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Beltone Competitive Update for 2025

Presenter: Tammy Stender, AuD

Thank you, Anna, and welcome everyone to the Bellone Competitive Update for this year. My name is Tammy Stender. Thank you so much for joining me. We're just going to get right into it on how Bellone compares to other manufacturers today. And spoiler alert, I think we have a lot to be happy about.

Things are very good competitively. So let's just get into it. Before we start, I do want to say that as this is a private course, of course, this is meant to be internal and confidential only, not to be distributed to our customers, our patients. But this is for you to really understand just how great we have been progressing our technology and how we stand up to competitors. Now, I believe that we have the strongest products in the market.

Of course, no one is perfect and there are areas that we need to be aware of in case there is a patient who comes in our door and says, you, know, I heard that Signia has X. What do we say? What do we do? These are the kinds of things that we'll be covering today. So our learning outcomes is to describe the highlights of what we currently offer, and what they currently offer.

And we can compare and contrast those. Next, we want to identify some common objections that might arise about how we compare to other hearing aids out there today. And finally, we want to sum it up with where we shine, where we offer the most comprehensive solution for hearing and noise. And of course, now we do that with DNN in our premium level product family. We will also be covering at the end a little of our essentials in case you would like to see how we measure up there.

Of course, with any talk, we're not going to be able to cover everything and there may be some risks and limitations as you can see here on this course, et cetera. So please feel free to read through those. And also please feel free to contact me or ask questions as we go along if things aren't clear.

Okay, here we go. These are our five major competitors at this time. We have the Oticon IntentT and their tagline is below. You can see engage in life like ever never before. You have the Phonak Spirit

Infinia, which talks about speech clarity in a world of noise.

Signia IX, which is unleashing the power of conversation. Starkey Edge AI, they call the Edge of Hearing Innovation and Widex Allure with a clear difference, they say, with Widex Allure. So these are the ones we're going to focus on today for the premium price segment, which are direct competitors to the Belltone Envision. So let's start with Oticon. Oticon IntentT family is consisting of one receiver in the ear hearing aid, as you see here, and then more recently they launched some custom devices.

They call them still in the Oticon own family. They are just another generation of that, even though they have the same chip as the Oticon IntentT RIE. So they are all non-rechargeable. All of those customs are non-rechargeable and the RIE is rechargeable.

First off, let's look about look at what the hardware looks like. For Oticon, we're lucky enough to have a direct comparison to a Beltone Envision. This was a hearing aid that we used in our in our trials in Chicago as we were getting ready for launch. That's why it says not for sale. But you can see here some glaring differences in size.

Oticon is not the biggest hearing aid on the market, but it surely is bigger and more massive than the Beltone Envision. vision. So we've got that going for us right away.

Some of the things that Otacon talks about that people might make objections are are that they are the only ones they say using user intent sensors. What are those do? Well, what those do is that they're motion sensors and combined with their microphones to try to determine where they want to make the user listen. So if the user is moving their head to the right, their they're going to zoom in on that side if they're moving it to the left, if they're up and down, those motion sensor driven signal processing is engaging their features like directionality. There are some things that need to be discussed when you use this kind of sensor and really make sure that the user can listen only in that direction.

And that's what if the user is making involuntary head movements? Being in this field, fitting hearing aids, a lot of the people we see are older. And some older people have troubles controlling the movements of their heads. It can be tremors, it can be posture that makes them kind of hunch over. In these situations, an Oticon intent which steers the directionality to where the hearing aid is oriented may not be a good idea.

because that might be, for example, if they're kind of staring at the floor based on some postural issues, might be making sounds that come below the speaker of interest more audible. And that's definitely not an intended consequence. So they call it intent, but the reality is, is that we know in real world, not everything is intentional when you move your head. Some people are more animated talkers than others as well. And it might not be that they don't want to listen to something that's not exactly right in front of them.

So this this is a limitation to their user intent sensors and something to be aware of. Also, they are still using traditional two microphone directionality. What this means is that they're not able to get the directional benefit, the signal to noise ratio improvement that you would see from us. We use a four mic beamforming directionality approach, which means that in those difficult situations, you're going to be able to hear the speaker so much better outside of that noise, it's going to really reduce the noise and be able to zoom in more on a speaker in front of you. So it's really a difference in the kind of technology that they're using versus what we use in Bell Tone and Vision.

Also, they are not using the same kind of development of the way that they are using their deep neural network as we are. When they came out with the Oticon predecessor to IntentT, they had DNN. And it was primarily used to replace an environmental classifier to kind of identify what kind of sounds are these, put it in this kind of bucket, apply certain kinds of features like noise reduction or directionality. So they're on their second generation and it has evolved since then, but we are not seeing the same

kinds of philosophy behind the way that they are using DNN. And furthermore, the custom products that they just launched are using by their admission a lower or limited level of DNN as compared to the receiver in the ear model.

And they said they did that to maintain the size and battery runtime that they had before with their custom products. So the DNN, they say they're the world's first with DNN in a custom device. And that may be true in definition, But it's not even as powerful of a DNN noise reduction as what they use in their receiver in the ear models. Furthermore, their custom products don't have Bluetooth Low Energy Audio or Auracast. They use the Made for Apple and Android ASHA streaming that we've used in the past before we had BT-LEA and Auracast.

So they did not put that kind of technology in there. However, in the receiver in the ear model, they do have Bluetooth low energy audio, but just without our cast broadcast connectivity. So summing all up for Oticon Intent, our advantages are that we are providing hearing in noise and hearing all around all at the same time. Oticon's still using that traditional directional beamforming, which doesn't offer as much focus in difficult noisy environments as we do. Furthermore, they don't use a multi-band directional processing in the first program, and that's where we have omnidirectional and the lows and directional and the highs, but then we have a fixed directional and above 5,000 Hertz, and that really helps maintain some spatial hearing benefits.

And having Omni and the lows, even when you're in a directional program, helps preserve your own voice quality and protection from wind. and this all happens automatically in the first program without the use of other kinds of features. So it's really an elegant system that we have and something that Oticon doesn't have. And what it does for the user is help them hear better in noise while not cutting them away from all the other sounds around them and letting them hear naturally their own voice and localization cues. Furthermore, the research that Oticon Intent published stated that the improvement in

speech comprehension with their users for intent was small versus their previous platform.

So this is not a huge leap forward that they made with the intent. They did not compare themselves to us. As you will see later, we have made some comparisons that show that we are doing very well against Oticon intent. So their research did not even include us in their study. We are also the industry's smallest AI hearing aid receiver in the ear.

Oticon's hearing aids are much larger. Oticon doesn't have any Auracast broadcast connectivity, and we do. And also we have newer custom product options. So because we have custom products that are rechargeable, I should say, they do not offer any rechargeable customs. and where we may be challenged is that they've got a really good marketing machine in terms of their brain hearing concept, which really seems to resonate with people.

If anybody comes into your office and talks about Oticon, it's probably because they saw one of their flyers with the big blue brain and talking about how you hear with your brain. But they are not the only ones who talk about that. In fact, we also have technology that supports hearing that comes from the brain. So just a little bit of a marketing to watch out for when you see someone who's seen Otocon marketing, rest assured we have the same kinds of acknowledgement that the brain is where you actually hear. And we're going to do everything we can with our technology to support the brain so that you can hear better in all listening situations.

Sometimes from markets we hear that Otocon offers a wider assortment of closed domes, which can be nice because they're able to kind of fill a gap between the open dome and the closed domes that we have with a kind of a middle dome that's still closed but allows for good relief of that low frequency noise. That is one thing that we hear sometimes. What we would recommend in that case is to try something in the middle like we have, like a tulip dome, which I do think sometimes gets lost in the fray. It's technically an open dome, but it is bigger than most of our open domes and usually very, very

comfortable. So give that a shot.

Let's move on to Phonak. Phonak, SphEre, Infinio, and Infinio. And the reason why we distinguish between those two is that SphEre Infinio is the one with deep neural network noise reduction and Infinio does not. So they have a couple of different models here. They've got the Audeo SphEre Infinio, and that's the only one with DNN.

And then they have the receiver in the ear Audeo Infinio and a Infinio and across Infinio. Then they have in the ear models which range from their IIC sized Virto Infinio Titanium which is non-wireless. Again you can see that these are battery devices as well as the CIC, Virto Infinio 10, and then you've got the larger ITC which is wireless. So they've got a couple of different options here. But the one that has gathered so much attention is the one with DNN, and that is the Sphere Infinio.

And one of the most glaring things that you'll find is that it is very, very large. It is larger than the Oticon intent. It is much larger than we are, as you can see in this head-to-head comparison. There really isn't much doubt about which is the more miniature hearing aid, which will be less conspicuous when being worn. So this is something that is a huge advantage for us when it comes to comparing against Phonak.

Some glamour shots for you. You'll see on the top, these are the corresponding angles that we took pictures of with the Sphere In-Fino on the top and Belltone In-Vision on the bottom. And it is much more invisible to wear the Belltone micro-RIE In-Vision than it is where the Phonak's fair and fine. So looking at their claims, they talk about that they have the new ultra responsive Phonak ERA chip with DeepSonic and that they're the world's first real-time AI sound processing chip. And they do have a dual chip, one that works only for signal processing that's not DNN and one that works just for DNN.

So they were the first to come out with that dual chip philosophy. But they say a lot of things like real time, and that was confusing because it sounded like maybe the hearing aid was learning, but they are not using a learning algorithm in their deep neural network. Whatever is put onto the chip is what the user gets programmed as the decisions for how the noise reduction is applied in different environments. And that is exactly the same as what we do, and that's exactly the same as what everyone does. in terms of DNN and AI.

There's no real learning that's personalized to the user. It's not learning the user's wants and desires. It is just performing these operations in real time. So a little bit of tricky wording that they use that can be very confusing for some of our customers, but rest assured they are not learning over time what the user wants. One of the reasons why they have such a large device is because the DNN that they have really drains the battery quickly.

And that, we believe, is one of the major reasons why the device is so large. They had to put a larger battery in there. So this is something that they kind of had to ameliorate with a larger device size, which of course has been a problem for them in the market. Meanwhile, we launched about six months after Phonak did, and we have tested and found similar results to the with the larger DNN battery, etc. We got the same results and we are 17 times more efficient.

We have a smaller size of our DNN network, which doesn't mean it doesn't work as well. It just means that it cuts off some of the waste that they had to be more efficient and get the job done quicker, faster with a smaller size and a longer battery runtime. So this is a huge advantage for us as well. if you can do the same outcome with better efficiency, smaller size, longer battery life for the user, that is a true user benefit. They also came out with some pretty big claims, like an SNR improvement of 10 dB for better speech understanding and noise, and they said they were superior to competitor devices.

Well, first of all, let's take the 10 dB one. That did not include human test subjects. That was done with a mannequin, and it was done in a lab and it was done versus Omni. So this is not something that would be real world at all and did not include us. But then the superior to competitive devices by up to 3.7 dB all has to do with the way that they set up the devices.

We don't believe that we were actually in our hearing noise program, for example, in that testing. So it's not really the fair comparison that we were looking for. so we did some testing of our own and we found that some of these claims that you've seen when Belltone Envision was launched compared us to Phonak, Spera, and Finio and found that we, first of all, we continue to lead the industry in hearing and noise with the crosslink directionality 4 compared to leading hearing solutions in our first program. And that's the program that most people use most of the time. Then, when we compared true focus to Phonak, we found that 64% of the test participants had better hearing and noise with us.

And then finally, 83% of our test subjects experienced better hearing and noise with Clear Focus compared to Phonak as well. So we completely arrived at stellar results, all the same time having that small device size. When it comes to connectivity, Phonak is still using classic Bluetooth, which is also draining their battery, by the way. And it's nice that they have classic Bluetooth for some users that have really old smartphones that don't have made for iPhone or don't have ASHA streaming, but that is becoming a very small number of people out there today. And the big drawback of that classic Bluetooth connectivity is that it really drains the battery fast.

and studies have shown since you've seen that the fidelity, the sound quality of Bluetooth low energy audio surpasses classic Bluetooth in many cases. So we are able to do it with less battery drain. So our competitive advantages are again, just like with Oticon, hearing in noise and hearing all around. Phonak claimed to lead in hearing in noise, but their papers that they did themselves only showed a minor improvement when they turned on the DNN versus having it off in their previous products, which

was Lumity. And they also omitted some competitors, including us, because we weren't launched at the time.

They do not use multiband directional processing in the first program, which means they don't get all those natural benefits that we get from our cross-link directionality for. We are again, just like Oticon, the industry's smallest AI hearing aid. Audeo Spher Infinio is definitely bigger. I didn't talk about it, but even the non-AI version, the Audeo Infinio without DNN is bigger than our DNN-enabled Beltone Envision. We have all-day battery, day after day.

We are unmatched when it comes to how we compare. to Phonak Audéo Spire Infini. Finally, we have BTE, LEA, RIC, and they do not. And then we have non-rechargeable RIE with Telecoil, and the Phonak Infini does not offer that non-rechargeable RIE with Telecoil. So if Telecoil and having a battery, a zinc-air battery, is important to your customers, we're where it's at versus Phonak.

where we need to look out and be challenged. And this may be important to some users. We don't have embedded health tracking technology. Phonak went into that area a little while ago. It was not extremely popular.

This is things like being able to measure cardiovascular status, something that most hearing care professionals were not necessarily wanting to get into because it gets into medical areas. for which we have not really been trained, but it is available in Phonak technology. So that's one thing that they have that we do not, so I mention it here. And also, the fact that they are using Bluetooth Classic means that connecting to Phonak devices, you can pretty much connect to anything that's Bluetooth enabled. But like I said before, you do it at a cost of battery life and you also do it at a cost of there's not that many phones out there necessarily that don't already work with Made for Apple or ASHA.

That's becoming a much smaller number. And then of course, let's not forget that more and more Bluetooth low energy audio phones are being released on the market today, which really utilizes the kind of technology that's forward thinking compared to the old technology that Phonak, Sivantos, and Finio has. Let's move on to Signia. Signia has several receiver in the ear hearing aids. And when they talk about their models, the pure model is code for receiver in the ear.

They've got a brand new one called the pure charge and go BCT. We'll talk about that a little bit. But all it is really is instead of using Bluetooth low energy, it uses classic Bluetooth like Phonak does. for connectivity. Then they have the Pure Styletto which is kind of a different design.

It's very long and thin that also runs in this family. They have some small in the ear devices such as the Silk Charge and Go. This is a non-wireless and then they have a wireless and they have two non-wireless versions, one being across and one not being across. They have a non-wireless IC and or CIC. And then they also have one that looks more like a consumer earbud, the Active Pro, which is wireless.

So let's talk a little bit about the one that just hit the market last month. This is the Signia Pure Charge and Go Bluetooth connectivity transformed iX. That's what the BCT stands for. It runs on the same platform with the same features as the rest of the models in the iX family. There is a rechargeable and across model of this technology, and it has some new hardware.

It's got dual push buttons. It has three different technology levels. The most important difference here is that it works with Bluetooth Classic connectivity. They were able to get better battery run time than Phonak was. This is a direct competition for Signia against Phonak here because they're saying they do Bluetooth Classic connectivity, with a lot longer battery life than Phonak does.

However, that is the only model in the iX family that uses Bluetooth Classic. The other iX models use Bluetooth Low Energy Audio, ASHA, and MFI. So those are more newer kinds of connectivity solutions there. But the BCT only offers Bluetooth Classic. The main feature that they talk about for helping with noise is real-time conversation enhancement.

And this is unique in the market because it talks about being able to have multiple beams of directionality and following speakers around. It says that it pinpoints multiple moving speakers in real time and adapts very quickly. So it's like you got zoom, zoom, zoom. You got different beams going on at the same time if you're like at a cocktail party kind of situation or playing sports is what they show somebody playing basketball out on the basketball court and everybody's talking at the same time I guess. But their own research does not support the claim that it follows dynamic movement because the research they did did not have moving speakers.

They were stationary speakers. And furthermore, there was a really small improvement measured versus their previous technology. In fact, that amount of improvement is probably not noticeable to users in the real world because remember when you get these test results, you want them to be about 3 dB in order to translate to something that people in the real world would notice. And in a lab, if you're only getting about 1 dB of difference, that's not going to be something that's very noticeable at all, if at all, in the real world when things aren't as controlled as they are in a lab.

So when it comes to connectivity, the regular iX models have Bluetooth Low Energy Audio and MFI and ASHA just like we do, but they do not have Auracast. We offer by TLEA and Auracast. The pure BCT model only offers classic Bluetooth, but not any of those other kinds of connectivity. and it causes them to have a larger size than our devices for sure. And it's also to remember that this is not very future proof.

So if a user with a pure BCT likes the way that it connects to their phone today, that still is a pretty older, more basic phone, in a couple years, they're really going to be behind on the technology and they won't be able to connect to our cast streams. and their new phones, for example, will not necessarily need it to be classic Bluetooth, and they'll be wasting a lot of power just connecting when they could be using something sleeker and more technologically advanced, like Bluetooth Low Energy audio. So competitive advantages for Signia. Again, I feel like a broken record, hearing a noise and hearing all around. While Signia has pretty good directional benefit for a speaker in front, a noise behind, that's why we think that they have a pretty good directional beam.

We win in spatial awareness while hearing through the noise in our all-around program, and we have that multi-band processing to preserve own voice quality and spatial cues while in that first program for sure. Secondly, Signia does not have deep neural networks. It does not have DNN based noise reduction. So they have not joined the rest of the industry with that yet. Bluetooth Low Energy Audio and Auracast, their new BCT model doesn't support LE Audio and Auracast.

Other models support Bluetooth Low Energy Audio but don't have Auracast broadcast connectivity currently. So this is something that we still win in terms of what we offer in connectivity versus all of their models. And then finally, we still have the industry's smallest hearing aid, the Signia's hearing aids are larger. What we need to look out for perhaps is that if a user comes in with an older phone that only offers Bluetooth Classic, doesn't offer those other kinds of protocols, the BCT model now offers connectivity to Bluetooth Classic and it does it with better battery life than Phonak. We have all day battery life too, but we don't have Bluetooth classic.

Signia offers dual push button that acts as a rocker switch and this is maybe a minor thing but some users really kind of like to have that rocker switch on their hearing aids. When it comes to the iX family in general, again, hearing and noise and hearing all around, deep neural networks, Auracast, smallest

hearing aid, and we also have newer BTE options. the IX family from Signia and even their previous family, the AX family, they don't offer BTEs. And the last release of a Signia BTE was in the Xperience family launched in 2021, which is four years ago, and that's a long time ago. So they're moving away from BTEs.

And if you have customers that want to have a BTE, it's a no-brainer to go with us. Where we might be challenged though is that they have a rechargeable CIC. and they offer own voice processing. We argue that we don't need own voice processing like Signia does because while everyone experiences occlusion, especially new users for the first time, Signia offered their own voice processing, we believe because they were having an issue with the own voice being amplified to a greater extent through their proprietary fitting rule. Baha doesn't do that to users, but Signia's proprietary fitting rule was doing that and we were able to do a study on that.

In fact, Gregoire Yesh was able to come up with measurements showing why Signia own voice processing alleviated a problem that they alone were having, which is why they launched that feature. That's why you don't necessarily see own voice processing in other manufacturers. Us, Oticon, Phonak, they don't have corresponding features, perhaps because it wasn't necessary like it was for Signia. Let's move on to Starkey. Starkey Edge AI.

We've got some receiver-in-the-ear devices, as you see here. They are two rechargeable models and then a non-rechargeable model, which is a 312. And then in the ear models, which have two wires, all three of them being wireless, and one of them being non-rechargeable, which is the CIC. Starkey is known for making pretty small, cute custom devices, and their custom device CIC is exceptionally pretty small. But when it comes to technology, there really is no comparison.

They are using something called NeuroSound Technology 2.0, and they're talking about how they've been using this kind of AI driven processing for something like seven generations now. I think that

they're using a definition of AI that would pertain to every manufacturer, if we all want to call it AI, based on the fact that everything we've been doing in the past, if you look at it in a certain way, has been artificial intelligence as well. I mean, how does the hearing aid decide what kind of environment it's in? Well, obviously that would be AI. how would we be able to do automatic DFS without some measure of AI?

So they're kind of capitalizing on that. A lot of what they talk about, you have to be like, I think that's just a lot of words, but it's not necessarily meaningful improvements in the technology. They also have something called Edge Mode Plus. And Edge Mode Plus is a way that they say that they activate the advanced processing of their deep neural network. but you have to put it into the app.

So it's not something that is a program change at all. It's completely confined within the app. Finally, the kinds of comparisons that they make on their research does not include other manufacturers. They only compare themselves to their older hearing aids. So we don't know why they do this, but we perhaps think that maybe it's because they're not performing as well.

There's also a waterproof claim that was pretty shocking. It said that it was waterproof up to one meter and they say they've got an IP68 rating. Well, if you're scratching your head right now, you should be because we have the same thing. We just don't call it waterproof. In fact, it's a little bit taking license to call it waterproof.

All of these hearing aids on the market today ours and all of the major manufacturers are tested at an ingress protection 68 rating. And that's a certification that the manufacturer chooses to send off the hearing aids for to ensure that they can withstand being in a rainstorm or being in a dusty environment without failing. We use the same test Systarkey, and we use the same kind of accelerated aging test that they were talking about with this claim, too, where we put the hearing aids through all all kinds of tortuous conditions like high humidity, low pressure, basically anything that can happen on planet Earth

that's bad for a hearing aid. We test it beforehand to ensure that it meets a certain level of robustness. So we've been doing that for ages.

We've, we also use Nanocoating inside and out to protect from moisture and debris. So this claim really doesn't compare to anything because all of us are using this kind of thing. And we for sure know that we've been doing this for years. Starkey Edge AI uses Bluetooth Low Energy Audio. It does not yet use ourcast, although they are talking about it a lot.

They are pending a firmware update. Meanwhile, we're on our second generation of ourcast broadcast connectivity. So we already do it. We're not just talking about it. We do it.

So competitively, we have hearing and noise and hearing all around. Common theme here. Starkey is still using a two mic beamforming directionality system, which is not going to offer as much focus and protection from noise based on directionality when you're in a difficult listening environment like a restaurant. They don't use multiband directional processing to preserve the own voice quality or their spatial cues in the lower high frequencies. That automatic wind protection that you get from having on me and the lows, they don't have any of that.

We have all of it. We also believe that our testing and claims need to be done with behavioral studies with humans. And the behavioral studies that they have done with the Edge AI show really small benefit. And it's probably not a noticeable difference to user because it needs to be somewhere along the lines of about 30% to really have real world applicability to users. compared to their predecessor that they compared themselves to.

We are the industry's smallest AI hearing aid, and we have newer BTE options. The Starkey Edge AI or their predecessor, Genesis AI families, they don't offer BTEs. And the last time they did offer BTEs in a new product line was in 2021, kind of a long time ago. So a BTE patient will like us much better than

they would like Starkey. Then they took away the connectivity for their remote microphone or table microphone accessory.

They don't have something like the MyPal Pro. They have nothing that is like that. They've got a TV streamer and a remote control, but they don't have a current table mic or remote mic that works with the Edge AI family. That means that if you're in a really bad situation or you are a person that really struggles in noise, you're not going to be able to even have that remote microphone accessory to use. Where we might be challenged is that they offer health tracking technology.

Most notably, they've been talking about a balance assessment that they have that's integrated into the hearing aid that corresponds with the app, that helps people kind of predict where they are with balance. As we all know, balance and hearing are intertwined in the same kind of system in the body. So they have that kind of balance assessment. They have some studies saying that it can be beneficial. We don't offer that.

We have decided not to go into that. But that is one thing that makes them unique. And then finally, they also provide a wireless CIC.

Let's finish up the five major manufacturers with the Widex Allure family, which I guess it's a family, but there's only one model available. It's the RIE. It just came out and this has been something new that Wi-Fi hasn't had a lot new in the last few years. So we have been looking at it. It comes with an option of two different chargers.

One of them is a charging clean and one is a standard charger. It has 25 hours of battery power with seven hours of streaming. It only has two accessories, a TV play and an RC Dex, which is a remote control. and it does not have a remote mic accessory. So just like Starkey, no remote mic accessory for helping in really difficult signal to noise ratio environments.

Their connectivity is similar to ours, Bluetooth, low energy audio, BLE and telecoil, but they do not yet have our cast. It is pending a firmware update. So what we know so far and what we've noticed is that the previous hearing aid that Widex came out with was the SmartRIC. And if you remember, it kind of looked like a hockey stick. It was a very different style and it afforded, because of the way that it was shaped, some protection from wind and handling noise because the microphones were more protected in that design.

But they've moved back into a more traditional hearing aid style with the allure. So that means that any kind of benefits they were getting with the wind and handling noise will not apply to Allure. They have made some claims about hearing and noise that, but it is important to realize that this is only in one program that is a second program, but it's only been tested and beneficial for users with mild and moderate hearing losses, which excludes some people that we might see. There is no deep neural networks in Widex Allure. There's still no Oracast yet, no remote microphone accessory.

And they talk about the AI machine learning in their app based on user preferences, but that is confined to the app and it's not in the hearing aids like DNN enabled hearing aids. So that's why we say they don't have DNN. It's not actually providing that kind of deep neural network decision making and denoising. that we do. What they talk about is the Allure PureSound program.

They're saying that it enhances speech intelligibility by 4 dB, combining their very quick processing technology, which they call zero delay technology, with advanced processing. But they just published their paper on this, and that advanced processing is nothing more than to microphone directional processing. So what they did is they had a PureSound program in the past. It was the second program. It had minimal delay, which is supposed to make the sound quality better.

But they combined that now with directionality, and that's where they get the 4DB improvement based on what they had before. So not surprising that directional would do better than omnidirectional because before that program was only an omnidirectional. They have Bluetooth Low Energy audio and they will have Auracast at some point. We don't know when. We also offer BTLE and we're on our second generation of Auracast.

One thing that also is different is that they have decided to launch cloud-based fitting software. And what this means is that it is all going to be contained on the cloud. They say it's feature proof. My first instinct with that was, wow, that's going to be different for markets that restrict IT on what you can put on your hearing aids, but all has to be downloaded from a cloud. And also, I've heard some reports that it might be a little more basic than what their previous fitting software was, but we're going to keep on looking into that.

So competitively, we still have great hearing and noise, and with an automatic first program with four mic beamforming directionality. They still have two mic directionality, which is not going to give you the same benefits as four mic directional beamforming. We have DNN and they do not. We have Auracast and they do not yet. We have the industry's smallest hearing aid and we have rechargeable custom products and newer BTE options.

And that is not something that has been offered. The last time they offered BTEs was in 2020 and they don't even offer any rechargeable customs at all. Where we might be challenged is that they're talking about a dedicated streaming compressor, which means that when they are streaming sound from one of their accessories, there's a different compressor in there. We've not seen that before. We are going to look into it and see what kinds of advantages or disadvantages it has.

But again, that would just be for streaming. Let's look overall. How do we compare? Number one, competitive advantage by far, and the easiest one to remember and to point out, is that we're the

world's smallest hearing aid, even with DNN in a receiver in the ear. These hearing aids in gray background are the ones that have DNN.

That's the Starkey Edge AI, the Oticon IntenT and the Phonak ViriNeo, and they are much bigger than we are. And we're even bigger, we're even smaller than the ones that do not have DNN. We still have to measure the allure, but it does not believe, we do not believe that it's going to be smaller than the Beltone Envision. So we're doing a really really good job here in terms of creating hardware that people want to use because it's very inconspicuous. And then we also have an advantage in terms of our battery life per the device size.

If the hearing aid battery lasts all day like we do and has a portable charger like we offer, then why are we sacrificing, why would anyone want to sacrifice cosmetics or need to wear a larger device? If you're going to store your hearing aids in the rechargeable charger every night, then why does it need to last for 51 hours? So the bottom line is that we provide a full day's use with the smallest hearing aid in the industry. We provide more battery lifetime than Oticon and Phonak for sure. And even though Starkey talks about providing more battery life in a DNN kind of AI product, why?

Because they also have a larger device than we do as well.

and then DNN efficiency. This is especially important for pointing out versus a leading competitor, which I will tell you was Phonak, Sphero, and Finio. When it comes to DNN, the final outcome in terms of performance is all that matters. So it doesn't matter how many nodes you have or how many millions of operations you perform if the outcome is the same as something that has more of those. It's more elegant and efficient to be able to get the same outcome with a more streamlined kind of DNN.

And that's exactly what we provide. Furthermore, we need to remember that we are very human centered in our technology development. And we remember that all the most important decisions on

listening are made by the person's brain. So overall, we have really prioritized quality over quantity of samples and number of nodes. because quality is really what matters.

And the human is what matters as well. Based on the per unit benefit of the SNR improvement for speech in front and in back in the presence of noise, Beltone TrueFocus is 17 times more efficient than leading competitor. And then our number one most exciting thing when it comes to noise control is everything that we put into our first program. that supports users for most of the time. I like to think of our Hear and Noise program as the emergency break or when people really need help.

And that's when we really kick in all of the DNN and really make that noise go away. But when it comes to everyday listening, people live in Belltone Crosslink Directionality 4. And the beauty of it is it provides very strong signals to noise ratio benefit, good sound quality for the user's own voice, auditory awareness and spatial hearing benefits, all of these at the same time. We are the only competitor to offer multi-band directional processing to optimize these benefits in a single automatic program. The only one to do that.

And this is unmatched amongst our competitors.

We are the world's best for hearing and noise, as you can see against all five of the manufacturers that we tested. and this test condition was in our hearing and noise program, and it looked at the ultra focus 2. This was actually done with ultra focus 2 versus all the others, because we wanted to just categorize what exactly is our directionality when put up against the rest. And that way we could compare against everyone else, because not everyone else has a corresponding DNN that we could compare to. and what you see across the industry is that we lead the industry for sure in terms of making people be able to hear better in noise based on our directional microphones.

Okay, let's round it off with the top 10 reasons to fit Beltone Envision. This is kind of like family feud, except for we'll just kind of reveal them once at a time. Try to guess and see what will be the next one. So if any of you guessed hearing a noise, that is the number one reason to fit Beltone Envision. We've got so much going for us, but after all, what brings people in the door?

It's because they weren't hearing well, usually a noise. And so this is where we maintain most of our focus when it comes to our technology and we strive to be better all the time. We provide really strong signal-to-noise ratio benefits through cross-link directionality for and we maintain those natural sound quality benefits that we prize so much. Now we offer DNN in our hearing noise program to provide the benefits of natural hearing along with AI to result in stronger user preference and performance when it gets really, really difficult to listen in noise. We've derived these measures after decades of research.

We have culminated it in what we have today. and we continue to evolve consistently to reflect that we want to be, and we are, on the cutting edge of technology available in hearing aids for this number one problem that people have. Second reason, I think size and cosmetics unmatched. We are the smallest micro RIE in the industry. And not just Beltone and Vision, but also Serene, because as you know, it was the same case.

so Beltone and Vision and Serene micro RIE are the smallest hearing instruments in the industry as an RIE, and they provide users with the cosmetic appeal and comfort with no compromises on performance and connectivity. Pretty amazing connectivity. Let's keep on with that. And I'd like to extend it more, not just what you can connect to, but more about what it lets people do and how it makes things accessible to people. You know, going to crowded venues where you need a remote microphone accessory can be really, really difficult.

And sometimes people decide not to even go to those places because they feel let down by their hearing. We are helping people enjoy everything in their environment with our technology, and that's

through connectivity in the hearing aids. in many different places. So we've got so many options and they're all in the same hearing aid. We've got BTLEA for people who own phones that can use that and those will be more and more and we are already seeing an explosion in the market.

We've got Auracast, very future proof. We are going to see an explosion of this kind of connectivity in public arenas like places of worship, theaters, schools, etc. Because it just has so many advantages over the ways that we had before. We've got Made for Apple on Android streaming for hearing aids for people whose phones need that. We also still have telecoil options as well.

This is so important.

Environmental classification. What do we mean by that? Why is that a reason to fit Beltone Envision? Well, we've done plenty of studies over the past and the classifier that we use that helps determine am I in a quiet environment, am I in a speech only environment is so precise and so accurate that we have been shown to lead the hearing aid industry in accuracy. And what that means for us is that our features will activate and deactivate as they should according to the user's surroundings.

Taking the error out of the way that our features turn on and off to help people hear better.

Number five, low signal processing delay. Okay, so I was talking about how Widex allure has a very low processing delay. Well, guess what? We also offer industry-leading signal processing in terms of the delay of getting the sound from the microphone all the way through the receiver. that's called the group delay.

And in our first program, we are industry leading for our processing through the hearing aid in terms of the time it takes. And furthermore, this first program is the most important for nearly all listening situations. And it's usually the one that people use first, unless they need to change to the second. And

even in the second, we have that same kind of delay. So it's really important to realize that we have very fast processing that minimizes any kind of bad sound quality that would ever come from having a delay in our processing.

Okay, number six, wind noise. Okay, so wind noise. We have wind noise reduction. That's a feature that we've had for several generations now, but also our band split directionality or our multi-band directionality that puts Omni in the low frequencies really gives users better protection from wind than if they were in directional processing in those low frequencies. And so that's one of the reasons why we do it.

And it makes it less intrusive to be out in wind when you're in that kind of a setting, which is what we use for all of our environments, whether you're in an omnidirectional program fully, or if you're in a crosslink directionality four, you're still getting that kind of protection from wind and the low and we're not compromising other features. Some manufacturers will turn off directionality fully to prioritize wind noise control, and that's not something that we're willing to do. We believe that it's not an either/or, it's an also and, and we want to have directional benefit at the same time as we protect from wind.

Okay, next one, cross and bi-cross. we really have some very elegant ways of doing cross. And our directionality options for cross offer more auditory awareness than competitors. And when you think about it, what is the whole reason why you're fitting a cross device? It's so you can make the user feel more auditory awareness around them, especially from sounds coming from the side of the poorer ear.

So it makes sense to keep them in the environment with more auditory awareness in a cross or by cross fitting.

Show me next one, which is rechargeable batteries. Our rechargeable batteries are really robust. We offer 80% capacity after four or five years. And what this means is that the user doesn't really have to

worry about it. This battery is going to live throughout the device lifespan for sure.

And we are offering a full day of use within all of those four to five years. Even with streaming, we offer a full day of use and without any compromise to the size of our devices or the cosmetics of the devices. We're not making big devices here. We're making small miniature devices that people want to use. And we're able to offer this battery runtime without increasing the size of our hearing aids.

All right, almost there. IP ratings. We're doing an amazing job with protection from moisture and debris. and we are doing the same test that every other manufacturer does. So when a user is encountering sweat, humidity, extreme heat, cold, and fog, we've tested it, we have already ameliorated a lot of the problems that can come from that, and we use nanocoating inside and out, which is very unique in the industry.

Last reason to point out is ease of use. maybe the most important one. If there's something that I think most people want in their lives, it's to simplify the things that should just be automatic. And not only do we have check my fit in the app to help users make sure that they put their hearing aids on correctly and get all the benefit that they need, all the gain that you fit them with, but it also is important to point out that our all-in-one program all around simplifies hearing aid management for users in most listening situations. They have the option to go to the Hearing Noise program, but in many situations, all they have to do is put the hearing aids on, check my Fitbit helps make sure that they're on correctly, and they go about their lives not having to think about it.

And I think that's a beautiful, beautiful advantage for us. So if you want to sum up all of these things that we just talked about in the top 10 reasons, here is a one-pager that has essentially everything I've just said. And before we close off for today, I want to give a couple of minutes to Belltone Commence, our essential product, which is really, really nice because look at how it compares in the market. I was able to compare our Belltone Commence 3 and 2 to the corresponding levels of technology for our

competitors. And the first thing I found is that Widex and Starkey don't really have much to compare with, so they're not even involved in this.

They don't have a correlate at that price point. Phonak Terra Plus, Oticon Zircon 1 and Signia 1 ix are the corresponding for those three models. But you can see some glaring advantages we have. Number one, we have Bluetooth low energy audio and our cast in our commence products, and it doesn't even matter what the price point is. And so that is where we went against all of these hands down.

We also have some things that make us more advanced like directionality options, impulse noise reduction, tinnitus masking, and a lithium ion rechargeable model, which in some cases is not matched by our competitors. Some things that we might not have is that, well, we're only one model right now. We only have an RIE. Everybody else has a couple more models to choose from in this segment. We don't have Bluetooth Classic.

That's probably not a concern for most of your users, but it is something that Phonak would say they have that we don't. and we have fewer channels and bands, which all that does is sometimes in this level make it be if you're doing real ear measurements, a little easier to match the targets for some of these other competitors, but not overall making any difference to the audibility of the user. And then for the lowest price point, again, you see that Bluetooth Low Energy audio and our CAS benefit and the tinnitus masking and the fact that we have a lithium ion rechargeable model remain very strong advantages. for us with the same kinds of disadvantages as you saw in the commence three page. So, and we dropped a competitor here.

We're not even competing against Signia because they don't have a corresponding price point at this size. So in all, we have so much to be happy about here and so much to remember. It's a big world out there with competitive, but if you have to boil it down, that page that I had with all of the advantages, the top 10 reasons right here, really is a nice summary to remember why we are the best in the industry. So

if there are any questions, I can take those now. Okay, not seeing any questions right now, so I will let you go and have a wonderful day wherever you are.

and thank you so much for joining me today.