

THE MOTHER OF INVENTION

Inspired by necessity, Callpod makes conferencing wireless and gives the charging station a makeover [finally!]

by Sondra Sneed



Callpod, Inc. Founders: Darren Guccione, CEO, and Craig Lurey, CTO

Imagine

that you are on the phone selling your software company to a publicly-traded media network. And let's say that you were unable to put your management partners on the call with you. Would you build another company shortly after the sale to rectify the trouble you'd had on that call? Darren Guccione would, and the launch of that effort is happening this summer.

Callpod, Inc. was founded on the idea that technology can still free us from drudgeries. With every human complaint, a window opens to invention. Guccione's immediate complaint was that conferencing - even in a mobile world - was still relegated to land-line facilities and speakerphones. His company is now ready, however, to replace the boardroom speakerphone with wireless, clear-sounding headsets and take business away from the office whenever practical. It is now possible to hold a mobile conference call at the airport or even in a café in a moment's notice. But invention hasn't

been easy in the development of what may be the next gadget de necessaire.

When Guccione, CEO, went looking for a way to turn his mobile phone into a conference-calling unit, he couldn't find anything on the market. So he set about making his own product. The first thing he did was to contact former CTO, Craig Lurey. Lurey had gone to work for CNET Networks, which was

callpod®
connect | share | go™

the technology media conglomerate that had purchased their software company in 2000. His new job there was to support and lead the rollout of an e-commerce system to value-added resellers. Guccione told Lurey that he had an idea for a new mobile communications platform and that

he wanted to patent it. He also wanted Lurey's help to put together a team. This team was to create a new product and their own application-specific integrated circuit or ASIC as it's more commonly known.

Guccione recruited Lurey's Dad, Dan Lurey, who had been a "star" engineer and once worked for Motorola. He also contacted an engineering-school friend, Mike Lichodziejewski, for industrial and graphic design. By October 2004, the assembled team had done exactly what it had set out to do and received their first U.S. utility patent for what they had entitled "Callpod Technology". In doing so, a new product category was invented: mobile conferencing. Coinciding with the creation of a new category was also the launch of a new brand, which was aptly named, Callpod®

"We created a product that could fit in your shirt pocket, run on a lithium ion battery and connect to virtually any Bluetooth® enabled headset, phone or PC without the headaches of difficult pairing. It allows users to conduct a conference call in full duplex - virtually

anywhere - with ease," Guccione said. Full duplex refers to the sending and receiving of data, such as in conversation. Landlines work in full duplex where walkie-talkies work in half-duplex, which is why only one party can transmit at a time. But being the first wasn't easy for Callpod.

"Trying to create something that hasn't been done before in the tech space is very difficult. Multiplexing a single Bluetooth chipset for Class I (100 meter) range performance without losing voice quality was challenging." Multiple voice signals are brought to the pod and then transmitted to multiple wireless headsets. "All of our first three products: Chargepod®, Dragon™ and Phoenix™ involved tough hurdles because we had little to benchmark or emulate. Sometimes in life you just have to go where there is no path, and then leave a trail."

Guccione likes to share the credit for the innovation that Callpod, Inc. is generating with the entire team. "First and foremost, my greatest successes in business always come down to the people that I choose to work with. Craig and I ran our first company when we were in

our twenties - we did not have a lot of experience. To get our ideas, we read articles covering great business leaders and innovators. I also had a great mentor, Peter Morris, who is one of our key partners and board members at the company. Aside from having strong moral fiber, he is an absolutely brilliant businessperson and thinker."

Guccione and Lurey are strong thinkers who value intuitive and inverse logic both as a product development principle and as a decision making practice. "A new product from Callpod had to speak for itself and be intuitive to the extent that a customer would ask, 'why didn't I think of that?'" he said when talking about how he distinguishes "true innovation". Guccione only considers something truly innovative when it is 'true' to the nature of both the inventor and the consumer's way of living.

Fashion mogul, Donna Karan, would probably agree as she had once said that the inspiration for her designs is her own closet. She's quoted as saying, "When preparing the next line, I open my closet and say, 'what do I need?'" Chargepod® is a perfect example of looking in the closet

for inspiration, or in this case, under the desk.

Chargepod from Callpod, Inc., gives immediate relief to everyone with at least two rechargeable electronic devices. Cell phones, PDAs, iPods, digital cameras and the list builds to a jumbled mess of cords plugs and docking stations, especially when traveling. Designing a small fueling station like the Chargepod is the perfect solution. "People from around the world thank us everyday for launching this product."

"Craig and I love gadgets. After the launch of Chargepod, we are unleashing The Dragon -- a Class-I Bluetooth headset that will have an impressive 300 foot range with proprietary dual-mic noise suppression built into a robust, sleek and surprisingly small housing. We design products that we would want to use ourselves with the ultimate goal of doing something great for the consumer. I believe you don't just design products, you design your life."