

Google wearable prototype evokes rocket ship chitchat

November 24 2015, by Nancy Owano

Those who trace Google understand that a better question than what will Google think of next is rather what won't Google think of next. Some thoughts turn into projects; others into realtime launches and, well, this one, courtesy of a *Time* article.

Amit Singhal, [senior vice president](#) of search at Google and a Star Trek fan, revealed a [prototype device](#) as part of a recent interview with *Time* that would resonate with Star Trek fans. Singhal's version reportedly consisted of a Bluetooth-enabled [lapel](#) pin, said *Android Headlines*.

Think Combadge, a communications device attached to the lapel that allowed crew members to talk to one another and the ship's computer. In science fiction, said *Time*, Captain Picard and his crew talked via lapel pins, to artificial intelligence and crew on Starship Enterprise.

Google made a prototype device based on this very design, to work as a communications device. *Time* described what they came up with: An object worn on the chest, activated with a [tap](#). The object is a black plastic circle. The prototype might output sound through an onboard speaker or by connecting to headphones, said *Time*.

Ron Amadeo in *Ars Technica* looked at the picture scored by *Time*: "In the close-up version, you can see holes for a speaker and a power light, along with what looks to be a tiny (and legally distinct from Star Trek) rocket [ship](#)."

According to *TechSpot*, "The black circular wearable features a speaker, microphone, power [light](#) and what's likely a button of some sort under Singhal's fingers to activate communications. The device can use Bluetooth to send commands to another mobile device, Singhal said."

Why did the Google team do this? The concept was intended to test how might users interact with voice search in new ways. Can the use of communication devices be easier than involving rummaging in pockets or bags for cellphones?

Time said: "The company is trying to redefine the way people access information through voice search, which is getting more adept at understanding natural language, as well as Google Now, a predictive service that tries to surface valuable information for users before they even think to search for it."

The [device](#), has not left the testing phase, said *Time*. (It's not clear why Google decided against further production of the wireless communicator, said Shawn Knight in *TechSpot*.)

Apparently Singhal has been walking around for a long time with a thought about how to make [voice search](#) a more natural part of everyday life with less gadgets to make it work.

In 2012, *Digital Spy* reported on his thoughts about voice queries.

"Singhal claims that in the future everyday appliances could respond to user queries without the need to input them via a computer keyboard or mobile handset.

Digital Spy quoted Singhal. "You have to pull out your phone. You have to unlock the phone. You have to type. Already you have lost valuable seconds and the conversation has become unnatural and [awkward](#)."

Singhal had added, "I would make a bold prediction that in the next three to five years you will have a Star Trek assistant, with a lot more capability than your phone has now. We have built baby steps of this already."

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