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What Makes Beltone Unique in the Hearing Aid Market Today?

Presenter: Tammy Stender, AuD

And I just want to welcome everyone to today's session. Competitive Overview, what makes Beltone unique? This is presented by Dr. Tammy Stender. She's a wonderful presenter and just we're so pleased to have her with us today. And at this time, I'll hand things over to you.

Thank you so much, Kimberly, and I appreciate that lovely introduction and thank you to everyone on the call right now. Very pleased to see you, even if we can't be in person right now for this presentation. Presentation today, today we'll be going over where Beltone stands in the competitive landscape. And I think this is such a fun thing to talk about, especially now since we have such a amazing offering to provide for our clients. A little bit, just a little background about what I do in most of my time at work.

I'm the Director of Commercial and External Relations for Global Audiology, so I am a hearing care provider as well. And what I do most of the time is look at the competitive landscape and gauge how GN technology compares in that landscape. How do our competitors provide benefits? How do we handle objections? What are they offering?

So all of this will be covered today and I just want to thank you again for spending this time with me today.

So let's get started with some learning outcomes. The first thing we're going to do is talk about what the other manufacturers are offering in terms of their premier product offerings. We are also going to talk about some of the advantages and disadvantages that those offerings have competitively and some common objections that could arise about how Beltone compares to these other hearing aids. And finally, we're going to explain how Beltone offers the most comprehensive solution for hearing a noise. And we do so without compromises, without making it a large device, without making it a short battery runtime.

We know that size and battery runtime, or the amount of time that the battery takes until it dies in a day, is really important to users. And so we have to find ways to provide everything we can to support them, especially for hearing and noise, but also to do it in a package and a size that makes sense for real world living. Small size, attractive design, and long battery life.

With any presentation, there are always risks and limitations. For example, this presentation won't cover every aspect of the competitive landscape and this may not apply to every client that you see, but it is designed to provide you with some intelligence about what is happening in the competitive landscape for your internal use only. It is not to be distributed outside of this forum, but it is for you to understand and really feel proud about the way that we provide unique offerings today in an industry that has so much advanced technology, we can really be proud of what we're bringing.

So what is it that we're saying and we're bringing? Well, as you will remember in Q1 of 25, so that was about a year ago. We brought the Beltonin vision to the world and this was a incredible leapfrog adjustment to our portfolio. The first thing that we always focus on is hearing and noise. And the reason why we focus on that is because it is the number one reason why people seek help for their hearing.

It is typically that they are in a setting where they were in a social setting or with family members, a party, a celebration, a restaurant where they were really trying to engage and enjoy and they were not able to do so because of troubles hearing and noise. So with that in mind and with so many market track research studies indicating that that is the most important thing to people, that is where we spend most of our research and development dollars. We want to be the world's best for hearing and noise and we are. We have brought some amazing technology to the industry with our four microphone beamforming directionality that is found in Crosslink Directionality four plus our DNN noise reduction that's found in the hearing noise program. We give people the best of all worlds and we still do so by not cutting them away from their environment.

We still give them spatial cues, localization cues, we preserve their own voice quality. All of this technology sums up to be the world's best for hearing in noise. But we don't want any compromises. So we make sure that is in the smallest hearing aid for a receiver in the ear with DNN AI in it. In the market today.

We are the world's smallest and we do so with an all weatherproof design, meaning that we put in the topmost amount of protection against moisture and debris ingress. We want the devices to last all day long with no trade offs. Which means that we are saying and we have tested for 24 hours of use even with streaming or AI. And streaming and AI are the most power hungry features that you could possibly put into a hearing aid. So the fact that we can get this much use even while we are having streaming and AI active is truly incredible.

Finally, we made our hearing aids the cutting edge for technology by having them be compatible with Bluetooth Low energy audio and AuraCast. AuraCast is only available with Bluetooth Low Energy audio and Bluetooth Low Energy Audio is the most premier and recently launched version of Bluetooth and that has been developed by the Bluetooth Special Interest Group. So with these kinds of technologies, users are able to enjoy the cutting edge and the most future proof kinds of connectivity that there possibly can be today.

Last year we also launched the Beltone Boostmas Max S& this is our Superpower hearing aid. As you are well aware, and again you see, the claims have to do with preserving hearing and noise, which again is a very important thing to people with severe to profound hearing loss. We also need to make sure that we have the best feedback management. These users use a lot of gain and as you increase gain, your risk for feedback increases as well. Our feedback management system has been tested against competitors to have the fastest and most effective elimination of feedback without compromising on the gain.

So you don't have to sacrifice the power to get a feedback free bidding. We have the smallest rechargeable superpower on the market today too. And this means that even when we're streaming, we're small, we last all day long with our battery and we provide all of that gain all at once. And then finally, we are the world's first superpower with Bluetooth Low energy audio and AuraCast connectivity. This is in addition to the fact that we are the only manufacturer who puts AuraCast enabled accessories out there as well.

The TV streamer Plus and the multi mic plus are compatible with Aracast and can act as transmitters of their own, which is truly, truly unique in this industry today. But who else is out there? Well, let's go through all of our major competitors and talk about their notable models. By notable I mean these are their latest and greatest hearing aid families with the highest levels of technology. And in some cases we're going to throw in some predecessor technology families only because those family members are not represented in the newest family.

So for example, with Phonak we have the Infineo line, which is their newest release family. But we also see in their BTEs the Lumity, which is a predecessor family, since they don't have Infineos that are superpowers or BTEs. Yes, we're going to talk also about the BTEs from the Lumity family. So what are we looking at with Phonak? In the Phonak family, especially in the Infineo family, they are offering receiver in the ear and in the ear models.

And the most notable one of these is the Audeo Sphere Infineo and this is the one that has AI. They use deep neural network noise reduction similar to the Deep Neural Noise Deep neural network noise reduction that we use in that it can remove noise from the environment. So this is probably the most interesting model of this page here because it behaves in a way similarly to the way that our InVision does. In Q4 of 2025, they launched the Ultra update and what this was was a firmware update with no changes to the hardware, but rather just a firmware update through the fitting software, where it applied

some fixes to the original Infineo hearing aids to make it run better. There were two things that they changed.

Number one, they gave it better battery efficiency so that the battery life was longer than in the original launched Infineo. And number two, they corrected a defect that they found in the environmental classifier system that they had. So all in all, not a huge update. In fact, it kind of just brings them back to what they were hoping to deliver the first time around when they launched this product. In Q3 of 2024, they have in the EAR devices, but these do not have any DNN in them.

And then the behind the EAR devices are the Naida form factor, that's the Naida model name, and the family is the Lumity. So the Lumity family is a little bit older, as you can see here. And the real Superpower one to think about is the Naida Lumity up, which is not rechargeable like the Beltone Boost Max S, but uses a 675 battery instead of, as you can see, it is a couple years old already. So it's not the newest technology in their Superpower.

So let's focus on the Ultra update to the Phonak Infinio Sphere. So when a company comes out and says we have improved upon the battery life, of course we sit up and take notice. We want to know are we still the same or better as they are? And when we looked at the data sheets, which is usually where you find these kinds of specs, you see that Phonak is still on the data sheets, saying that it's about 18 hours of use of battery runtime before the battery would die. Also, you notice that the volume of the device is quite a bit larger than ours.

So when you go head to head with the spec sheets, the data sheets, you see that Beltone still is offering a whole lot more in terms of battery runtime with a much smaller device. And that makes sense since the Ultra update didn't actually change anything with the physical device itself. But then you start to see some conflicting claims out there. The Phonak Infineo Ultra Sphere indicates that now it's offering 56 hours of battery life, which is quite interesting since the data sheets say something

completely different. But then you notice there's a little asterisk and there is a caveat to that.

56 hours. And they are putting in a lot of quid pro quos and caveats of, well, it kind of depends on what kind of features you've got turned on, what kind of hearing loss you have, what kind of environment you're listening to, whether you're streaming and whether you have things like DNN turned on. All of those things can greatly impact the battery runtime. And so when they say up to 56 hours, little alarm bells go off and says, oh, that's probably not very typical. In fact, that's probably not a real world number that people can rely on when they use these devices for from Phonak.

In the real world, I would never want them to say, well, I don't have to take my charger with me because it's going to last me 56 hours on a weekend trip. Because that's not typical results. Not typical. It's kind of like when you see a car commercial and they talk about the miles per gallon that it can get, but then they say up to a certain number, well, that number might not be anything close to what you experience in your regular driving life because you're going up and down hills, your weather may be changing. They got those numbers in some pretty optimized environments, and that's how they were able to make the claim.

But it might not be typical. There's also a setting in the fitting software for Phonak that doesn't limit the DNN from turning on more than three hours. It used to just limit it to turning on only three hours in the day to conserve battery. Well, now they're not limiting it anymore. But it made us wonder, how do we compare spec sheet or no spec sheet, claim or no claim, what happens if we put Beltone Envision head to head with the Phonak Infinio Ultra Sphere to see which one can last longer when we put on the DNN continuously?

So that ended up in this test box comparison. This was done in our clinic in Glenview, Illinois, and we took a Phonak Infinio Ultrasphere and a Beltone Envision, set them up identically to see how long it took before the battery ran out. We programmed them all very similarly, their own targets. So our BAFA

targets, their proprietary targets for a mild to moderately severe sloping hearing loss. We set it to a manual program that would enable DNN noise reduction continuously.

And then we put the test box stimulus at 80 decibels speech and noise sound. So we were sure that they would be engaging and we would be engaging our DNN noise reduction as being one of the most power hungry features that you can have. But we tried to level the playing field, eliminate variables, make it be the same kind of settings for each hearing aid. We closed the lid and then we left and we read out in data logging how long these hearing aids were able to run before they died. The results are at the bottom.

Here you can see that Phonak and Finial ultrasphere lasted for 10 hours and Beltone and Vision lasted for 13 hours. So what do we take home from this? Well, first of all, we take home reassurance that we are not behind them at all. In fact, we did win by three hours in this comparison. You may be asking how come we're not making a special claim about this?

Well, the reason why is because claims have a lot of regulatory background to them and they would require a lot more extensive testing than a test box comparison like this. However, we wanted to do this kind of quick and easy test to, to show exactly what would happen if you leveled the playing field and set the hearing aids up identically by the same tester. So everything could be as same as possible and we have nothing to fear here. We are at least exceeding what they are getting. Even with their update that improved upon their battery efficiency.

The other claim that they made with the Ultra update was an improvement to their Environmental Classification System. That is the AutoSense 7.0 system that they talk about. That's what they call their environmental classifier. And they said that it is the most precise implementation to date and that it's 24% more accurate than it was before. But when you read the Phonak field study news, which is what they call their white papers that they themselves publish on their own website, you will see that the

reason why they did this was not to supersede or excel in this, but rather to be fixing a defect or an error that they found with AutoSense 6.0.

AutoSense 6.0, they admitted, was not turning on the deep neural noise reduction like it should have been. It should have been turning on DNN to reduce noise in many environments. And it wasn't because of an error that they identified. So they fixed that error and put it into the new autosense 7.0 and that is what they have done. So really it just takes us back to the baseline of how the Infinios were supposed to perform back in 2024 when they were originally launched.

It's not something to be fearful of. It's more just like they fixed a bug. They also talk about a few other claims that refer to older studies. For example, there's a 21% less fatigue claim, but this study refers to the speech enhancer feature which was actually introduced six years ago with the Phonak paradise platform. So it's not new.

This is not new research and it's not a new feature either. They talk about spheric speech clarity 2.0, improving speech understanding and reducing listening effort and fatigue. But when you read the study, these claims did not include competitors in their testing. The setting was DNN versus a setting without dnn. And so since there were no competitive devices testing, you can't say that GN would have done any poorer than Phonak because we simply were not in that study.

One other thing they brought to market in the fall of last year was easy guard domes. And those are a dome similar to the all fit domes that we have just recently launched. And they have a special trap for wax in their dome. They also did a field study newspaper about how they had a high preference for for these domes over their traditional domes after a four month home trial. So it's very impressive that they did a four month home trial.

I will say that that's good and that they were preferred for comfort, et cetera, based on what they had before. However, they did note one thing with the introduction of the easy guard domes. They noted that the frequency response in the high frequencies above 4000 Hz are peakier than they used to be than with the old domes. What that means as a clinician is that if your baseline measures in a test box are peakier, then that means that it could be more dicey, it could be more difficult to match some of those high frequency targets. If you're doing real ear on a patient, or even if you're not doing real ear on a patient, it means that your response in the high frequencies might not be giving you the gains that you expect expect to get based on the fitting software.

And this could be something that makes fitting these domes a little bit more different, a little bit more difficult. With our new domes, there are no caveats that we have a different frequency response. We have similar frequency responses for our new domes versus our old domes. And we wanted to do that so that we didn't sacrifice any of the ease of fitting or any of the patient satisfaction from their amplification. Just by introducing another dome.

So I'm really proud that we took the extra step to make sure that this was not going to be a problem for us.

One other notable model in the Phonak family is the Virto Infineo, which is a rechargeable custom device. We have rechargeable customs as well. But this is what they say is the world's first rechargeable custom hearing aid equipped with Phonak smart speaker. So what does that mean? Well, smart speech technology is a blanket term that just talks about all of their speech in noise hearing features.

So it's not something new. They've been talking about it for a couple years when they launched the Infinity family originally. Furthermore, unlike the Audeo Sphere Infineo, there's no DNN in these devices. It's the same feature set as the Infineos that don't have dnn. So it's not doing that denoising

like we do in the envision.

And only their RIE offer those noise reduction capabilities. So it's not that it is anything greater, it's just another member of their family. But they did not put the DNN in it. Just like we have other members of our family, other models of our family of a vision that don't have dnn. So do they.

They also talked about how it is customly made precisely for the user's ears with Right Fit technology. And it talks about biometric calibration as part of a customization process that utilizes 1600 data points to deliver a precise fit. This sounds incredible. It definitely makes me want to know more. But then looking at the research and when this system came out with Right Fit technology and biometric calibration, it's not new.

It was actually referencing a claim from 2017. That's nine years ago. So this is not new. Companies occasionally will recycle claims from older studies and put them forward as a way to gain more attention. For what?

Something that they're launching. But rest assured that this isn't new. This isn't groundbreaking technology that they've just come out with. It's what they've had before.

The Phonak Naida Lumity is their Superpower hearing aid to date. And it again talks about smart speech technology. One of the things that they talk about is how smart speech technology with mild to moderate fittings can provide a certain amount of signal to noise ratio improvement. But they didn't go back and do that test over with users of Superpower hearing aids. The claims that they make about Speech understanding that they say translates to the Naida Lumity because it has that smart speech technology in it were actually derived from people with much milder hearing losses.

And we as clinicians know that the needs of people with severe to profound hearing losses and the benefits that they can expect to gain from our features may be different than what the user with a mild to moderate hearing loss experiences. Typically, due to their needs for greater amplification and their more severe hearing loss, they don't get the same amount of signal to noise ratio benefit out of directionality just because audibility is oftentimes a big struggle for them. They may be also facing things like dead regions or areas where they're not getting any information, even if you are able to provide enough gain for them. So they're a special population when it comes to speech understanding and noise. We at GN believe that you have to test our directionality with users of superpower hearing instruments in order to make a claim appropriate for a superpower hearing instrument.

So we did a test to look at the SNR improvement for people with severe to profound hearing loss compared to omnidirectional. And this claim was published with our launch of the Beltone Boost Max S. With that, we saw 8.3 dB of signal to noise ratio improvement. It is so important to make sure that the claims that you make for a superpower population are unique to them. Because if you will remember, we got a little bit more of a signal to noise ratio improvement for people with mild to moderate hearing loss with the envision and this makes perfect sense. It's a different population that we are serving here.

So really proud that our company doesn't just gloss over and apply claims for mild to moderate hearing losses to people with more severe hearing losses. Because you just can't do that. It's just not the right way to go. In addition, we're the only superpower hearing aid that uses multiband processing directionality, but also with preservation of spatial hearing abilities, natural preservation of vocalization cues, and maintenance of your own voice sound quality. We do this in the automatic program, which really kind of sets us apart in the industry.

This is something that makes us truly unique and allows people to get the best of everything in that first program. And then of course, when you want to get a little more focused help for hearing a noise, you

can always go to that hearing noise program and get that extra help.

So let's sum it up. Where should we watch out for? Phonak. Here are some of the strengths or the advantages that they are Perceived to have number one, they are fitting their hearing aids with classic Bluetooth. That means that regardless of the age of the Bluetooth enabled phone, you are able to connect those hearing aids to stream from it through classic Bluetooth.

It's a pretty straightforward process. Most people are very familiar with how to pair their phones to different things like their car, Bluetooth, etc. And so that makes it easy. However, classic Bluetooth was introduced in 1999 and wow, that's 27 years ago. Now we're in 2026.

The newer version of Bluetooth is Bluetooth low energy Audio. That is the newest and that is what we and the other manufacturers have already moved to. We've already moved to Bluetooth Low energy audio as the connectivity choice. That's future proof. So eventually I'm assuming that Phonak will as well.

But to this date they still offer classic Bluetooth. The other thing is, is that you cannot get aura cast with classic Bluetooth. You have to have Bluetooth lower energy audio to do so. And so in order to get AuraCast connectivity, they would need to replace the radios in a future family. They do have a new rechargeable custom which has gained some attention.

And I think the biggest benefit of this because of course we already have our rechargeable customs as well is that it allows people who already fit the Phonak portfolio to now finally have rechargeable customs. Areas where we have distinct advantages against Phonak are the number one and this is the most important one. And it basically supersedes everything else out there. Hearing in noise and hearing all around all wrapped up in the first program. This is really unique.

This is what sets us apart. So we have multiband directional processing which applies omnidirectional to low frequencies which preserves your sound quality, localization cues, own voice sound quality reduces wind noise when wind is blowing. That omni in the lows combined with directional in the high frequencies really gives you that signal to noise ratio benefit without sacrificing your localization and spatial hearing abilities. And then we have AI enabled noise reduction in the beltone and vision to be able to hear even better in the hearing noise program. This really sets us apart also from Phonak which as I mentioned has denoising in their DNN noise reduction in one crucial way.

The difference is because we marry our four microphone directional beamforming in the hearing and noise program with our DNN noise reduction. That means that you get a very narrow beam and noise suppression of the non speech noises around you. So the narrow beam helps you hear just the speech that you're looking at instead of the speaker sitting next to you at a different table in the restaurant or the person talking over on your shoulder that you don't want to hear. Because of that narrow beam plus the strong deep neural network DNN noise reduction, we're able to provide a benefit that Phonak is currently not able to provide. They have DNN noise reduction, but they have it paired with a fixed directional response which is much, much wider.

Meaning that yeah, the noise is reducing, but the speakers around you are all audible and the hearing aid doesn't know what you want to listen to. So if there's a speaker here, here and here with a fixed directional response, you're going to hear all of those speakers and you'll probably just hear the loudest one regardless of if it's the one that you're looking at because it's all within that beam. Having a narrow beam puts the user in control so that they can maximize their signal to noise ratio for that speaker that they're looking at. This is a huge advantage. Another huge advantage is our connectivity.

As mentioned before, Phonak offers Bluetooth classic connectivity, but that doesn't mean that they offer any aura cast. So they are behind in the market because everyone else has moved to Bluetooth low

energy audio. At least some of them have auracast, some of them do not. But at the very least they have a model with Bluetooth low energy audio and Phonak does not. We also have non rechargeable RIE options with telecoil and you know, talking about rcast.

But let's not forget that there's a ton of places that are looped in our societies and we must be able to support people who want to have that looping as well. And having a non rechargeable RIE is also a unique offering nowadays that everything seems to be going rechargeable because some people just really like having that zinc air battery and so having this and Infineo does not offer this is an advantage against Phonak. Our Superpower BTE is a lot newer than the Phonak which launched in 2023. We just launched in 2025, so. So two years newer for sure.

And for the superpowers we have a wonderful white paper that talks about how we tested our feedback control versus every other feedback control for Superpower and found that we are the only ones who provide the amount of gain without restricting that gain or adding distortion. So we beat Phonak, we beat everyone else in this realm as well. And then in terms of size, we are smaller in terms of our receiver in the ears and our superpower BT these.

All right, let me move on to Oticon here. Oticon's newest family is called the Intent and it features. The reason why it's called Intent is because they have put in addition to microphones, they've put motion sensors so that the hearing aids will steer their directionality features, for example, to the place where your head is moving. Which may seem like a good idea, except for we have to remember that not all head movements are fully intentional. For example, when I am talking right now, I'm moving my head, but it doesn't mean that I want a beam that's moving here, there and everywhere, or that I necessarily want my directional processing to change because I'm an animated speaker.

So something to remember, that's why it's called Intent, because they have those motion sensors on board. In the Intent family, they have recently launched the mini BTE and that was just launched in this

previous quarter. And they also have some custom devices. All of them are non rechargeable. And then finally they just launched also last quarter in Europe and this quarter in the US an instant fit rechargeable wireless etc.

This is called the Zeal. If this looks a little familiar, this looks a little bit like our Mike and Helix used to look like when we had that model available in our products. It's got an antenna that goes into the concha bowl of the ear and that is where the connectivity comes from. It offers BTLEA and AuraCast. It is rechargeable, but it is not a custom device.

It is a stock device and so it is supposed to be one size fits all. If you remember, we had a model that was similar to this probably around 10 years ago that was supposed to be one size fits all. And we ran into some major hurdles. The biggest hurdle we ran into was that one size fits all does not fit every ear canal. You and I both know that every ear canal is slightly different.

Some are more slender, some are more bendy, some are wider, and you cannot reliably fit any product in everyone's ear canal. So you have to have the right size ear canal for this to fit in. And we are noticing on blog posts that fitters of the Zeal are having difficulties fitting it because it is a non custom in the ear device. In terms of superpower BTEs, they have two models and they are in the Exseede family. But if you notice the XCEED family was launched in 2019.

That is a long time ago. It's five and a half years since Q3 of 2019. So they've got some pretty older technology in their Superpower line which is clearly a disadvantage for them. So this is more of a close up of the Oticon Zeal and as you can see it is fitted with a dome. They say they have the next generation AI, but this does not mean it's the same AI that we and Phonak offer.

The DNN that's used by Oticon Intent and Oticon Zeal is not the type that removes noise from the environment. It simply classifies the environment and then applies the noise reduction that they had

before. So this is even though they're on their second version of that DNN noise reduction, it's not doing as much reducing of the noise because it's just a classifier, it's not a denoising noise reduction system system like Phonak and we have. So it is doing less of the removal of the noise than we are. As I mentioned before, this is a rechargeable device and it offers Bluetooth low energy audio and Auracast and made for Apple and made for Android.

So essentially the connectivity here is the same as what we offer. One thing that came to the news at the end of Q4 of 2025 was Google fast Pair and both Starkey and Oticon now offer this. And what it is is it allows you to with one tap connect Oticon Intent and Oticon Zeal devices to Android devices like phones that have Bluetooth low energy audio capabilities already in them. So we're talking about the newer Samsungs by and large that have BTLEA capabilities, other phones too, but they're definitely going to be newer phones. So it's not every Android phone that will do this, it's only the newer ones with BTLEA already on it.

What it does is it simplifies the process, makes it one tap and done. Which is pretty cool. I will say that it is pretty cool. We were faced with some questions how come we don't have this in GN hearing aids? And the simple answer is when you are looking at how to prioritize your research and development dollars, we are always, always focused on the number one reason and the number one thing that drives satisfaction with hearing aids and that's hearing and noise.

It's not things like fast pairing, etc. Although I do admit it would make things a little easier. But seeing that we don't have it right now, what can we possibly say about it? Well, number one, this fast pair is only used for the pairing procedure. And the pairing procedure is a pretty rare event.

It happens at the fitting. It might happen later on if you lose pairing. But connecting is a more daily occurrence. Connecting to a phone, connecting to an accessory, much more common to have connections than pairings. And so with that in mind, making sure that we have something like

multiconnect, which we do, really, really helps us in the everyday, ease of use category with our devices connecting to accessories and phones.

But what to say if they're like, why don't you guys have it? Well, it's not that we can't have it, we could have it. We just did not prioritize it because we're very basic, very, very focused on developing the latest hearing and noise. But if pressed, you can highlight the advantages in convenience and connectivity that we do have and their significance to the experience. We are the only manufacturer to offer AuraCast enabled TV streamers and remote microphone accessories.

Arbocon does not offer AuraCast enabled TV or remote microphone accessories at all. In fact, nobody else does. And so the fact that we have this technology in our accessories as well, making them effectively a transmitter for AuraCast, is truly groundbreaking and has a bigger impact, I believe, in the overall use cases of this technology than just being able to quickly pair.

Some of the claims that they've been talking about with intent include the update that they made to their deep neural network processing. It's their second time around with deep neural network noise reduction and they said that there was an improvement. But one of their behavioral studies that they published really didn't find a huge difference between what they have now versus what they had before when they first came out with deep neural network processing. So the expected benefit is pretty small. And again, it's not removing noise from the environment like we are, because it's just classifying it.

Secondly, they talk about their user intent sensors. What I was talking about before with when you make, when you are walking, it will change the directional pattern, it will change some of the feature settings. When you are moving your head around, that will also change some of your settings, especially for directionality. And while this may seem like a good idea, it's important to realize that making it automatic might not always be the best idea for every user. For example, if you have a client who has some neurological challenges or has involuntary muscle movements, involuntary tics, or they

have postural difficulties which make it hard for them to hold up their head, having the hearing aids interpret these kinds of head Motions as intended could be disastrous because you could end up, if you're not able to hold up your head very well, you could end up with a directional beam that's pointing toward the floor instead of to the speaker in front of you.

And this is something that's very real world. It's very. We come across it, we fit people and people have different needs outside of just hearing loss. And we do not want to do anything with the hearing aids that would lead to disadvantageous steering, especially if they can't control their own head movements. So that's why when we put our hearing noise in program two and we say you're going to be able to hear in this narrow beam in the direction that you're looking at, that is a choice to go to that program two.

Because we know that if you want to be able to really see in here in the direction that you're looking at, that's a choice, that's a thing that we want you to choose and not us to choose for the user. In addition, oticon is still using traditional two microphone directionality. So even when they are changing around the patterns based on where they think people want to hear, it's still giving a much wider beam than the narrow beam that can be achieved with a four microphone system.

Finally, they state that they are the first in the ear hearing aid with an onboard deep neural network. But then when you read the fine print, you see that even the DNN that they use in intent, which doesn't remove noise from the environment like ours does, it's reduced even from what's in the intent. So yes, it could be the first one with an onboard deep neural network, but it's not changing things dramatically.

In terms of the Xceed, this is their superpower device that was launched in 2019 and these claims come from 2019. All we need to do here is just rely on the claims that we have today. Knowing and having confidence in the fact that we have this Beltone Boost Max S with the only superpower hearing aid that uses multi band processing, preserving spatial hearing, preserving localization queues. We have industry leading environmental classification and we've got a much newer device with a lot newer

technology inside of it. In addition, we've already tested that the feedback management we offer with BoostMax S is a lot more effective and adds more gain, more usable gain to a client's life than other leading superpower solutions.

So this is something to be really proud of. Where should we watch out for Oticon? Well, first, up until very recently when we came out with our new Alpha domes. They were offering a wider assortment of closed domes and so that will soon be going away as a strength of Oticon because we now offer a broader selection of domes. Google Fast Pair is something that we don't offer and they do.

So I guess we should watch out for that. But again this is just for the pairing process and not for connectivity and not related to their accessories. Where should we challenge Oticon? Here's where you see this again. The hearing and noise and hearing all around.

Just like with Phonak, we are the only ones to provide these kinds of spatial hearing and localization cues while still giving best in class signals to noise ratio improvement for hearing and noise. And then taking it one step further with the hearing noise program to really turn on some strong noise reduction for and focus on the speaker in the Beltone envision. So these are huge, huge benefits that we have in terms of size and something that people want to wear. We know people tend to like to wear these smaller devices. We have a smaller receiver in the ear and Superpower bte.

We have a much newer Superpower BTE and we do not restrict gain when calibrated even for super power users who need a lot of gain in our super power Power Boost Max S. Let's move on to Signia. Wow, there's a lot on this slide. Signia has a lot of notable models. All of these are in the IX family which stands for Integrated experience and they are all notable for different reasons. First of all they've got a huge lineup of receiver in the ear devices including a very special skinny one called the Styletto.

They have custom devices that are non wireless but rechargeable. Those are the Silks. They've got the. I'm sorry the Silks are non custom, the NCO is custom and then they have the Active Pro which looks like an earbud and they recently just this last fall launched the Motion charge and go IX. Those are the BTEs and the superpower one is the one that would be a competitor to our Beltone Boost Max S. In the highest gain version.

Signia does not have DNN noise reduction yet. So what they are talking about is their real time conversation enhancement which talks about their directionality being able to be in multi streams. And they did some tests with some external placements, external sites that showed a nice looking claim of 86%. Participants performed better with them versus a key competitor. But based on the fact that we know that they did this study before we launched Beltone and Vision it was Not GN that they were comparing against.

It was compared against Phonak, Sphere and Finio, and they have actually come out and said that that was what it was comparing to. And so while they beat Sphero and Finio, since they did not test against us, we can't say that we would have done any poorer than they did. We were not in the study. Additionally, they say that they can deliver 22% better speech understanding. But again, this was against the Sphere, Infinio and not GN technology.

They have one model of RIE that offers classic Bluetooth, and this is a direct response to the Phonak line, which also competes against them in the va, especially because the VA tends to really like the classic Bluetooth models because they are so quick and easy to pair, even though we know that they come with disadvantages such as a larger device size and poorer battery life. That's the same true for the Signia IX that has this pure Bluetooth, classic Bluetooth model. Although they have better battery efficiency than Phonak, their device is larger than ours by a large margin. And then they also say they have the longest battery runtime of any rechargeable Superpower hearing aid. And this was kind of

their biggest claim when it came to their release of the new Superpowers at the end of 2025.

But you will see, just like we talked about with Phonak, that there's no standardization when it comes to manufacturers reporting their battery life. They can literally turn off different features, not include streaming, set it to a very mild hearing loss, all of which will make it look like you have a much favorable, more favorable battery runtime. But since it's a huge claim and they're talking about 65 hours on a single charge for a Superpower device, which is astounding, we wanted to check it out. So what we found, and this testing was done in our Copenhagen site, is that they're not really being transparent, first of all, in how they test it. We test it, and most other manufacturers will test it in variations of this with set standardizations of how you do it according to the standards.

But here on their spec sheets, they talk about how the battery runtime was based on first fit settings. So that's going to be low gain using 60% of the fitting range. That's not a whole lot. And a speech signal, which also doesn't tax the system at a very conversational level of input. So then they give a lot of caveats about.

It's always determined by battery quality, hearing loss, et cetera. Et cetera. And they are really just kind of trying to find the way to get the strongest claim here without a whole lot of attention to how real world usage is. We really want to make sure that when we bring these products to market for users that we're not over promising them, especially in terms of battery runtime when we can already provide 24 hours, which is astounding. So what we do is we test it more real world.

Like we test it in 10 different environments. Not just quiet, not just speech, but a whole different selection of environments, including difficult ones with noise. We run our hearing aids at a relevant hearing loss for the model. So not just a lower hearing loss, but a relevant one. We don't disable any features and that's how we guarantee all day battery life because we test it that way.

And we stand proudly with integrity knowing that we are delivering what we promise. Something I think is really, I'm really proud of that for our company. What should we watch out for? Signia battery life. They make a big claim, but we all know that that's not apples to apples.

And there's lots of caveats. They offer a rechargeable CIC and we do not. And they offer a Bluetooth classic model. Where we should challenge them is in hearing a noise, hearing all around. Just like Oticon and Phonak.

We bring unique advantages. They also do not have DNN right now and we do to reduce noise in the most intelligent AI way. Their feedback system restricts gain for Superpower devices, which is not a good thing when you need a lot of gain. And they do not offer Aura Cast yet. We also have a smaller receiver in the ear and Superpower bte.

Let's move on to Starkey. Starkey just launched a new product family in the last quarter called the Omega AI and they launched it in the receiver in the ear models and the custom models behind the ear to models are about three generations ago with the Evolve AI and we'll talk about those in the context of the Superpower comparison. I've also included the Edge AI which is one generation back from the Omega AI. And this is what or two generations back rather than. And they do have a rechargeable CIC that they still offer through that family.

One thing to note about Starkey, they put out products every year. They put out products really, really fast. And with that you can only expect incremental differences between the families because they are produced so quickly. Most companies let families live for a couple years, but Starkey's onto a new family Basically every single year. What they're talking about with the Omega AI is that they have extended deep neural network classification for environments, not just for noise reduction, but also for directionality.

And so that's their main headline. They're talking about how they use DNN based classification to be able to steer their directional settings. It's not removing noise, it's not denoising, it's nothing that's really that different in the directionality. Except for their classification system uses deep neural network processing. And that again is not the same level that we use when we remove noise with our denoising DNN noise reduction.

DNN is only being used as an aid to the steering to decide when they activate directionality. And furthermore, they don't have a four microphone beam forming response like we do, meaning that when they do turn on directionality, it's a much wider response, which means that they can't get the same level of signal to noise ratio benefit with their hearing aids that we can. They talk about some advantages in terms of 6.5dB and 70% improvement compared to all brands, but when you read the study, you find out that it was all based on modeling, basically theoretical, and results were not obtained with human testers. So this is not a real world claim. And you shouldn't be able to expect that kind of benefit in the real world since every time you test with humans it's not as perfect as when you tested on an AI based model.

And finally, they have a claim about 28% improvement in speech intelligibility. And this one was not including competitors. So again, we can't say how we would have done and up to 8dB signal to noise ratio improvement. But the 8dB signal to noise ratio improvement was not done with human testers. So again, if you don't have human testers, you don't really know what's happening in the real world.

And we're really proud to bring human testing when we talk about claims that are expected with our devices. In terms of the superpower offering, that is the EVOLV AI and the claims that come with it are from when it was launched in 2021. So these are some older claims and we have evolved so much past 2021 that it should be very easy to say, you know, 2021 technology really pales in comparison to what we can do now in 2026. Where should we watch out for? Starkey?

One thing that they do offer that we don't is health tracking technology in the devices, and this is largely fall detection and Health tracking. They even have like a translation tool that works with their app. So all of this is interesting and unique for them, but it is also taking a lot of processing power and taking away from their research and development from the thing that really brings people to a bell tone, which is to hear better. It's not that you go to a bell tone because you want to have a Fitbit on your ears. That might be a nice add on, but the real reason that brings you to a bell tone is that you are missing out at a conversation that you wanted to hear or you could didn't have fun at the party because you couldn't hear anybody and figure out what was going on around you because of the noise.

So that's why we haven't put health tracking technology into our devices. We know that there are Fitbits, Oura rings, there are smartwatches galore that will have this technology for a user. So let's focus on what we do best, which is helping people hear better. They also offer a wireless rechargeable CIC which we do not currently. And the size of their Superpower is smaller than our Beltone boostmax S. However, it doesn't quite have the same classification as a Superpower bte.

So it is a consideration. Where we win is hearing a noise and hearing all around again our number one benefit. I've said it before, you guys all know it by heart by now. This is what we can use against everyone in the field. We have a newer BTE and Superpower BTE offering than Starkey.

Their feedback system restricts gain, whereas ours does not. And we have smaller rics as well.

Let's end today with Widex, who only has a couple of models in their Allure family which came out last year. The most recent addition to this family was the ITC and the bte. So the Allure is very similar to the predecessor Widex Moment. What it does is it talks about sound quality, the Widex sound, and they're very proud of their second program, which has zero delay technology, meaning that the latency or the time it takes from the sound to enter the microphone and exit the receiver is very, very minimal. It's almost instantaneous.

And this is cool, except for it's only available in the second program. You can't put it in the first program. We know that users spend most of their life in the first program and only go to the second for special occasions. So when you look at their latency or the delay in the processing for their first program, you find that it is exactly the same as what Beltone offers. So in the first program we are matched with them for the delay or latency that they talk about.

This improvement to their second program only means that they added traditional directionality to microphone directionality, whereas before they just had Omni. And that's where they're getting that 4dB signal to noise ratio benefit. Because now it's not just only for quiet environments. It can be used in some noise, but it's not going to remove the noise like ours can. And there's no DNN in these devices either.

They talk about a 92% preference claim, but no competitors were involved in the testing. And they also have been talking about a dedicated streaming compressor. So there's no changes that are distracting between volume and interference. Well, we have mix and streaming and this helps with our transitions between non streamed and streamed inputs as well. So what should we watch out for?

Widex. The Widex sound, their processing is a little unique in that it doesn't sound like other hearing aids. So if you've got a user come into Beltone and they've been wearing the Widex, it may take them a little longer to acclimate to our sound quality. But that doesn't mean it's a bad thing, it's just that Widex process is different, it's hard to emulate through our settings. But if you can get the gains similar to what they had with a Widex and let them experience what Beltone technology is supposed to do, they will eventually get used to it and get the much better benefits for signal to noise ratio in noise that we can provide versus Widex.

Which leads us to our number one reason to challenge hearing in noise and hearing all around localization cues while still getting signal to noise ratio benefit in noise. We also have a very small RIE with DNN and they do not have DNN in their RIEs at all. And we offer AuraCast, whereas they have just started to offer Bluetooth low energy audio without Auracast.

We're almost to the end of the hour and that's what I'm going to leave you with this overview. I've covered a ton of things and if you were all just thinking where is the commonalities here? Where are places that we as Beltone succeed versus our competitors? This is the page for you. On the left you'll see a column regarding the things that matter most to users.

Hearing and noise, size and cosmetics, signal processing, delay, rechargeability, IP ratings. And then here on the right column is our elevator speech. Why Are we better than everyone else? Well, here's why. And without calling out any specific competitor, these are advantages and things that we can be proud of that we can say no matter what we're up against.

We have this both for Envision as well as for Beltone Boost Max S. Much of this is crossover between the Envision and the Boost Max S, but it is unique because we do believe that boostmax S users have unique needs, such as the need for very reliable feedback control. And this is highlighting some of the research that we have recently done with that as well. So I want to thank you so much for your time today and check and see if there's any questions for me from anyone here. And not seeing any questions yet. Feel free to write in or.

Or let me know if you have any questions. If not, I see we're at the end of our session and I want to thank you greatly for spending your time with me today. If you have any questions, you can email me@tcetendern.com and I'd be happy to chat with you. All right, well, thank you everyone for attending today's sessions. That concludes the course for today.

We hope you have a great afternoon. Thanks again, Dr. Stender. Thank you. Have a wonderful day,
Kimberly and everyone out there, take care. Bye.

Bye.