

Touch and go as Apple finds more issues

TECHNOLOGY

APPLE has detected a number of issues affecting some of its iPhone X and 13-inch MacBook Pro products but said it will fix them free of charge.

The repair offers are the latest in a string of product quality problems over the past year, even as Apple has raised prices for most of its laptops, tablets and phones to new heights.

Its top-end iPhones now sell for as much as US\$1,449 and its best iPad goes for as much as US\$1,899.

Apple said displays on iPhone X, which came out in 2017 with a starting price of US\$999, may experience touch issues due to a component failure. The company said it only affects the original iPhone X, which has been superseded by the iPhone XS and XR. For the 13-inch MacBook Pro computers, it said an issue may result in data loss and failure of the storage drive. Apple said it would service those affected drives.

Only a limited number of 128GB and 256GB solid-state drives in 13-inch MacBook Pro units sold between June 2017 and June 2018 were affected.

Last year, Apple began a massive battery replacement program after it conceded that a software update intended to help some iPhone models deal with aging batteries slowed down the performance of the phones. The battery imbroglio resulted in inquiries from US politicians.

(Reuters)

Finance sector to serve the real economy

MONETARY POLICY

CHINA'S central bank has said it will maintain a prudent and neutral monetary policy, and make the financial sector better serve the real economy.

The latest third-quarter China Monetary Policy Report by the People's Bank of China also demanded strengthening policy coordination, improving the transmission mechanism of monetary policy and innovations in monetary policy instruments and mechanisms.

However, the central bank also admitted that constraints exist in the structure of monetary policy transmission. To address the problem, the central bank has taken targeted measures, including issuing special-purpose bonds for private companies, expanding the range of collaterals and precisely reducing reserve requirement ratio to better support the development of private companies and small and micro-enterprises.

Since the beginning of 2018, the central bank has also put into effect a raft of measures to keep medium and long-term liquidity via cutting down RRR and Medium-term Lending Facility. China has reduced RRR four times this year, releasing 2.3 trillion yuan (US\$331.75 billion) into the market.

(Xinhua)

Sonova, listening to customers, making their dreams come true.

TO stay alert to market changes and keep coming up with new ideas, such are the expectations of Arnd Kaldowski, new CEO of Sonova Group, the world's leading provider of hearing care products and services.

Becoming CEO in April, Kaldowski is confident of leading the company to new heights, combine more internet technology with its hearing products.

Staying ahead

"We already make the world's best hearing aids, and I don't believe there is a risk of being slowest just because we are biggest," said Kaldowski.

"I hope to create a culture in Sonova of moving faster than the market to stay in the lead," said Kaldowski.

In his opinion, innovation lies at the core of that goal.

Switzerland-based Sonova has just launched a ground-breaking hearing aid that can be connected to the internet via a smartphone.

Apart from collecting data, it enables real-time audio-visual connection with audiologists. If consumers need help in certain conditions, they can talk to their hearing care professional who can diagnose and then fit a new device through the app.

The most challenging part was to come up with a low energy chipset, as connecting with a phone consumes a lot of any hearing aids's battery power.

"This can save people time and energy they would otherwise be spent going to the store in person. We are the first to have developed the chipset to make this happen," Kaldowski said.

New technology is a common way to woo new consumers, but may not always be that helpful. For Kaldowski, innovation cannot be reckless, but must be pursuant to the fundamental aim of improvement of the company's devices toward provide better hearing quality for users.

"Whatever technology is available, we have to consider whether it is really relevant to our consumers," Kaldowski said.

There are so many possibilities. For example, hearing aids can be made with navigational functions, or use voice recognition to generate text on the phone for those with the most severe hearing difficulties. They can be equipped with various sensors to record movement, heart rate or even blood pressure.

"Overall, our products must become more consumer-centered," said Kaldowski.

China's potential

There is no doubt about the potential of the Chinese market.

"I am optimistic that China will become the world's second-largest market for hearing aids in just a few years, possibly in 2024," Kaldowski said.

"Although only about 2 percent of the Chinese population use hearing aids now — compared with 20 to 25 percent in the United States and some European countries — there is no doubt that the Chinese market has the greatest potential."

Sonova has a long-term commitment to developing products to meet the unique needs of customers in China.



On his first visit to China as CEO, Arnd Kaldowski meets Jiaojiao, a dancer who is suffering from profound hearing loss since childhood. She is now Sonova's brand ambassador in China.

The company is already the leading provider of pediatric hearing instruments in China, and its Naida range is very popular among people with severe to profound hearing loss.

In 2012, Sonova introduced a solution that improves speech intelligibility for mandarin speakers.

"The biggest challenge for us in China may be that the market is lacking of hearing care professionals, and thus people are not fully aware of the importance of being able to hear," Kaldowski said.

Global institute

To some extent, Sonova's success in China will rely on qualitative practical training for audiologists.

To address this issue, last year the company opened the Sonova Global Hearing Institute in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province. It is the company's biggest investment in education anywhere in the world.

"It is very exciting," Kaldowski said. "We engage with people who are interested in what we do and we learn from them about our consumers' needs."

The Suzhou institute provides current and future professionals with the latest theories in hearing rehabilitation and relevant practical experience.

As a global institution, it also offers

training for people from overseas, Kaldowski said.

On another front, while Chinese consumers, just like those elsewhere, are demanding better products and services in many sectors, awareness of hearing quality is still low, and market penetration of hearing-related products still has much potential.

Dreams come true

Finding a well-known ambassador is an effective way to improve awareness and increase penetration.

Sonova has invited dancer Zhang Tianjiao, known as Jiaojiao, to be the face of its products in China and beyond.

Jiaojiao is suffering from profound hearing loss since her childhood, but with Sonova's Phonak hearing aids she has realized her dream of making a dancing career.

During his first visit to China after being appointed CEO, Kaldowski met Jiaojiao at the institute in Suzhou.

"You can see Jiaojiao is a very confident young woman, and her story could inspire a lot of people to pursue their dreams with the help of our products and services," Kaldowski said.

And for many more in China, the delight of quality hearing is just one aid away.



The Sonova Global Hearing Institute in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, is the company's biggest investment in education in the world, and offers training to global professionals.