





# Air to the Throne

We've set ourselves a little quiz. The question is: how many of the products that we've covered, over all those issues, have truly impacted upon our own working lives?

Think about that for a second or two. How long would your list be? Ours scaled from two to seven – and the majority of us thought seven was slightly ridiculous. Even the harshest critic amongst us has recently upped that figure by one, however, having tried and tested aircharge's amazing products.

A new division of ergo, aircharge, has developed a range of wireless charging solutions for the office, home and public spaces. aircharge products allow users to charge devices at their desk, during a meeting or in public spaces such as cafés, restaurants and shopping malls, bringing power to the user and freeing them from using cables or hunting around for power sockets. And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Having used the products ourselves, we can see a myriad of further possibilities, from hotel rooms and showrooms, through to planes, trains and automobiles. ergo Managing Director Steve Liquorish is in complete agreement. 'There are now about 65 phones on the market with the technology built in,' Steve reveals. 'The new Samsung S5, Nokia Lumia 930 and the new Google Nexus, for example, both support it.'

Wireless charging is an emerging technology whereby a magnetic field in the charger transfers power to a receiver (embedded within your device, or one of the accessory cases) when placed on top – without the use of any cables.

aircharge is a member of the Wireless Power Consortium (WPC) and is, in fact, its 200th member. Members aim to have one global standard for wireless charging that makes all wireless chargers compatible with all phones and battery operated products. 'There has been a bit of a Betamax/VHS issue going on up until a few watershed moments, which happened halfway through last year,' Steve admits. 'As I've already said, there are, as of today, some 65 handset manufacturers who support this standard. There are two main current carriers in the US – Verizon and AT&T. Verizon has just bought into this standard, while AT&T has decided to look into supporting another 'standard' – and there are zero phones on the market that support the other standard.'

'The pendulum has swung firmly in the direction of the standard we are supporting

when the automotive industry decided to support this standard – Qi technology. There is a conglomerate which was formed when Bluetooth and other technologies came along – and they said 'If we're not careful the automotive industry is going to get extremely confused with the communication of electronic devices in cars' – otherwise we could have had a situation where one was using Bluetooth, another Redtooth and another Yellowtooth!

'If you compare this technology to Bluetooth, that took approximately six years from when it first emerged in a few handsets until we all fully expected it to be built into devices. Google are not stupid people – and if they and the people at Nokia are building this into their devices already, then you can expect this technology to grow extremely quickly. We showed at 100% Design last year and we had a number of people come onto the stand with their Nokia handsets who didn't even realise that their products were already wireless charge enabled.'

'The WPC, which includes the likes of Samsung, Nokia, HTC and Phillips, is now ►



▶ rolling out this uniform standard. There are already some 40 million plus devices already wirelessly enabled. There are over 500 different consumer electronic devices available – for example, in Japan, Panasonic recently showcased a camcorder, which has a battery pack that sits straight onto the wireless charger.’

Steve tells us that the major phone carriers – such as Vodafone and EE – are now showing considerable interest, and are looking to integrate the technology into their own

showrooms – which makes perfect sense, of course, when showing off the benefits of the latest handsets. The networks want to support any opportunity to power up your devices. When you think about it, if you run out of power at midday, you’re not going to be downloading data, you’re not going to be sending texts – so they want us to keep people’s devices charged.’

Before we go any further, we should tell you about the products themselves. aircharge

products include a drop-in wireless surface charger; designed to fit standard 80mm grommets, the charger can be retrofitted and, with the use of a standard 80mm drill piece, can be easily applied to areas within the workplace such as reception/breakout areas.

Then there is ergo’s KONCEPT LED task lighting, which is available with aircharge wireless charging integrated into the base.

A number of new smartphones and tablets already have wireless charging compatible technology built in as standard. Steve hopes this technology will continue to be built into more devices in the future. However, for now, accessory cases can be used as handy, clever fix. Wireless charging cases for the iPhone 4 and 5 are as light, tactile and durable as any case people may already use, and enables you to experience all those lovely benefits of wireless charging. Furthermore, there is even a clever little dongle (wireless charging receiver), which allows those without compatible devices to tap into the aircharge experience.

And it doesn’t stop there, as Steve explains. ‘We’ve also developed a nylon version of the pad, which is a totally sealed unit – so if you put it into a bar or a coffee shop and spill a drink, it won’t be a problem.’

We will also, as Steve alluded to a little earlier, be able to charge our devices in our cars. The technical committee of automobile manufactures, CE4A, has endorsed Qi as the ▶





- ▶ worldwide charging standard for passenger cars. From this year, for example, Mercedes-Benz will be introducing this Qi technology into its vehicle range. ‘The technology will be built into the centre console,’ Steve explains. ‘Already Toyota and Jeep have compatible models, while BMW, Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche have all announced that they have models coming out with this technology on their options list.’

Being the Apple-obsessed geeks that we are, we can’t help but notice that Steve hasn’t mentioned Johnny Ive’s crew. ‘Apple devices are currently being catered for by after-market cases,’ he tells us. ‘Nobody knows exactly what they are going to do yet – we’ll have to wait until the next generation iPhone. They’re very clever people, obviously, and we hope they’ll come on board.’

The aircharge products are already on show in ergo’s London Showroom, The Gallery, on Great Sutton Street, and, we are told, due to make a ‘charge’ throughout the borough for CDW. ‘We’ve decided to use Clerkenwell as a hub,’ Steve reveals, ‘to roll this technology out into cafes, bars, showrooms etc, a bit like the Cloud worked and spread. We’d really like this to rollout, and for Clerkenwell to become a more permanent hub for the technology.’

We cannot wait for the future – and we think the future might be now! ●

