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Oct 12 · 3 min read

Ending Sales of Myo, Preparing for the Future

The Myo Gesture Control Armband

A few years ago, as we were finishing up our final exams at the University of Waterloo, Aaron, Matthew and I got into a discussion about the evolution of human-computer interaction (as mechatronics engineers do after a couple drinks).

In that conversation, we hypothesized that technology would move out of discrete “boxes” and into our world, becoming more tightly coupled with our daily lives. Somewhere along that line of reasoning, one of us posed the question: If we’re taking technology with us out into the world, how will we interact with it?

A Path Forward

Even back then there were new types of heads-up displays in development, so we knew change was coming. As we thought about those new categories, it was clear existing input methods wouldn't work. Just like the desktop computer needed the mouse and keyboard, and the phone needed multitouch, new products would need new interfaces. Whatever input device came next would have to be mobile and seamlessly blend with our experience out in the real world.

A viable path seemed to be through electromyography (EMG) sensors —used to measure and record electrical impulses given off by muscles. Our theory was that if we could understand those impulses, we could build an interface that would become a natural extension of our actions. It hadn't been done before—we had never seen EMG used in a commercial consumer product.

The Early Days

Unsurprisingly, the early days were challenging. We jerry-rigged a bathroom at Velocity (with a fake "out-of-order" sign) as an etching lab for home-made circuit boards, bought 3D printers off of Kijiji, and shaved our arms to try to get the early sensor prototypes working better. We initially failed to understand the dramatic impact that human variation would have on a product. Everything from sweat and arm hair, to variations in anatomy raised speed bumps for making the product work consistently.

As we iterated through solutions and recruited an amazing team to help solve problems, our work led to a final product: the Myo Gesture Control Armband.

Launch

The initial pre-order announcement for Myo surpassed all of our expectations—10,000 orders in the first few hours, 5.5 million views on our launch video, a listing among *Time Magazine's* top inventions of the year. For something that started off as a hunch, things picked up super fast.

Fast forward to today, and we've seen customers and developers take Myo and run with it in directions that span music, healthcare, gaming, manufacturing and more.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins used it to give an amputee the power to control his prosthetic, Armin van Buuren took it on his world tour to seamlessly control the lighting during his performances, people hooked it up to every drone and widget imaginable. Even just this summer, a pair of Canadian students took home the grand prize at Microsoft's Imagine Cup after using Myo to make an inexpensive prosthetic arm.

What's Next

Today, as we reflect on that amazing journey, we're officially ending sales of Myo. In the near future we'll be announcing the release of a new product, entirely different from Myo, that requires our full attention and focus.

Matthew, Aaron and I would like to personally thank everyone who has been a part of bringing Myo to life—whether through applications, research studies, presentations, or just plain fun. As a commitment to those who have embraced Myo, we'll continue to provide customer support for anyone who has bought one and have no plans to change that.

As for what's next…we'll get back to you soon.

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