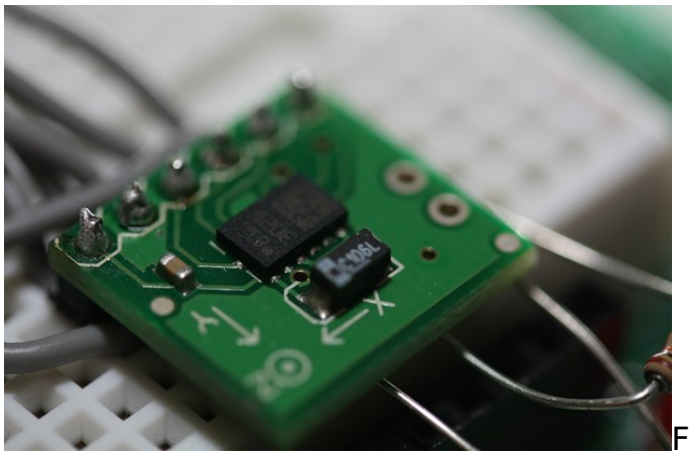
Accelerometers Are The Most Under-Appreciated Technological Innovation



For every well-branded Retina Display [1] or PureView camera [2], there are dozens of smart technologies in mobile devices that go entirely unrecognised for their impact on this world. Somewhere in the middle sits the humble accelerometer -- the tiny component that detects which way up you're holding your phone, or how you're swinging your games console controller.

While it provided one of the first "wow" moments for anyone who got a first-gen iPhone [3] in their hands, the design decision was almost a victim of its own success -- the accelerometer became a natural part of the experience in no time. Meanwhile, in devices like the Nintendo Wii, it's an essential component of the innovative Wiimote controller that inspired the PlayStation Move and Xbox Kinect with its intuitive capturing of non-gamer attention.

Indeed, gaming has been a big benefactor of the accelerometer's unique charm. Even with fantastic displays and processing power, virtual onscreen buttons are considered an unwieldy control method at best. For the casual user, the experience of tilting the device itself has opened new doors of accessibility. It's the accelerometer that makes this possible.

Interfaces for mobile that are able to swivel between horizontal and vertical views have arguably made mobile life more bearable too, providing a more forgiving virtual keyboard experience for many who would have otherwise fled back to their BlackBerry devices.

Would we even perhaps still be stuck in a world where phones had to decide between being predominantly based around one orientation or another, in the guise of monstrosities like the Nokia N-Gage and Communicator models? Consider the video that shows the laborious process to change orientation on Windows RT for tablets and tell us that wouldn't drive you mad.

Read More [4]

September 06, 2012

Source URL (retrieved on *12/28/2014 - 1:12am*):
http://www.wirelessdesignmag.com/news/2012/09/accelerometers-are-most-under-appreciated-technological-innovation

Links:
[1] http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-06/20/retina-display-teardown-surprises
[2] http://www.wired.co.uk/reviews/mobile-phones/2012-07/nokia-808-pureview
[3] http://www.wirelessdesignmag.com/topics/iphone
[4] http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-09/06/accelerometers-are-awesome