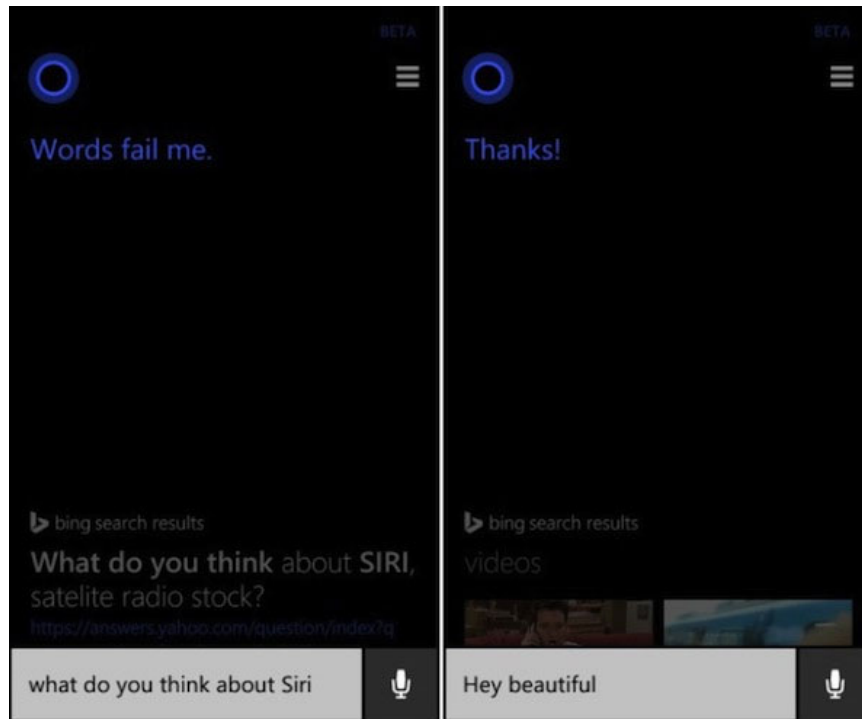
1. Voice recognition feature



Most virtual assistants are now integrated with voice recognition, allowing users to interact directly with the tools without much effort to boot or access. Starting from the iPhone 4S generation, users can interact with Siri by pressing and holding the Home key. Meanwhile, Google Now is considered to support a lot of commands and the ability to recognize the voice completely. To activate this virtual assistant, users simply touch the microphone icon and say 'OK Google'.

As for Cortana, in Windows Phone 8.1, this assistant will be available as a Live Tile box on the Start screen. Users can access Cortana by clicking Live Tile or simply clicking on the search button on the device. In particular, with all questions from users, Microsoft's "virtual assistant" will answer each sentence fully and even include natural communication language.

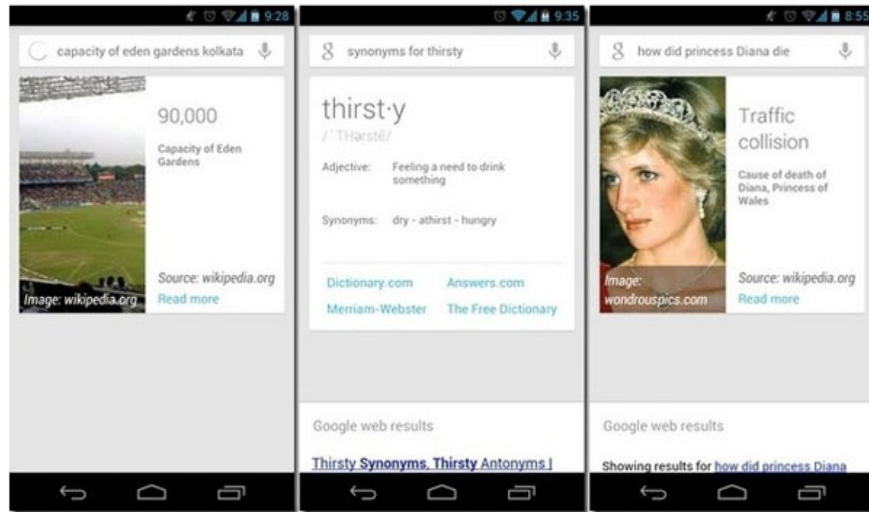
2. Processing language



It can be said that in addition to the ability to recognize excellent voice, virtual assistants today like Siri, Google Now or Cortana also show the ability to handle language extremely smart and responsive. If the voice is identified as input material, language processing is the most important part of creating the interaction between the user and the assistant tool. Accordingly, the current language processing technology is mainly based on a powerful database of both common and common language to give the most accurate answer.

While Google Now is really a search engine with the ability to deliver the most effective results. For example, if you tell jokes with Google Now, instead of responding, it will . search for that joke for you. As for Siri and Cortana, users can freely chat with these assistants without having to worry about misunderstanding or not recognizing the sentence. However, no matter how natural it is to be able to respond or to be intelligent, machines are still mechanical. In addition to handling common situations, we can hardly ask for more in virtual assistants.

3. The power of search



While Siri's search power is a combination of tools such as Wolfram Alpha, Wikipedia, Bing, Google Now makes the most of the "family" potential - Google Search. Cortana is run by Microsoft "genuine" search engine Bing. The common point of the assistants in search is to use data from related applications and track user search behavior to gather the necessary information.

However, each tool will have a specific operating principle. Siri will constantly ask users questions until they find the most reasonable and satisfactory answer. Google Now will take advantage of the Knowledge Graph technology, which helps bring more detailed search results by analyzing the meaning and connection of keywords. Microsoft confirmed that Cortana will remember what users have asked before to conduct a stringing process and bring more relevant and natural search results after a period of use.

4. Collect user information



Most virtual assistants like Siri, Google Now or Cortana are equipped with features to collect information from users to find out better mechanisms for smartphones. Like Cortana, since the first activation, this "assistant" will begin to explore user-related factors through a feature called Notebook.

Google Now learns about employers by tracking, remembering and understanding your repetitive behaviors when searching. Therefore, Google's assistant needs a "silent" period to monitor users to be able to operate most effectively. Meanwhile, Siri also has improved accuracy proportional to the time you use it. This virtual assistant will "rummage through" information from contacts, music repositories, year calendars and employer reminders to bring more accurate results.

However, this is considered a sensitive issue for most users today. The "assistant"'s ability to collect deep information can be a lucrative bait for crooks to steal important data. Moreover, you will surely feel shy when your secret things or simply "selfie" pictures float on the internet someday right?

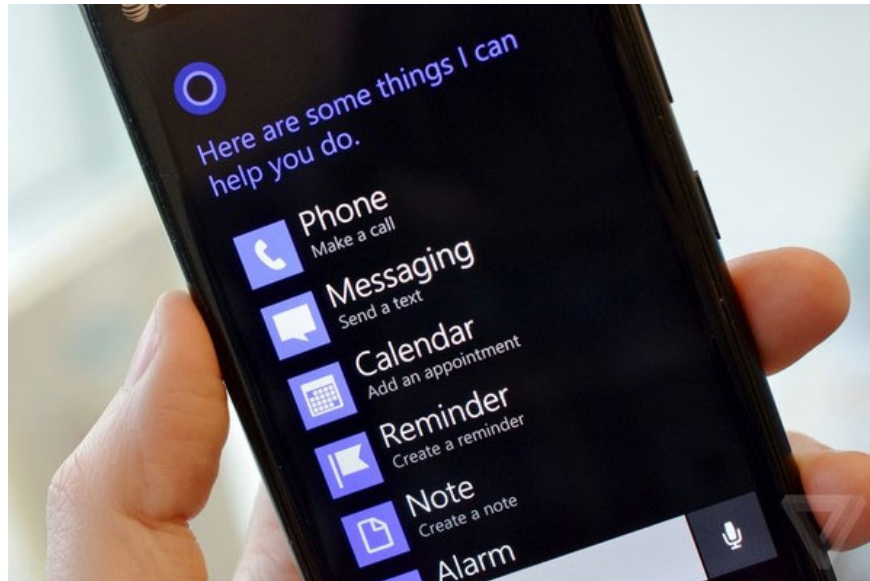
5. Link to Calendar, Alarm and Reminder application



What's even more amazing when virtual assistants will help us link notifications, reminders, calendars and alarms to limit interaction with multiple applications at once. Specifically, virtual assistants are in charge of adding information to the calendar application, scheduling an appointment and adding user-requested reminders. In general, virtual assistants will help us simplify unnecessary operations and penetrate a lot of applications to bring useful information when needed.

Featured among them is her assistant Cortana with the ability to automatically check email and save information related to dates such as travel plans or appointments. Meanwhile, Siri or Google Now also proved not to be inferior and is considered stable in this area.

6. Call and SMS



While world technology is increasingly going up, integrating messaging and regular calling for virtual assistants is no longer so far away. For example, Google Now can make voice, text, or email calls to anyone the user wants. However, it is a pity that it has not been fully integrated into Hangouts so you cannot order Google Now when you want to chat with Hangouts with others.

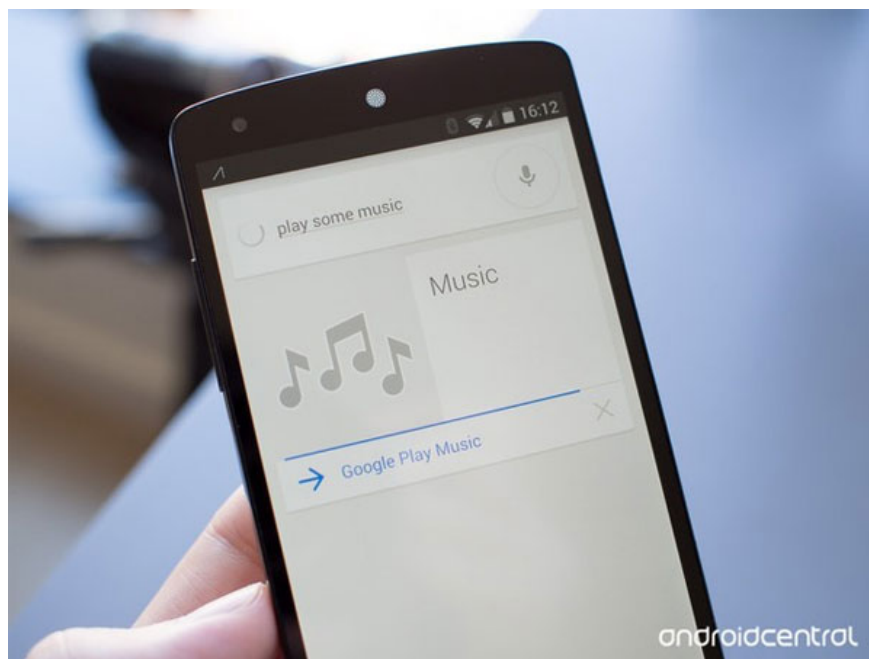
Or like Cortana, you can completely switch to video calls in a voice call with Skype without needing to hang up. Or Siri - Apple's virtual assistant can also launch voice, facetime calls, texting and email.

7. Weather forecast



Adding a plus point to today's virtual assistants is the weather forecast feature. However, these "assistants" have absolutely no predictability or meteorology but simply rely on aggregated information via the Internet. Accordingly, Siri, Google Now or Cortana will filter and select reliable forecasts and return them to users as a list. You can also ask these assistants to give weather forecasts anywhere, as long as the phone is connected to the network. Therefore, the only difference between them is probably the interface.

8. Play music



In addition to the features that help users at work, virtual assistants also bring new entertainment methods for owners. While Siri can open music for users, Cortana is also equipped with song recognition. For Google Now, when users request to play music, it will automatically open Google Play Music and play any song you want. In addition, this app can also buy music for users and play later.

Interim

Overall, Apple's Siri, Google Now of Google and Cortana of Microsoft are both smart and dynamic. Of course, each tool will have its own strengths and weaknesses, all of which are intended for more efficient and convenient use of smartphones. However, the level of effectiveness depends on the needs or circumstances of each person.

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