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Amazon hires gadget experts for door-to-door smart home installs, taking on Best Buy's Geek Squad

BY JOHN COOK ([HTTPS://WWW.GEEKWIRE.COM/AUTHOR/JOHN/](https://www.geekwire.com/author/john/)) on July 10, 2017 at 5:39 am

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Photo via Amazon

Having problems with your smart thermostat, Wi-fi setup or home entertainment system?

No worries. Amazon is here to help.

As discovered by Recode (<https://www.recode.net/2017/7/10/15930998/amazon-geek-squad-smart-home-alexa-set-up-installation-consultation>), the online retailing giant is venturing into the world of in-home technology implementations, hiring a bevy of gadget-loving geeks who can assist customers with the often tricky task of setting up everything from smart locks on the front door to voice-controlled lighting.

Of course, Amazon is placing some big bets on the smart home with its Alexa-powered home speaker, which can be used as the central hub for many of the technologies.

And having a fleet of expert technology gurus representing Amazon in the



Photo via Best Buy

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home could be a smart move.

Having Amazon employees interact directly with customers not only can solve a major pain point for them in terms of implementing smart-home technologies, but they can also serve as brand ambassadors for the smart-assistant Alexa and the Echo speaker devices.

The new in-home service is available in seven markets, including Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange County and San Jose, according to the Smart Home web site. It also pits Amazon directly with Geek Squad (<http://www.bestbuy.com/site/electronics/geek-squad/pcmcat138100050018.c?id=pcmcat138100050018>), the Best Buy-owned service whose white shirt and black-tied geeks have been installing TVs and fixing routers at homes across the U.S. for 15 years. And it signals — yet again — how serious Amazon is taking its in-person touch points with customers, adding to services such as its physical bookstores and Amazon Fresh grocery delivery.

Amazon writes on its Web site explaining the new service (https://www.amazon.com/b/ref=gurus_shrul?node=14586916011):

Our experts are Amazon employees, not contractors. They have been handpicked for their technology experience, passion for customer service, and strong track record. All experts have been background-checked and are licensed and certified where applicable. Think of them like your technology-savvy best friend – they listen to your needs and customize solutions that work for you.

Amazon's Web site certainly has an Alexa bent to it, with examples showing how customers can use the Echo device to trigger "movie night" or lower the temperature in a room. It also offers a "Smart Home Consultation for Alexa," and offers services such as setup for Amazon's Fire TV and implementation of the Rachio sprinkler control system. Rachio is backed by Amazon.

Microsoft's X-box gaming console, a popular in-home entertainment system, is not mentioned. Nor is the Sony Playstation, or Google Home speaker.

Amazon writes:

We know shopping for smart home products, and figuring out what will work in your home can be overwhelming and frustrating. We've vetted hundreds of products and made sure they're certified to work with Alexa, so we can recommend the best products for your needs.

Amazon has experimented with in-home installations for a number of years. We first reported on the TV-mount installation service (<https://www.geekwire.com/2012/amazon-inhome-tv-mounting-installation/>) back in 2012, but the smart home effort appears to go an extra step, since the installers are Amazon employees and they appear to be intimately familiar with Amazon products.



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Appointments via the service are available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days per week, and it appears that Amazon is looking to ramp up the service in the U.S. Recode spotted job listings for "field technicians" with past experience at Geek Squad and the Apple Genius Bar in four other states, including Florida, Texas, Nevada and New Jersey.

Expert installations by the Amazon employees are now available at a 20 percent discount, with experts able to install the ecobee4 Alexa-Enabled Thermostat with Sensor or Schlage Z-wave Connect Camelot smart lock for \$79.20.



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