

# Can Apple be out-Appled?

★ [blogs.blouinnews.com/blouinbeattechnology/2014/02/14/can-apple-be-out-appled/](http://blogs.blouinnews.com/blouinbeattechnology/2014/02/14/can-apple-be-out-appled/)



Mario Tama/Getty Images

Can Apple wow the world a third time? It certainly seems to think so.

Tim Cook, Apple's chief executive, gave a [long interview](#) to the *Wall Street Journal* this month. The top executive used the conversation to address persistent concerns among investors that Apple is fresh out of innovative new ideas. He assured it that Apple is working on new product categories.

In other words, it's working on products that are different from the computers, smartphones and tablets, it sells today. But, that doesn't mean Apple is working on products that no one has ever seen before. That's what people expect from it these days. After all, its most recent successes stemmed from its uncanny ability to release products that no one's ever seen before.

For instance, Google built a phone prior to the iPhone's arrival. But, it wasn't anything like the all-glass, futuristic smartphone Apple imagined. As a result, Google [reportedly scrapped](#) its project to start again. The iPad offers a similar story. Microsoft [called tablets](#) the future of computing for years. And yet, people ignored the message.

Why? They didn't really like Microsoft's Windows-centric vision of tablet computing. But, they liked Apple's. So, as far as anyone is concerned, it invented both markets from whole cloth.

But, things have changed. The world watched Apple's incredible magic trick twice now. So, a lot of equally wealthy and intelligent companies have invested a lot of money in following suit. This is especially clear in

the arena of “wearable computers.”

In 2012, a lot of people decided these devices were the best way to out-Apple Apple.

The idea was arguably jump-started by a small startup named inPusle (now Pebble). The company [shattered records](#) in mid-2012 when people gave it over \$10 million on Kickstarter to help it build its Pebble smartwatch. The Pebble moment made it famous, and suggested a huge untapped market for wearable computers.

Google reinforced the point by showing off a [Google Glass](#) prototype around the same time. Glass is a monocle that people wear over one eye to project a digital landscape on the world around them.

Then, the floodgates seemed to open.

Nike released the Fuelband in 2012, helping to kick off a genre of high-tech bracelets that track telemetry about the human body. A year later, Samsung released its Galaxy Gear smartwatch. And, companies like GoPro released a new generation of small wearable video cameras to help people record themselves 24/7. They must be somewhat popular. GoPro is now going public.

Not enough? Oculus VR also blew people’s minds in 2012 when it successfully Kickstarted its new take on virtual reality goggles. Like the Pebble, the Oculus Rift inspired the imagination. Since then, several competitors have appeared with their own take on Oculus’s inspired idea.

The point here is that new product categories have exploded.

New ones could still come along, but that’s probably less likely than ever. Let’s consider this in the context of some of the biggest and brightest rumors about Apple’s new technologies. The next version of iOS is [said to be](#) focused on tracking health stats about its users. This would put it in direct competition with a limitless universe of Apple-compatible health gadgets.

Similarly, Apple is said to be working on some sort computer-based TV or set-top box. This market is already flooded with entrants. And, a new rumor surfaced just this month that Apple has [200 people](#) working on a new smartwatch.

Apple has a better shot than anyone at getting these products just right. But, for the first time in years, its new technologies could also just get lost in a sea of gadgets — like tears in rain.

*(Disclosure: James Abels runs a startup working on new ways to design and deliver media.)*