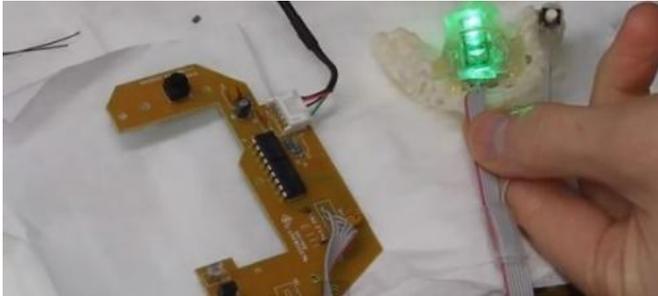


Valve engineer builds mouth-mouse and butt controller from other gadgets (w/ Video)

6 December 2013, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org) — Valve engineer Ben Krasnow is clearly one of those guys that sees things differently than the rest of us. How many people would look at an optical trackball, for example, and think to themselves, hey, maybe I could make that work with my tongue. But that's just what he's done, taken the guts from an optical trackball, add a cable, changed out the bulb and attached it all to an orthodontic type retainer which he puts in his mouth to use as a controller that can be run by his tongue. And that's just one device—he's also created another gadget that a person sits on to control some of the action on a computer screen.

Krasnow works for Valve, a virtual reality company, so he's not just fooling around for fun—he and presumably others at Valve are knocking around trying to find replacements for mice, trackballs and other gesture control devices that hopefully at some point, will blur the interface between human and machine. Take the posture-based game controller Krasnow has built. He made it by taking apart a digital scale and adding in an Xbox controller and a standard mouse. The end result is a flat device that he sits on. Twirling on it causes panning onscreen—leaning forward or backward results in speeding up moving forward or backwards onscreen. Both devices seem

obvious—how is it we don't have both already?

Neither of his devices is ready for mass production and sale, and they never may be, but both show hints of what might be coming as he and other engineers like him set their minds to thinking very seriously outside of the metaphorical box. The tongue-mouse, as he calls it might not be of much use to most people who use Windows—it's accuracy is not up to standards, but for a paraplegic it might mean the difference between dependency on others and a whole new kind of freedom. In a similar vein, the posture-based [controller](#) looks like the beginnings of something new—perhaps future warplane pilots will sit on something similar, or more likely, gamers sitting in 360 degree pods, swiveling on their seats to gain an immersive experience unlike anything available today.

We don't often get to see the results of tinkering by corporate engineers—not unless it winds up in a finished product—it's nice when it does happen—helping us enjoy some of the wonder that they experience first-hand when sudden inspiration strikes.

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