

# MILO

It all started with wanting to keep tabs on his kids racing down the ski slopes, says engineer Dr Peter Celinski.



Fact file

**Founder** Dr Peter Celinski, 46

**Investors** XT Ventures, Foxconn and multiple Silicon Valley angels

**First customers** Milo began shipping globally in 2022

**Headquarters** Loose Cannon Systems Inc is based in San Francisco, with staff in Sydney, Melbourne, Seattle, Boston and Copenhagen

**Staff** 16

Interview by Jane Nicholls

**What’s your elevator pitch?**

“I wanted to reimagine the walkie-talkie experience and create a product people would use, not reluctantly out of necessity but because it makes their shared outdoor adventures better. We call the Milo Action Communicator the ‘GoPro of walkie-talkies’ – a simple device that doesn’t require the user to stop and push a button to talk and delivers clear audio, even in extreme conditions: high wind, noise, freezing cold and rain. It can go underwater, too – but you can’t talk then. It seems simple but inside each Milo is a computer, similar to what’s inside a smartphone.”

**How did the idea come about?**

“I learnt to ski late in life and very quickly my young kids became better skiers than me. I found myself trying to follow them down one of the diamond ski runs at Whistler in Canada and they disappeared through the trees. I followed them, shouting and waving my arms, and thought there had to be a better way to communicate when adventuring outdoors. There was nothing on the market enabling communication in the moment.”

**What was the problem you were trying to solve?**

“I wanted to be sure it was a problem, not something I was imagining. People’s reaction was mixed, which

is great because if it’s obvious then there’s no opportunity. Some people said, ‘You can just use your phone’, and I was like, ‘Have you ever tried to use your phone when you’re skiing or riding a bike?’”

**How did you get it off the ground?**

“I have a PhD in electronic engineering and am a technology entrepreneur with experience in wireless networking and audio product development. I was with my previous company until the end of 2018 so it was evenings and weekends tinkering with a couple of other engineers. The key was to build something that was simple and people could use to communicate clearly while they were moving. We built

algorithms to filter out wind noise. We wanted people to be able to banter, rather than have to take turns, so we built a protocol in the software to deal with the voice-data distribution. The range between two Milos is about 600 metres but as a group of three or more spreads out, they create a network.”

**How did you convince investors?**

“I learnt in my first company that you need to find a serious customer fast. We signed an agreement with our distributor very early – they were confident of wide interest from retailers, which allowed us to find a manufacturer. We met electronics manufacturer Foxconn and it also became a strategic investor, which

meant we could raise more capital, hire people and start developing the idea. In late 2020, when we were close to something that was production-ready, we launched a Kickstarter that in 37 days took AU\$4 million in pre-orders from around the world.”

**What’s next?**

“Milo – named after the son of one of our earliest investors – was among *Time* magazine’s Best Inventions in 2022. It’s exciting to see the diversity of the communicator’s users: surfers, skiers, mountain bikers, kayakers, golfers, sailors, road cyclists, e-scooter riders, sports coaches. We also have interest from the construction, mining, oil and gas industries and hospitals.”



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