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'Gadget Guard' Looks to Protect More Than Just Your Phone with Antenna 'ALARA' Technology

In an interview with Grit Daily News, Gentry Jensen, the CEO of Penumbra, the parent company to Gadget Guard, discussed the company's integration of antenna technology into its cases and screen protectors.

But for a company known for its resilient, impactful Gadget Guard line of products, why expand into the realm of antenna technology? Back in 2011, the company identified with screen protection technology, with Jensen managing the Gadget Guard brand, building up a presence in the indirect specialty retail channels and dealer phone stores for screen protectors.

"We had been cruising along on that plan," Jensen told Grit Daily. "Around 2016 or so, we started to realize that 'hey, this is good, and this has been nice, but if we really want to take a quantum leap forward and step our game up, we probably need to think about doing something strategic either in terms of new channels or new markets, going overseas, or new products that are differentiated.'"

Joining forces with L Catterton, the largest consumer-products-focused private equity firm in the world, Penumbra has turned its attention to ALARA technology with respect to mobile antennas.

'ALARA,' an acronym that Jensen said they borrowed from the nuclear radiation field, stands for "As Low As Reasonably Achievable," when talking about connectivity and radiation. "L Catterton had invested in ALARA technology, which is the use of external antenna to enhance the phone's performance or its health benefits," Jensen explained.

Jensen told Grit Daily that in their attempts at being pragmatic, they are "not saying that it is feasible to reduce the radiation down to zero and maintain connectivity," but rather, "reducing it from its current levels—VR technology, to a more reasonable level."

That technology, according to the CEO, could be licensed to other entities, especially with mobile cases and screen protectors.

But, how does knowledge with screen protection translate into antenna technology? Jensen pointed to companies like AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint.

"From the disparate side, on the screen protection side, we just wanted to get the company to the point where we felt we were the recognized brand in the authorized retailer channel for specialty mobile, which is a long way of saying we wanted to be the go-to screen protector for guys that owned AT&T, Verizon, and Sprint stores, operating under those licenses but not necessarily owned by the company or the corporate-owned retail. When we started to get to that point, based on the numbers and size of the market that we saw, and figured out we were getting to the lion's share of that market, we had to try and be strategic about the next step. That is what got us looking."

The founding vision for the antenna technology, according to Jensen, is that there isn't conclusive evidence that cell phones are harmful and cause cancer, despite what rumors and news reports have pointed to.

"However, there is ample evidence to give rise to legitimate concern about having something that is radiating a signal pressed up against your brain for a long period of time at regular intervals," Jensen emphasized. "The antenna technology is the most elegant solution for mitigating that issue without causing other issues, like degrading a signal or actually, as is the case with a brute force solution of a shield, placing an actual physical barrier between your head and the phone, causing the phone to work harder to burn through that shielding mechanism and keep the phone connected to the call, causing more problems."

By penetrating this market, Penumbra believes that this technology provides a viable, noninvasive, non-disruptive solution to give people peace of mind when they are using their phones.

Beth McFadden, an account manager with LexisNexis, has been a long-time user of the Gadget Guard line. "They maintain a strong focus on quality, particularly with packaging," she told us. You can see the time and effort spent on the design, which is innovative and eye-catching."

Penumbra, which has labs in San Diego, led by their CTO, Ryan McCaughey, who has a Ph.D. in antenna engineering, has third-party data validated by completely independent authorities, revealing that on average, its line of cases reduce the SAR, or Specific Absorption Rate of energy emitted by the phone and absorbed by the body, by two-thirds. Jensen told Grit Daily, this plays into the company's millennial consumer-base.

In managing its intellectual property, Penumbra hopes to brand it all with ALARA technology, licensing it to other entities. "In other words, the cases will be Gadget Guard with ALARA technology."

Just a few months ago, the company released its Black Ice Cornice FLEX Edition, a curved flexible display guard with ultra-sonic finger print compatibility.