



Published on *Poly Online Newsroom* (<https://newsroom.poly.com>) on 11/11/13

The New User Experience

Terms:

[2013](#) ^[1]

Subtitle:

Plantronics debuts an effort to crowdsource the next generation of user interactions.

Published Date and Time:

8/28/13

The New User Experience

<http://www.nojitter.com/post/240160527/the-new-user-experience> ^[2]

News Organization:

No Jitter

There's a possibility that communications--even or maybe especially in the enterprise--is about to get fun. And if you want to see how that might happen, check out [PLTLabs.com](#) ^[3].

PLTLabs is a new effort from Plantronics. It's a pretty cool place to go and see what the future of user interfaces and experiences might look like. It's also an initiative that Plantronics CTO Joe Burton says is an attempt to essentially crowdsource the next generation of user experiences.

Plantronics isn't just about headsets for contact center agents any more--though that heritage makes Plantronics a natural leader in the wearable technology space that's heating up as devices like Google Glass get more attention. Plantronics is focusing much of its efforts on sensor technologies to let that headset communicate its location to the devices you use, so that the device knows more about your actual location or presence state. The simple scenario is, when you leave your work area, the device can interface with software to tell your UC system to change your presence status.

PLT Labs is intended to take this to the next level. The idea, according to Joe Burton, is that Plantronics will release experimental hardware to the community at large, on a closed-alpha basis, so that innovative companies and individuals can come up with exciting new use cases. "We want unified communications people, but we also want crazy people," Joe Burton told me. "The more it's something I've never thought about--within reason--the more excited I am."

Some of the concepts that Plantronics is working on are shown [here](#) ^[4]. There's a video where Joe Burton demonstrates "head tracking," which can track which direction you're facing and can communicate that to your device, so it knows which of your multiple devices you're nearest to, whether you're looking into the device camera or not, and other information that the system could use to optimize your communications experience. The camera-orientation application gets its own demo in another video on the page, featuring Cary Bran, Plantronics' senior director of innovation and new ventures.

The PLT Labs site includes some potential use cases around first responder and real estate applications, but this is the kind of thing that really is limited only by the imagination of the enterprise. The key to making it happen is the fact that the technology is becoming so much cheaper and ubiquitous--it's the logical extension of something Sheila McGee-Smith wrote about this week on No Jitter, in a piece entitled, "[Video in the Contact Center: Just Do It](#)" ^[5]. Sheila starts out by hearkening back to a mid-90s Bell Atlantic announcement about an ISDN-based video banking service that, obviously, never took off, thanks to the costs of the equipment and services. "What is different about bringing video into the contact center today as opposed to in 1996?" Sheila asks, and then answers her own question: "The difference is the ubiquity and low cost of the required bandwidth and appliances."

When cameras are cheap and APIs let you connect Plantronics systems with communications platforms and business applications, why not give the user a great experience--at least in certain high-value use cases? We're no longer talking about spending a quarter-million dollars to make two conference rooms look alike and put a half-oval table in each. Now you can spend that money on talented app designers--and the smart networking people who will need to support the new environment.

It's pretty cool stuff. If you can bear to part with your desk phone, you might be able to get something really interesting, sooner than you might think.

Language:

English

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