The banker's best-loved gadget may be making a return from the dead – thanks in part to the pandemic sending millions of workers into work-from-home arrangements.

Blackberry smartphones were phased out at banks years ago – Credit Suisse's finance chief David Mathers was openly unhappy about his boss, Tidjane Thiam, taking his away in 2017. The brand has been left for dead several times after Blackberry left the phone business in 2016.

Now, a Texan technology start-up plans to roll it out again, on an Android operating system with 5G connectivity, by next June, it said in a statement. The company, Onwardmobility, inked a pact with BlackBerry as well as a Foxconn subsidiary to offer the device in North America and Europe.
Endearing To Bankers

The key draw of Blackberry – a physical keyboard – endeared it to bankers (as well as journalists) – so much so that it was colloquially known as a «Crackberry». Blackberry, the company, licensed the brand out to TCL, but the Chinese provider abandoned it earlier this year.

By that time, financial service firms had decommissioned the technology (after prying them from the reluctant hands of bankers like Mathers). First manufactured by Research in Motion (RIM), the Blackberry was gradually eclipsed by Apple's iPhone, launched in 2007. Efforts to reinvent with Blackberry with features like a touchscreen, or without the physical keyboard, foundered.

Zombie Revival

Blackberry gave up its own software in favor of Android, but ended up ditching phones altogether in favor of security software. The move relegated the Blackberry to «zombie» status, something Onwardmobility wants to change.

«Enterprise professionals are eager for secure 5G devices that enable productivity, without sacrificing the user experience,» Onward CEO Peter Franklin said. The company hopes the increasing number of office staff working from home and cybersecurity needs will spur demand for the devices.