



History Making Product Launches: Three's Not a Crowd

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April 6 will be a groundbreaking day for Plantronics. For the first time, we'll be launching headsets in two product categories on the same day, globally.

The Voyager 5200, Voyager 5200 UC, and BackBeat GO3 will be sharing many product launch resources as well, including print, audio and online ads, press kits, ware assets, and videos.

Joint launch events will be held on April 6 in New York City and the following weeks in Europe and Asia. Moreover, joint press tours are planned, and the three headsets will be shown together at user and industry events such as Pepcom NY.

Voyager 5200, Voyager 5200 UC, and BackBeat GO3 are the fruits of hard work and collaboration within and between teams and across functions and geographies. The development of all three products represent a significant step toward the globalization and integration of functions, cross-company collaboration, and embedding of the Innovation Waves in everything we do.

Improving a legend

The Voyager 5200 is part of the company's mono Bluetooth line, including the most recent version, the best-selling Voyager Legend—widely-praised for its audio quality, comfort, versatility and durability. Product reviews have consistently named the more than 3-million-sold headset best in class.

Part of the Plantronics DNA, however, is to look for ways to improve products no matter how popular. "Based on customer feedback, we knew that there was a few areas we could improve, including wind noise and fit," said Tom

Criswell, who as program management lead made sure the headset's development stayed on time and on budget.

The Voyager 5200 has 50% more technology than the Voyager Legend, yet, thanks to the industrial design team's innovative work, the Voyager 5200 looks smaller, even though it's the same size as the Voyager Legend.

The extra technology (which translates to more processing horsepower) enabled the 50-associate development team to develop innovative solutions that successfully tackled everything that customers said could be improved in the Voyager Legend. "The Voyager 5200 is one of the most brilliant pieces of technology in the market—an incredible example of hardware and software," noted Jan Caldarella, Senior Director, Product Management.

The 18-month program's core American, European and Chinese team of product managers, program managers, engineers, designers, and software and app developers met twice a week (virtually) to update the group on their extended teams' progress and plan the integration of the parts of Voyager 5200 they were responsible for. "We had firmware and app developers and engineers in England, the Netherlands, Central Europe, and China, product managers and designers in the U.S., and manufacturing teams in China and Mexico, working on the project," said Tom Criswell.

"Nonetheless, we kept the Voyager 5200 on schedule and within the specifications we laid out at the beginning, thanks to the willingness of people to do whatever was necessary" said Tom Criswell.

Reducing wind and ambient noise at the same time

Steve Graham, Principal Acoustics Engineer, and his acoustics colleagues, including Tom Trumbull, and the industrial design team tackled wind noise in several ways. Industrial design led by Nick Paterson built a more aerodynamic mic boom to resist turbulence. Tom Trumbull came up with a way to attach the sleek metal boom to the headset's plastic body at the two-month mark, what Tom Criswell calls a

key moment in the Voyager's development. "Because much of the Voyager 5200's technology is in the metal boom, if Tom didn't come up with a solution, we would've stopped right there," Tom Criswell said.

The acoustics team placed each of the headset's Voyager-line record-number four mics in their own wind box. The four mics act independently, so when the headset's noise avoidance algorithm picks up wind noise in a mic, the algorithm ignores that mic and searches for one that isn't experiencing as much wind noise to transmit the user's voice. Moreover, each mic has a wind screen. "I wouldn't attempt to do a television interview in hurricane force winds, but the Voyager 5200 is extremely reliable in winds up to 14 mph," said Steve.

The Voyager 5200 is the first headset that can distinguish between wind and ambient noise and reduce both at the same time, a groundbreaking feature.

The multi-array mic can tell a sound's distance, the direction it is coming from and volume, allowing the mic to distinguish speech (which is closer, coming up, and, in most cases, louder) from ambient noise. The mics ignore ambient sound, focusing instead on speech.

"The Voyager 5200 does a remarkable job with both wind noise and street noise," said Steve. "Usually a headset can do one or the other not both," he added. "That's why the Voyager 5200 is far ahead of every other headset in its class."

Lend me your ears

One of the product development team's most important findings was that the Voyager 5200 could be designed to fit more ears than the Voyager Legend. A study sponsored by the industrial design team revealed that a few ergonomic adjustments would allow the Voyager 5200 to fit smaller ears. "That was huge, since one of the primary reasons a person doesn't buy a headset after trying it out, is that it's not comfortable," explained Nick, the Voyager 5200's principal industrial designer. The improved fit also makes for a better audio experience for all users.

Voyager 5200 users can update the headset's multi-language firmware wirelessly using an app that identifies the headset and updates the software through the Cloud. Users can also update firmware remotely through a technology-laden dongle that attaches to a PC, the mechanical engineering and digital signal processing teams and software developers built. The Voyager 5200's control buttons are

located in an easy to reach place on the boom, and the mute allows the user to initiate Siri and Google Now—both improvements over the Voyager Legend.

Passing the ultimate test

The Voyager Legend has a dedicated following among construction workers, contractors, truckers—all kinds of non-office workers toiling in extremely noisy environments. When product experience manager Jim Staples designed the Voyager 5200's beta tests he made sure to include testers in jobs exposed to extreme noise. One tester, a miner, said that he was able to use Voyager 5200 at a dig site in subzero temperatures and high winds with heavy machinery going. The Voyager 5200 was also tested in the London Underground, New York City streets, and San Francisco International Airport.

At the test's end, participants were asked if they had the option of keeping the Voyager 5200 or going back to the previous premium mono headset they were using. More than 80% said they would pick the Voyager 5200. "The testers were most impressed by its noise and wind cancellation features and fit," Jim explained. He added that the beta tests bode well for Voyager 5200's market reception.

High Praise from Beta Testers

After so many years using Bluetooth headsets, I did not know I could still be wowed by a new device. The device is nearly flawless. I love it and cannot stop using it. –Patrick

This is by far the nicest, most comfortable headset I have ever worn. I love the magnet charger and the case. [You] knocked this one out of the park. –Robin

[I am using the headset around] power tools and in high altitudes and lots of wind. When I say power tools, I am referring to jackhammers, impact hammers, and various types of saws and drills. I always get asked by my boss: "What are you doing? How come you can't hear the machines in the background?" I always have to remind him I'm on this headset. –Adam

I tested it in Buffalo Wild Wings during a football game, and I could actually hear the other person on the phone. –Alicia

The headset's noise cancellation capabilities exceeded my expectations, especially in windy environments. The person I am talking to is able to hear half a second of wind noise when I start talking, but then it's immediately cancelled and no more wind could be heard! -Ronald