

Jawbone makes talk pretty and smart

January 18 2010, by Glenn Chapman

The logo for Aliph, featuring the word "Aliph" in a bold, sans-serif font with a trademark symbol (TM) to the upper right.

Aliph logo. Aliph is adding brains to beauty in a new line of Jawbone Icon wireless earpieces designed to be Internet smart and techno-chic.

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While Bluetooth headsets have historically been "dumb" devices that handle audio to and from mobile phones based on control buttons, Icons can be customized with mini-applications to do tasks with personality.

"We are calling it the first intelligent [headset](#)," Aliph co-founder and chief executive Hosain Rahman told AFP.

"You've got to curate that experience at the ear, because it is pretty precious real estate."

San Francisco-based Aliph is staying true to its credo that Bluetooth

headsets should combine top technology with the fact that "if you wear something on your face, you want it to look good."

Icons come in six styles including faux gold nugget and pearl looks as well as brushed metal and a deep burgundy "Rogue" model.

"Like characters in a film, each captures a different fun-to-wear persona," said renowned industrial designer Yves Behar, Aliph's chief creative officer.

"The materials, textures, colours and surfaces of the Jawbone Icon line produce rich and distinct watch-like or jewelry-like results."

Engineering in the headsets cuts [background noise](#) and automatically adjusts the audio so all speakers, even on conference calls, are heard at consistent volumes dictated by users.

Aliph is testing a MyTalk website where Icons can be personalized with voice notifications and mini-applications such as voice text messaging.

Icons can be programmed to tell users phone numbers of an [incoming calls](#) or how much [battery life](#) is left. Voice options include an intellectual, a manly hero, and a female "bombshell" when it come to who is whispering in one's ear.

Language choices are English, French, German, and Spanish.

"MyTalk is just a hint of the exciting ways people will be able to breathe life into their Jawbones over time," said Rahman.

Aliph envisions adding richer applications to MyTalk, perhaps podcasts or letting people customize earpieces with voices of their children.

"MyTalk is the first step toward allowing headsets to do more things," said analyst Tim Bjarin of Creative Strategies in Silicon Valley.

"It's very clear these could be used for command and control; a lot of things if the headsets are tied to a cloud service."

Cloud services are Internet applications hosted online where simple devices can tap into the power of data centers hosting the programs.

"The real problem with headsets in general is they are too geeky," Bjarin said. "The goal has got to be to make them so you don't feel like a nerd and are functional and, to some degree, fashionable."

Aliph headsets will be available for purchase online at jawbone.com beginning Monday and be priced at 100 dollars.

In an environmentally-sensitive move, Icon packaging is made of recycled paper and plastic.

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Citation: Jawbone makes talk pretty and smart (2010, January 18) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-jawbone-pretty-smart.html>

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