

Friend delays flagship wearable, shifts focus away from web chatbots

Article

The news: Friend delayed its AI pendant until Q3.

- The wearable, which runs on **Anthropic's Claude** large language model (LLM), was originally scheduled to ship to pre-order customers this month.

- “I still have refinements to do, and unfortunately you can only start manufacturing electronics when you are 95% done with your design,” Friend CEO **Avi Schiffmann** said.

Pivoting to hardware: Friend is also shutting down its web-based chatbot platform to put all of the company’s efforts into hardware. Schiffmann said that even though “millions” tried its chatbot, “digital chatbots and embodied companions” don’t mix.

The company’s small team of eight engineers was juggling both product manufacturing and web development, which could have spread resources thin.

Industry shift: More tech companies are reevaluating their offerings and product timelines—a failed launch could take a growing startup down.

- **Humane pivoted the operating system behind its Ai Pin** into a software-as-a-service (SaaS) offering after the wearable suffered poor reviews and high return rates.
- However, **Rabbit CEO Jesse Lyu** said that **startups need to release products early**, even if they’re imperfect.

Friend doesn’t seem to be following Lyu’s advice and is betting that pre-order customers would rather wait longer for their devices than get a subpar product faster.

Our take: Friend’s delay and shift away from digital chatbots shows how startups are managing the challenges of scaling products and creating reliable AI tools.

As the capabilities of smartphones raise consumers’ expectations for alternative tech devices, smaller companies need to brace themselves for longer timelines to make high-quality products.

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