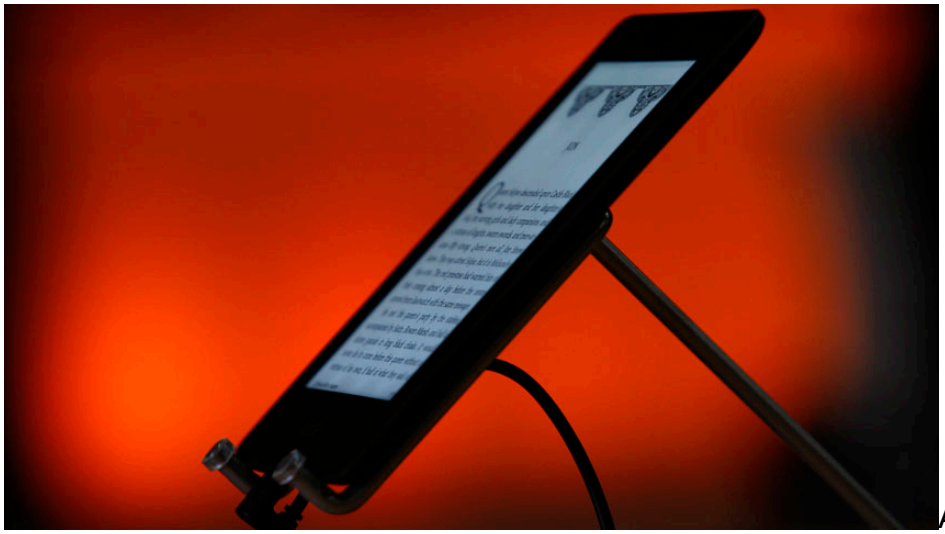
Amazon Buys Speech-Recognition Company Ivona

Reuters



Amazon.com Inc said on Thursday that it acquired speech-recognition company Ivona Software, a sign the world's largest Internet retailer may be looking to develop more services similar to Apple Inc's Siri voice-based search product.

Amazon did not say how much it paid for Ivona and an Amazon spokeswoman declined to comment on a purchase price.

Ivona's technology already supports several features on Amazon's Kindle Fire tablet computers, such as "Text-to-Speech," said Dave Limp, who oversees the Kindle business.

"We look forward to building great products to deliver world-class voice solutions to customers around the world," Limp said in a statement.

Apple's Siri service on its iPhone smartphones lets users ask questions and delivers answers, suggestions or actions. Ivona's text-to-speech technology on Amazon's Kindle Fire HD tablets reads Kindle e-books aloud to users.

"The Ivona acquisition could provide some technology on the Kindle to compete with Siri, although I would argue that Siri has not been all that was expected of it so far," said Kerry Rice, an analyst at Needham & Co.

Ivona could also help Amazon expand its e-book market to more people with disabilities, such as the blind, Rice added.

Ivona already works with organizations supporting blind and visually impaired people, including the Royal National Institute of Blind People.

Amazon shares rose 3.1 percent to $276.61 in morning trading on Thursday and hit

a record $276.65 in earlier action.

(Reporting By Alistair Barr; Editing by Nick Zieminski)

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