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Winning the Bluetooth Wars

WINNING THE BLUETOOTH WARS

When Apple introduced their AirPod Bluetooth earbuds a few years ago, a major player emerged onto the burgeoning Bluetooth audio scene. But that scene wasn't new: Earbuds, headphones, and speakers can all utilize Bluetooth tech, with every manufacturer jumping into the pool. But as anyone over 30 can tell you, Bluetooth was originally a wireless headset product, not a type of connectivity. And that's raising questions about the viability of the Bluetooth market as well as the future of the current war for customer dollars in the market.

Bluetooth audio tech was designed to wirelessly connect your phone with an in-ear speaker and tiny headset. But spoken-word audio isn't the same thing as a vibrant musical experience with a range of high and low sounds, depth, and bass. You wouldn't want to listen

to a concert through your cellphone; in the same way, Bluetooth isn't set up to transmit music to a speaker, headphone, or earbud. Manufacturers have developed workarounds, and the quality of their work determines how good (or bad) the end result sounds. Bluetooth is obviously capable of a lot more than it was designed for, and its near universality makes it an attractive choice.

But it still wasn't *designed* for music.

What does that mean for most listeners? Likely not very much — if a good manufacturer made your headphones or speakers, their clever workarounds to the "Bluetooth problem" will likely mean little decrease in quality compared to "wired" options. Most of us can't tell the difference. But for true audio fidelity, we still have to hook up with



a cable. And as manufacturers vie for market share, a smart company that designs a brand-new wireless tech based around music instead of talk could gain much — and leave Bluetooth behind in the process. And whoever does that will be the *real* winner of the Bluetooth wars.



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May 2021

Our Runner's Dream Comes True

Meet Midge, Our Family's First Dog!



I'll never forget the moment my youngest daughter, Monica, met her dog for the first time. It happened in the back of our family Suburban in the parking lot of the William P. Hobby Airport, and it was the sweetest thing I've ever seen in a rear-view mirror. But I'm getting ahead of myself! Before I tell you about that moment in 1994, I should probably share the story of how Midge, Monica's German shepherd pup, came to be in our SUV.

As a kid, Monica was a cross-country runner and she loved to run on the bike paths around our house. For years, she begged me and Kaye for a dog as a running companion. It took us a while to come around to the idea, but eventually we agreed. Instead of telling Monica, though, we reached out to Kaye's sister, who raised German shepherds in Wisconsin.

"Do you have any puppies for sale?" we asked.

"Well, I do have one!" she said, "She's almost 6 months old and she was the runt of the litter, so you can have her for free if you pay the shipping costs for me to send her to Texas."

As easy as that, Midge (short for "Midget") was ours. We timed her arrival to coincide with a three-day family beach vacation to Galveston just before

Christmas and came up with an elaborate plan to surprise the girls.

Before our beach trip, we told each of our daughters they could take one Christmas present along and open it early. There was just one catch: Kaye and I got to pick the present. We wrapped up Walkman cassette players for Shelley and Dana and a shoebox for Monica. Inside was a leash, a brush, and a book on how to take care of a dog.

Kaye and I couldn't wait to see Monica's reaction, so on our first night in Galveston, we handed the girls their present. Shelley opened her gift first, followed by Dana. They were both excited about their Walkmans, and I could tell Monica was sure she'd get a cassette player, too. When she opened the shoebox, her face fell.

"What is this?" she asked, "They get Walkmans and I just get a stupid leash and hairbrush? We don't even have a dog!"

Her sisters crowded around to look in the box, and the realization hit them.

"Monica, don't you know what this means?!" they shouted. "We're getting a dog!"

The look on Monica's face was priceless, and she hasn't lived down her initial reaction to this day. The next morning,

the five of us piled into the Suburban and headed to the airport to pick up Midge.

As soon as I got to baggage claim I could see the dog's shipping crate and her little nose and paws peeking out between the bars. But Monica couldn't say a proper hello until the airport worker carried the crate to the trunk of our car. As soon as he closed the trunk and I got back in the driver's seat, 14-year-old Monica climbed over all three rows of seats and opened the crate door. Midge crawled right into her lap, and they bonded immediately!

For the next 10 years, Midge was the whole family's dog, but she was Monica's best friend. Often when Kaye and I went to Monica's room to check on her during high school, we'd find her asleep on her bed with Midge sprawled across her, snoozing. Midge lived up to her name and never grew beyond 45 pounds. She was the sweetest, smartest, most obedient dog, and even 15 years later, her name still comes up in family conversation at Christmas time. These days, Kaye and I have a different pet — a cranky 17-year-old cat. But his hijinks are a story for another time.

Happy National Pet Month!

4

MEET JUSTIN SOLIZ OF HTX MOLD CONSULTING SERVICES

One of Houston's Top Mold Experts

Two years ago, I took a class on asbestos inspection here in Houston and ended up sitting next to another expert in the field: mold assessment consultant Justin Soliz. Justin owns the local company HTX Mold Consulting and has more than 15 years of experience in insurance adjusting, restoration, and forensic reviews of buildings with problems. He's also a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and a member of the state advisory board for the Texas division that licenses mold consultants. He is also one of the most hardworking men I've met in the indoor air quality field.

Over his time in the industry offering mold inspection, testing, and remediation, Justin has seen a lot. One building he'll never forget inspecting was a 500,000-square-foot internet hosting facility in Wichita, Kansas.

"We were referred by a national mold remediation contractor to come in and do the assessment," Justin remembers. "We were the third company brought in — the first two didn't address the mold issue. ... Once we did our walk-through, we realized the exterior walls of the building were failing. They were allowing a moisture intrusion that wasn't drying and, in turn, causing mold growth on the exterior walls inside of the building."

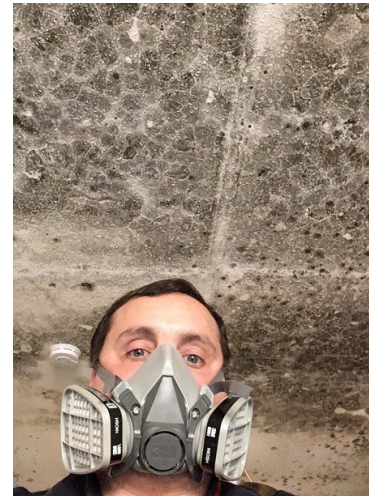
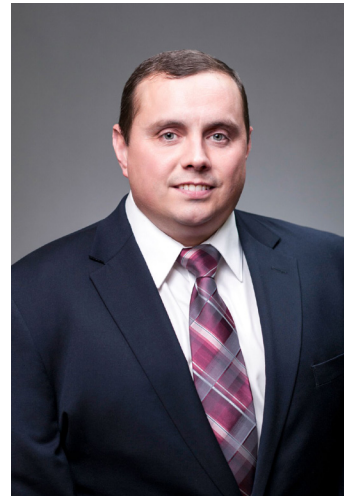
As you can imagine, the 300 software engineers working in the building weren't happy!

"They wanted to know what type of mold, the cause, any health effects that could arise. Obviously, from our inspection reports, we determined the building was unhealthy and their health could be affected if they had a compromised immune system or were in direct contact with these areas of mold growth. After we put together our remediation protocol ... [and the work] started, they realized it would cost more than the building was worth! They ended up condemning the building and the project ceased."

That's just one example of Justin's inspection skills protecting people's health. Since starting his company in 2017, he has worked on commercial, residential, and multifamily properties in Texas and seven other states.

Like me, he also fights back against all of the phony, badly researched, and over-hyped indoor air quality products that have popped up to address mold. UV lights and HEPA filters, he says, are often ineffective Band-Aids masking more serious mold issues.

"Find out what is causing that problem, then fix it; don't add a new air filter or UV light. As we like to say, that's basically



putting a screen door on a submarine," he says, noting that when he conducted an at-home test with one of these UV lights, he found no reduction in mold spores after 21 days of use.

On the day we met, Justin and I discovered that we share clients, projects, and a similar work ethic. Now when I need another experienced mind on a project involving mold, Justin is one of the people I can call. The feeling is mutual.

"I probably contact Travis once a week just to pick his brain on things he has done and seen in the past," Justin says.

Not long ago, the two of us worked together to inspect a 1-year-old, mold-riddled fire department building in South Houston. I provided the high-tech, aggressive testing equipment and Justin lent his mold expertise; together, we came up with a 60-plus page remediation plan that would save the building.

To find out more about Justin's work, expertise, and why I trust him, visit HTXMoldConsulting.com.



Travis West

CONNECTING YOUR EMPLOYEES TO YOUR MISSION

Making Your Passions Their Passions

Your business might be doing well, but if your workforce doesn't feel any sort of personal connection to your business's mission, that could prevent lasting success. You want to boost employee morale and make them happy about their work. To reinvigorate your employees' passion for your business's mission, try a few of these tips.

WALK THE TALK.

Patagonia CEO Yvon Chouinard decided to make his products out of organic cotton after he saw how industrially grown cotton was hurting the environment. It cost more to do that, but he stuck to Patagonia's mission of creating environmentally friendly products. If you're not willing to sacrifice for your mission, then it's not your mission — and your employees will know it.

MAKE IT CLEAR.

Make sure everyone at your company knows exactly what your mission is. Only when employees have a clear understanding of the goal can they actually abide by it. If your mission statement can be interpreted in multiple ways, clarify it throughout all levels of your business.

SPEAK PASSIONATELY ABOUT IT.

While you want the mission itself to be exciting, even the most intriguing of mission statements will be DOA if your delivery doesn't convey your excitement. Humans are emotional creatures, so connecting with your employees emotionally in regard to your mission is just as important as the mission itself.



MAKE IT PERSONAL.

While you might think tying your personal story to the company's mission seems narcissistic, the truth is that your team wants to hear your story. People like stories, and if you can convey yours with honesty and humility, no one will think you're an egoist.

RE-WORK IT.

If your mission doesn't seem to be inspiring passion in your workforce, then maybe it's time to tweak it a little bit. Whether you're just starting in business or have had the same mission statement for 10 years, a new mission lived out, made clear, and made personal by you can spark a newfound appreciation for your business among your employees.

SUDOKU

HAVE A LAUGH WITH TRAVIS



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