

This year should have been huge for phones. Now Samsung, Apple face a crossroads

Phone brands are stuck in limbo, with few options to move forward while the world holds its breath. Here's one thing they can do.

The spread of coronavirus around the globe has brought the mobile industry sputtering to a near halt, just as it began revving up for a potentially blockbuster season. From my stance as a CNET phone reviewer, the need to scale back is crushing but necessary given COVID-19's serious nature and the staggering toll coronavirus has already taken on lives. But while the industry scrambles to plan its next steps, there's one thing brands can do: Grasp at the opportunity to refocus their portfolios, designs and campaigns on features that matter.



This was the year 5G-ready devices were meant to go mainstream and foldable phones were going to prove their right to exist. 2020 would belong to top-tier handsets adopting groundbreaking features for photography and 8K video recording, we thought. But then COVID-19 hit and the dominoes toppled, taking out enormous events like Mobile World Congress and Google I/O along the way. Others, like Apple's WWDC, are moving online.

Phone releases haven't entirely flatlined. Some brands continue to dribble out announcements and review units. Oppo and Huawei, for example, turned to online press conferences to launch the new Find 2X and P40 Pro flagship phone, respectively.

Savvy brands will continue to sell what they can in less affected countries, and to homebound buyers seeking the sweet embrace of retail therapy.

But, during the downtime, phone brands have a chance to clear out the bloatware and rethink the old ways of doing things, the constant need to push out X products Y times per year.

Take the Galaxy S20 phones. The Galaxy S20 Ultra, S20 Plus and standard Galaxy S20 introduced premium features like 5G across the board, a zippy Snapdragon 865 chipset, a 120Hz screen refresh rate and new photography tools. But the phones are very expensive (the entry-level S20 costs \$1,000 at full retail price) and at the end of the day, they're not worth the upgrade from the Galaxy Note 10 or even Galaxy S10 series.

Perhaps it's better to take a break from the high-speed cycle of churning out phones, whether we want to or not.

Foldable phones like the Galaxy Fold 2 and Razr 2 can profit most

Foldable phones might be the biggest beneficiary of the news and production cycles slowing to a stop. Ever since the Samsung Galaxy Fold launch in 2019, foldable phones have fallen behind the initial expectation, with long delays, staggering price tags and half-baked features ruling the headlines.

Pausing the development of foldable phones pushes them to the back burner. But this also buys phonemakers more time, allowing them to take a more moderate pace once businesses start up again.

Slowing the release of foldables could wind up saving them from the lethal level of critical scrutiny we saw with the early Galaxy Fold review units, and again with the Motorola Razr, whose winning concept just couldn't live up to a flawed execution.

The sweet spot between challenge and opportunity

I'd love it if phone brands would use this time to take a step back, if engineers were given license and space to create genuinely bold, exciting and solidly built devices.

But the truth is that any disruption in sales will likely leave companies reeling to shore up lost revenue by ramping up production of new phones as quickly as they can. And in the near term, engineers are likely feeling the distance as factories and companies remain closed and employees are limited to collaborating online rather than in labs. That goes double for any top secret projects locked away inside secure offices.

If 5G testing and rollouts have stalled, brands can't develop prototypes and employees can't work together on designs and implementation. There's the entirely real possibility, too, that the coronavirus outbreak will delay phone advancement, rather than give designers time to plan ahead.

It's popularly circulated that Isaac Newton settled on his theory of gravity during an outbreak of the plague. With any luck, at least one luminary within the ranks of Apple, Google, Samsung and all the rest will have an a-ha! moment amid the all chaos.



You finished reading the article "**This year should have been huge for phones. Now Samsung, Apple face a crossroads**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.