

TechnologyTell Review: Plantronics Voyager Edge UC

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Published Date and Time:

4/1/15

TechnologyTell

<http://www.technologytell.com/gadgets/157512/technologytell-review-plant-ronics-voyager-edge-uc/> ^[3]

News Organization:

Technology Tell

Despite the abundance of quality earpieces, I'll still see someone having a conversation with a huge phone or tablet up to their face. It's still ridiculous, even if they may just be singing along to playing music.

Everyone should own a good Bluetooth earpiece. They work better than the built in microphones and speakers of mobile devices, and they're practically a must-have while driving and talking. And if you're going to get one, might as well get the quality and discreet form you deserve.

Design & Connectivity

Now, I never had the opportunity to get some in-depth hands on with the original Plantronics Voyager Edge, so pardon me if at times I sound like I'm gushing with the Voyager Edge UC. The last Plantronics earpiece I used religiously for months/years did not have this level of sophistication. However, the Bluetooth connectivity is pretty much the same - easy and hassle-free.

Unless I'm wearing an over-the-head headset, like the Plantronics Blackwire C725, I don't like to have dangling booms about my face. Weird, I know, but I'll own it. While the Voyager Edge UC may seem long, the slim tapered form minimizes the bulk. Since most of the body sits right outside the ear, you end up wearing hardware that appears smaller than it really is.

The main button, that announces battery & connection status, takes & ends calls, and redials, is integrated so it doesn't look like an actual button. Since it's centered above the part that rests in the ear, using those features don't end up dislodging the fit. Both the volume and power buttons are identifiable by touch, likely work better on the right-hand side, and operate efficiently.

The form and function of the included dock is nothing short of genius. First, it looks pretty cool. I can be picky about what I have lying around in sight, and I've yet to kick this dock off my desk. Second, I love how both the Voyager Edge UC and Bluetooth USB adapter tuck away seamlessly within the dock. There's room enough for a finger to pluck the device from its bed, and eargels aren't cramped for room.

And, best of all, the dock's built-in battery charges the Voyager Edge UC on the go. Sure, you can still power the earpiece via its separate Micro USB port. But if you're a power-user, might as well grab the whole dock and be prepared for what the day has in store. One touch shows the battery level (a trio of blue LEDs) for the dock and the Voyager Edge UC each. Some may consider this dock/holder too big, but you can always leave it out of the equation if desired. Personally, I feel it to be a welcome addition that sets it apart from others.

If you happen to be one to use multiple devices simultaneously, the Plantronics Voyager Edge UC juggles it all. I've experienced situations of where my voice-to-text dictation on my tablet had been interrupted by a phone call.

The Voyager Edge UC seamlessly transitioned to my Galaxy Note 4, and then back to my tablet as needed. The earpiece connects and disconnects from separate devices individually. It's surprisingly handy. And if you're out of range of a device and then walk back in range, it automatically reconnects without any assistance.

Similar to the Plantronics BackBeat Pro headphones, the Voyager Edge UC can sense when being worn by the user. So if you take a call on your smartphone, all you do is insert the earpiece and it automatically switches over. Remove the Voyager Edge UC and it switches the audio back to the original (likely speakerphone) source. Sure, it removes a step of pressing an additional button, but it also makes for a seamless experience. I like it.

My biggest complaint has to deal with the volume regarding some notification beeps/prompts. Specifically, it's the ones

when I'm using Google Voice. When activating, it's the 'PLINK' right after the 'boop-boop-bop', and when deactivating it's the 'PL-PLONK' sound.

Neither my Galaxy Note 4 nor the Voyager Edge UC can adjust this; it's sharp and somewhat uncomfortable to my ear. I've been accustomed to having those beeps controlled by the media volume slider (e.g. headphones, speakers, other earpieces).

But aside from that, all other sound from notifications to voices to music can be set to volume of my liking. There's max, min, and seven levels in between. Max volume gets loud enough to stand up against noisy environments, which is almost on the border of being too loud. Almost. But it's a good thing.

The voice commands through the earpiece are standard: pair mode, connectivity, battery check, call back, and cancel. Call back is my most-used one, since battery level and connected devices are announced upon press of the main button and when the Voyager Edge UC has been turned on.

In terms of wireless distance, you can walk quite a ways off without the Bluetooth connection breaking. I've been able to wander about 6 meters away, behind an interior wall, before the Voyager Edge UC announced disconnection. It automatically reconnects (and tells you) once you've stepped back into range. Very handy.

Comfort

The use of eargels and earhooks are very personal things. What may be comfortable for someone else might not do so well for me. I used to use a Plantronics Savor M1100 back in the day, after it first came out. I still own it, and despite some cosmetic wear along the edges it works just as well as it ever has. But it's been shelved for a few years, since, in the end, I couldn't maintain that comfortable fit. And it doesn't matter how good a piece of hardware is if it causes discomfort or fatigue.

Thankfully, design and fit have evolved. Although eargels aren't really my favorite to use, the one equipped on the Voyager Edge UC is quite comfortable. The base sits right outside my ear canal, without intruding in, and the eargel loop is thin and flexible enough to hold without creating a significant pressure point. Since I wear glasses, I'm not a fan of the hard-plastic over-ear hook. But it's included in the package for the ones who like using it.

Despite the supple snug of silicone gel, slight fatigue does set in after a few hours of wearing. Removing the Voyager Edge UC for a couple of minutes is sufficient to refresh my ear for another few hours. Anything generates fatigue over time, but I feel that this earpiece does well to keep it at a minimum. Sometimes, when the Voyager Edge UC brushes the beard hair on my cheek, it feels gigantic. But a quick mirror check shows that it is indeed pretty thin and discreet.

Voice & Audio Quality

Between the earpiece and connected device, the maximum volume output from the Plantronics Edge UC should be more than enough for most. This is thanks in part to the volume control on the device itself. The noisiest condition I frequently find myself in is freeway driving with the windows cracked. The Voyager Edge UC holds against all the road noise, although rolling up the windows does make conversations easier with less wind.

The clarity of voice and sound is excellent. Even if my smartphone's signal is close to the edge of nonexistence, I've been told that my voice is very present and not totally sounding like I'm within a tunnel.

The earpiece practically ignores (the beforementioned) road noise, yet is a little lacking when it comes to cutting down the sound of wind rushing by. With windows cracked while driving, this wind sound ranges from a minor roar behind me up to a level on par with my own voice. My voice still comes through well enough, but the wind adds some clutter.

But other than that kind of extreme, the noise cancellation of this earpiece is top notch and definitely one of the best. My experience has been of continuous conversations without having either person's voice cutting out.

Now it's not just background noise that the Voyager Edge UC diminishes. It does well to focus on my voice and my voice only. So if I happen to speak instructions to Google Now, someone sitting next to me would have to be annoyingly loud to have their voice intermingled with mine. Thankfully, sung lyrics from music over nearby speakers doesn't interfere. Unless it, too, is really seriously loud.

Voices on both sides of a phone conversation are very present with minimal (if any) digitizing. It's like talking to the other person with them being only a couple feet away, and vice versa. Mostly. The Voyager Edge UC won't fix a terrible connection on the other side, also vice versa. With bad reception, voices will sound distant and somewhat muffled, but this has been the exception rather than the rule.

While you can listen to music with the Voyager Edge UC, you won't get the same level of enjoyment as a good set of earbuds. But what you will get is some clean, respectable playback, even if there isn't a whole lot of depth. Things like instructional videos or audio books would pair very well, especially since voice comes out stronger with this earpiece.

So far I haven't experienced a single call drop while using the Plantronics Voyager Edge UC, due to the Voyager Edge UC

itself. As long as I am within wireless range and in an area of reception, using the earpiece is very fluid with consistent performance.



Verdict

The Plantronics Voyager Edge UC is at the top when it comes to Bluetooth earpieces for mobile and PC/laptop use. Its ability to pair with multiple devices simultaneously, seamlessly, makes it a must-have accessory for busy individuals. The Voyager Edge UC is so easy to use, transitioning between voice dictation on my tablet to an incoming call on my smartphone and then back again doesn't involve more than a button press each time.

Fit is going to be subjective to each individual, but I can say that the quality of the eargels has improved. By now, I know how and where to pop the Voyager Edge UC into my ear for an instantaneous, comfortable fit. Aesthetically, the body is very pleasing on the face with its slender, tapered form. Looks count, and this device nails it.

Within average-use situations, the voice quality and clarity are faultless. Rare circumstances will lead to less-than-stellar operation, but the same can be said with most any Bluetooth wireless device. But the Plantronics Voyager Edge UC presents the whole package. The charging base, which also houses the USB wireless adapter, doubles as a charging case while on the go. While the price point may seem a little much for the Voyager Edge UC, it's hard to deny the combination of protection, power, and performance that fits in the palm of your hand.

Language:
English

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