

# PODCAST Episode 452

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

White Cane Week, Ambutech, mobility canes, customization, No-Jab cane, Pathfinder Tip, customer service, product innovation, cane materials, Canadian winter, O&M instructors, disability legislation, smart canes, assistive technology, low vision.

## SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Ryan Fleury, Mellyssa Lyght, Rob Mineault

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Rob Mineault 00:16

Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter,



Steve Barclay 00:20

Banter, banter.



Rob Mineault 00:21

Hey, this is of course the pod - that was a very, that was a really, really well, well struck cowbell this morning.




Ryan Fleury 00:31


Thank you.




Rob Mineault 00:31


I have to say, yeah.


 Steve Barclay 00:33  
You've been practicing,


 Rob Mineault 00:35  
yeah, I think he has. I think he has, that resonance on that was just ...

 Steve Barclay 00:40  
I hear it's all on the follow through..

 Rob Mineault 00:42  
Well, you might have to give us lessons at some point. Hey, this is, of course, the podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault, and joining me today as you can well, here it's Mr. Ryan Fleury.

 Ryan Fleury 01:05  
That's master of the cowbell to you.

 Rob Mineault 01:08  
it is master of the cowbell. And of course, what AT Banter podcast would be complete without Mr. Steve Barclay?

 Steve Barclay 01:17  
Oh, hundreds of them.

R

Rob Mineault 01:19

Yeah. Well, actually, that's true. I guess. But whatever, not today, not today. How are you gentlemen, today?

S

Steve Barclay 01:29

Oh, just dandy.

R

Rob Mineault 01:31

Hey, can I share something real quick before we get started? Because I'm excited about today's show. But before we get started, I got to share this, this really weird Chat-GPT story with you guys, you know, since we talked all about AI and CES last week, but it was just the weirdest experience. So one of the things that I really love about Chat-GPT, and what I use it a lot for, is organizing stuff, you know, being able to just, you know, give it a bunch of data, and then being able to pull things out of that data. It's so much quicker with Chat-GPT and over at Blind Beginnings, you know, we do this Blindness 101 Workshop every once in a while, and we have all the participants fill out evaluation forms, and then they write on them, and then they submit them. And so usually I have this stack of evaluation forms that I have to go through, and we're, you know, collecting the data, you're seeing what we can improve and what people are saying about the workshop after the fact. And so what I generally would do is I would, I would take a picture of each evaluation form, and then upload those into Chat-GPT, and then ask it to compile and analyze the results. And, you know, analyze the handwriting. It's always really good. It can, you know, take chicken scratch handwriting and actually translate it pretty well. So anyways, I do this yesterday, and I had had 14 forms. So I take a picture of each, I upload it in the Chat-GPT, and, you know, get it to do this way. And I've done this, you know, multiple times before in the past six months, and it starts spitting back the results to me. And it starts, it keeps talking about the 20 evaluation forms that I've given it kept doing this after a few results I was like, okay, this is weird. So I stopped, and I was like, hey, how many, how many evaluation forms did I upload to you? And I was like, 20. And I was like can you recount that? Just, just recount that for me. And it's like, it came back and was like oh, wow. I'm really sorry, which always cracks me up whenever Chat-GPT apologizes for itself. It's like you're totally right, Rob. You uploaded 16. What? And so I was like, really? And so now I'm arguing with Chat-GPT, and it would not budge. It was like, no, you have uploaded 16 evaluation forms and here's, here's the data. And it was the most weird thing like to be gaslit by Chat-GPT. And I know that. And then, so now I'm like, Well, okay, now I can't really trust any of the outputs it's gonna be because if it can't get the count right, like, what else is it going to get wrong, or just make up? Insist that that it's there, and it just, it really sort of shakes your trust in what it's outputting when it makes such a fundamental error. So I don't know, it's kind of shook me a little bit. And it's like, well, now I've got a, you know, I've kind of kind of got to check its work. And so I guess now, the way that I'm looking at Chat-GPT, it's like having a fairly intelligent third grader as an assistant. It's great, it can do some, put out some impressive work, but you gotta, you kind of always got to check it.

R

Rob Mineault 01:31

Yeah, yeah. A lot of lawyers have discovered that going into court with citations that have been dug up by Chat-GPT.

R

Rob Mineault 04:35

And I get, I get hallucinations and all that stuff has always been a thing, but, like, a count where, like, really, you can't count 14 evaluation forms, like, and then, just to be so, so confident about it. It's like, no, nope, nope. You're wrong. Rob.

R

Rob Mineault 04:45

More and more I keep hearing about the errors and issues that people are having with Chat-GPT, and I keep hearing more switching over to Gemini because they're getting better results.

R

Rob Mineault 05:34

Well, I think that the interesting thing about this is that I've never seen a technology like that. It's kind of roller coaster. I really do feel like six months ago they were better, the models were better, and now they're kind of worse. And I don't know if there are technical, you know, reasons for that, whether it's just the computing power that that's needed to drive all these models is catching up with them, and so they're not quite as good, or they're limiting its capability. Actually purposefully, like, sort of dialing it back because, because of the social concerns of it's if it gets too good that that can be a problem. So I don't know what's going on, but it's just, it's weird.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:17

It's weird on a paid plan.

R

Rob Mineault 06:21

So I don't know, weird,

S

Steve Barclay 06:24

I run into similar stuff, like, I fed it a PDF the other day, one of the things I commonly do is I feed it a manufacturer's price list, and I give it the PDF from the manufacturer, and I give it our Excel spreadsheet that's got our pricing calculations on it, and I say, Hey, can you go through these products and find where the products match up? Is this column and this column the same, or is it changed? And it just gives me a quick way to parse through price list to see when prices have changed and stuff. So I uploaded a PDF to it and says, Oh, okay, well, let's extract the information from that. And it goes and extracts the information from it, and then it starts doing the comparison, and it's not lining stuff up properly, so I'm sitting there trying to get it to line stuff up, and that's not working. So I decided, Okay, I'm going to do it all over again. So I upload the same PDF to it, and I say, okay, you know, compare it to this. And so we can't extract the information from that PDF. It's like, what it's like? No, no, we can't extract information from a PDF.

R

Ryan Fleury 07:20

And how much time did you waste trying to do that?

S

Steve Barclay 07:24

But you just did it. Why are you telling me you can't do it? You literally just did it. Yeah, yeah. It gets into strange, strange little glitches. But I figure what the problem is that it's learning from social media, and it's actively getting dumber,

R

Rob Mineault 07:38

And that could be the more the more human knowledge it absorbs the stupider it gets. There you go. Well, anyways, anyways, that's a whole other podcast episode. We go on for an hour talking about AI, and we probably will at some future episode. But that is not why we have gathered here today. So without any more ado, let's get started. Hey, Steve?

S

Steve Barclay 08:05

Yeah, Rob?

R

Rob Mineault 08:06

What week is it?

S

Steve Barclay 08:08

What week is it? Yeah, it's, it's the last week of January.

R

Rob Mineault 08:14

Okay, wait, okay, what week is it like? Next week?

S

Steve Barclay 08:17

Oh, well, next week, it's gonna be White Cane Week.

R

Rob Mineault 08:21

It is, it is. As people are listening to this, it is White Cane Week. And we wanted to do, I don't know, something, something to recognize White Cane Week. So what, Steve, have we decided to do?

S

Steve Barclay 08:37

Well, you know, to be honest, after all these years, I'm kind of surprised we haven't done this before, but today we are going to have Mellyssa Lyght, who is a senior customer service rep at Ambutech, as well as a buyer for Ambutech. She is coming on to talk all things white canes with us.

M

Mellyssa Lyght 08:58

Thank you very much for having me.

R

Rob Mineault 09:00

I like Steve. I am actually kind of shocked that we haven't. We're whatever, 10 years into this, and we've, we've never thought of this before, so that just goes to show you that we're, we're no better than Chat-GPT where we are, like a bunch of third graders as well around here.

M

Mellyssa Lyght 09:14

Okay, the timing's perfect. It works out anyway,

R

Rob Mineault 09:20

Well, maybe, maybe just to get the ball, the ball rolling, a bit of a warm up question. Just to start off, maybe tell our listeners a little bit about about what you do over there at Ambutech, and what you know what a typical day looks like for you.

M

Mellyssa Lyght 09:35

So, yeah, at Ambutech, here, we manufacture the canes for the blind. We're in about 80 different countries. We take orders from around the world with limitless varieties of tips and canes. We have a lot of our products built and designed by low vision individuals so basically what you're getting is a product that has been either tested or designed by someone who is also a cane user, which is really neat. We have the widest variety of products in the world, in the market, and we do also have the widest reach so far. We keep on trying to increase that reach, and we try to get into another country. Every so often we we break open a new market. So, yeah, it's, it's a really nice place to work. We're very small. Lots of people think that we are this massive company. There's two of us on the order desk right now, with a third coming in so and we take care of 1000s customers every, I would say, every week, every month, we enter orders from one cane to 1000 canes, whatever people need. That's what we're here for.

S

Steve Barclay 10:53

You actually did a tour of your your facility a number of years back, probably a decade ago and you are a division of Mellit Plastics. Can you tell folks a little bit about what Mellit Plastics does?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 11:12

Sure, yeah. So Mellit Plastics is an injection molding company. They have been around, I want to say, since 1968. Now another company has it, but we they do the injection molding part. Ambutech was a sister company, and now we are our own incorporated business. Ambutech has been around since 1989 and, yeah, we just it started out with support canes, actually, and it grew slowly into mobility canes for the blind and everything's made in-house and made to order.

S

Steve Barclay 11:57

It's crazy that that it's only been since 89 that's that's really interesting, because you guys have such a huge chunk of the market share in Canada, for sure. Like, what, what kind of market share Do you have worldwide?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 12:13

To be quite honest with you, I couldn't even begin to tell you. I want to say we have most of it just because of the variety of canes that we offer and the customization options that we offer as well, I think there's a handful, maybe five or six companies that I'm familiar with that are also manufacturers of canes, and their reach within their region is very strong. I know there's a couple of competitors in the United States as well that they're going online with Amazon and that sort of thing and breaking into those markets, but I still think that we have a very good reach on the commute, the blind community, and part of it is our customer service too. Like we don't have any robots or anything like that, or people talking on a machine, you're talking to an actual human. So it's still that person to person contact, which is really, really nice.

S

Steve Barclay 13:08

So no plans to incorporate chat GPT into the operation?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 13:12

Not at this time, unless we're dealing with an an irate customer or something, and we want to really make sure we don't make the situation worse. Then we might break into that.

R

Rob Mineault 13:24

So, so given that you you talk with with cane users every day they're putting in orders and stuff, what are, what are some of the more common questions that people will come to you at when they're when they're ordering their canes?



M**Mellyssa Lyght 13:39**

I guess the main questions would be timeline. So how long is it going to take for me to get a product? So the the lead time within Canada and the United States is about two weeks for delivery. We use UPS for most of our deliveries, and we have about a week to make the cane order. We try to make it less. And then UPS takes about four to five days for delivery, and that's anywhere in Canada or the US, for European orders, or Asia, that sort of thing. Anywhere else in the world, it's about 10 to 15 days for delivery. That would be our, our longest lead time. So that would be the most commonly asked question is, how long does it take to get the product? And then the other the other question would be, what do you have new? And so we would tell them, anything that we have new right now, our newest cane is the No-Jab cane, which has a spring in the handle, and so it's a shock absorber. So when if you're walking, if you want run into a curb or something or a right angle. It's not going to jab you in the stomach, like a lot of the other canes do. This one will actually absorb the shock to give you that more reaction time so that you can recover and align yourself where you're not going to be running into that curb again. Our newest product for a tip would be our Pathfinder Tip. It's a 360 degree tip. It rolls in all directions. It's a bit larger than our rolling ball tip, and has two halves that run on a on an axis. And we found it's really, really well. So far, the durability is really, really good. And people either they either really love it or they really don't like it. It is a bit heavier, but it rules very smoothly on the ground.

S**Steve Barclay 15:24**

We've been showing the No-Jab cane in our office for quite a while now, and people are just really thrilled with it. And it's funny, because it's, it's such a such a good idea, and it's one of those things that you look at and you go, why didn't we think of that before?

M**Mellyssa Lyght 15:38**

Yeah, yeah. It was actually made by a blind cane user in the States, John McAteer, he actually created the No-Jab cane. And said, hey, look, you guys need to make this. And we said, Okay, let's see what we can do. And now, yeah, it's one of our best selling items.

R**Rob Mineault 15:56**

Do you do you sort of see this as possibly down the road becoming the new standard, because it also seems like one of those things is like this should just be the base foundation of any cane.

M**Mellyssa Lyght 16:09**

Oh, absolutely. I think it's going to progress further as we go on and as more customers are ordering the canes and looking at the canes and what they need for everyday life. I mean, our slogan is mobility, the mobile way of life. So, I mean, we want to make sure that all of our items are going to fall under that slogan, and they're going to be designed for people who are going to need them. I can't see that the No-Jab cane will ever go away. If anything, yeah, it would definitely progress to whatever else we can do with it, or bringing it into more products.

R**Rob Mineault 16:45**

So it's interesting. The sense that I'm getting is that, is that innovation is sort of very, very key for you guys. Because, you know, honestly, like, it's just a mobility cane it's a mobility cane, but you guys are really taking it farther, you know, in developing the No-Job in developing all of these, all of these different types of tips, and even, you know, and we'll talk about this a little bit later, but even the form factor and the materials of a variety of different canes. Can you talk to a little bit about how important innovation is when it comes to developing the Ambutech canes?

M**Mellyssa Lyght 17:29**

It's very important, especially for us, to keep our position in the market if you don't have if you're not going to be moving with the times and creating product that people want now, not what people wanted 10 years ago. You have to keep an open mind on what people are wanting, what people are looking for, and what they're interested in, if they're if you don't have those sorts of things, then you kind of get stuck like, you know, there's a couple of companies that just refused to progress with their items, and you can see that some of those customers are coming to us because we do have the new items. We do have the variety and choices. I mean, even our grips, where we have the leather grip for the no jab cane, which a lot of people they would rather have that than, say, a textured golf grip. It's all just customer preference. But, yeah, we try to keep an open mind and take every idea as something that we should consider, because it's it's not necessarily us using the canes. It's our customers. That's what we're here for, us, for our customers. So we may as well be making products that people want.

S**Steve Barclay 18:45**

You've got so many tips, so many materials, so many grips, so many color options. How many you must have? 100,000 product combinations?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 18:56

I think we actually tried to calculate it, and it's in the millions. If you include all of the different colors, the different tips, sections, lengths, handles, I'm pretty sure there's over a million combinations. It could even be infinite, if you really wanted to get down to different colored sections and that sort of thing. But yeah, it's, it's wild. How many items we have. I'm amazed. Sometimes when I'm talking to a customer and they're like, Wow, you have so many things. I'm like, Yeah, I can't believe I remembered all of that. It's just crazy. Yeah, it's, it's wild. I think it's, I think it's the best too, because you're offering so many different options, and people can really customize it to how they are with their cane and how they are as a person.

S

Steve Barclay 19:46

I've, I've seen some of the competing products that are, that are out there. You know, there's, there's some that are more, more ruggedized canes that are coming out of the states. I've seen some. Some fairly cheap looking knock offs coming out of Asia that look a lot like your canes looked probably 15 or 20 years ago. Are there a lot of companies competing with you now?

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Mellyssa Lyght 20:13

I would say so. I would say there's more than there has been, that's for sure, with I guess a lot of things that I've seen are three-d printed, or they are molded, and they almost look exactly like ours. Like you would you would look at and go, Oh, that's a Ambutech tip. And I would look at it and go, that is definitely not our tip, but that's what they're marketing it as, either like a Canadian tip or an Ambutech tip. So there is quite a bit more competition that we have to be wary about. We try to help customers as best they can as well, because they'll come to us and say, oh, I need this, this product, and we'll go, oh, well, we don't make that. And try to let them know and show them, okay, this is what we make. This is where we are. So maybe check those avenues, if that's what you're looking for. But yeah, there is quite a bit more competition than there used to be. We do also have more of a line in teaching material as well for canes and adaptive mobility devices, which does help with broadening our business, because it's not just in the mobility of everyday life, it's also in the teaching and learning how to use canes and how to use mobility aids. So that helps us as well.

S

Steve Barclay 21:32

Can you talk a little bit about the different cane materials and their relative advantages and disadvantages?

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Mellyssa Lyght 21:39

Yeah. So we have aluminum, graphite and fiberglass, our main materials for our mobility, canes. So aluminum is the least expensive. It's the most economical. It's very strong, durable cane. And then we have our graphite, which is lightweight. It's very It has very excellent tactile and vibration feedbacks. It's one of our more expensive canes, but it's because of the lightweight and the durability factor, and then fiberglass is our strongest cane, one of our heaviest as well. It's in the middle price range, but it's designed to withstand every sort of abuse you can give it. So for those rugged days when you're on the trail, or if you're walking down dirt roads or a very fast, aggressive Walker, that sort of thing, that the fiberglass would really hold up to those the graphite also is a very strong, durable cane. And for people who use their canes, I guess, quite often, and using the side to side motion, you would have less fatigue with a graphite because it's lighter as well. So those would be the three main materials for our canes.

S

Steve Barclay 22:55

So you know we, you know we're all Canadians here and heck, Ambutech is in Winnipeg. So Canadian winter, we all know that all too well. So I guess what I'm curious about is there generally a form configuration that you recommend to folks who are going to be in, say, a lot of snow, or is there really just nothing, nothing really you can do with, you know, a six foot snow drift?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 24:30

Well, yeah, it's hard for us to recommend only because we're not certified orientation and mobility instructors, so we have to be careful on how we recommend items. We more just give the breakdown on what our products do and how they work. It's mainly up to each customer, but we do have a lot of our tips designed for the Canadian winters, so like our jumbo roller tip would roll over a lot more obstacles. We have our Dakota. Disc, which kind of floats over the ground, which is really good for those snow drifts and for uneven ground, especially sand and gravel in like the the playgrounds and that sort of thing. So, I mean, it's, it's all dependent on where you're going and how often you want to make sure that you're going to have the right cane for what you're doing. We do also have testing where we take our canes and we put them out in minus 50 and we see how they're going to work afterwards. And same with a tip, like we'll stick it in a snow bank, and then we'll drown it in water, and we'll just make sure that we can test it as far as we possibly can, so that we know where, say, a fail spot would be, so that if a customer comes to us and says, Hey, this happened, we can go, oh, yeah, this is what you have to do to correct it, or this is what you should do with that sort of tip. Maybe it's not for that environment, but this environment. So yeah, we we do keep a lot of our Canadian weather in mind when we're making our products and testing them too.

R Ryan Fleury 26:02

So then my question is, we have heated steering wheels, we have heated seats in our car. Where's the heated handles on our canes?

M Mellyssa Lyght 26:10

I'll write it down for a future look. Right now, we don't have anything quite like that. I mean, that would be really neat.

R Ryan Fleury 26:20

Warmer, nice, yeah, just a battery. Battery Powered. Hand warmer, right?

R Rob Mineault 26:26

Yeah, listen, maybe you can like a mug holder as well.

M Mellyssa Lyght 26:31

Yeah, hey, that would be really nice, yeah, and then that way you don't have to have your other hand full with your mug. You can just attach it to your cane. Why not?

R Ryan Fleury 26:40

Absolutely. Or you just have a straw that inserts into the handle, so the handle also becomes a cup.

M Mellyssa Lyght 26:47

Yeah, oh, now that's gonna be cool.

R Ryan Fleury 26:51

You fill the whole cane with liquid and yeah, I mean, it is hollow.

S

Steve Barclay 26:59

And for those hotter days, you can swap out the coffee cup for our Margarita shaker. That's right. Hey, Mellyssa, we started doing repairs to canes in our office, and people are really excited when to be able to bring in a cane and get a restrung or re-tipped, or, you know, have a segment replaced on it. Are there other places in Canada that are still repairing canes?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 27:24

We are here. We're doing some repairs and everything on our canes. Not as much as we used to. I'm not sure why, but we still do repairs here. I know, yeah, you're doing repairs from your side, but I don't know of many other places in Canada that are doing repairs. I think there's a couple of places that we may have in the United States that also does the same thing. But no, that is something that we would like to look more into, is repairs and how to handle them. Because I know some canes, it's just you need to replace the elastic because it wore out, but the rest of the cane is still working fine. So yeah, that's something that we're still exploring as well.

S

Steve Barclay 28:04

I just think it's interesting that there's not more people doing that. There's so many canes out there, you know, I know, just from, from talking to people, that a lot of people just have, you know, an old cane kicking around that they don't use anymore because, you know, maybe the elastic is weak or, you know, maybe it snapped entirely. But there's definitely need out there for for more people to do repairs on a on a local level.

M

Mellyssa Lyght 28:29

absolutely, I think, I think part of the reason why there's not as many say repairs even coming back to us, is just the cost to ship it and send it back and everything. If we did have more say, like localized areas, doing repairs for the canes, I think that would be beneficial.

S

Steve Barclay 28:47

Absolutely.

R

Rob Mineault 28:50

I want to, I want to step back and go back to talking a little bit about about the customization aspect of the canes. And now you guys offer, you know, a variety of different colors as well as materials. A customer can really sort of build their own cane like quite literally. And I work for a youth organization that provides programs and services for blind and low vision kiddos. And, you know, we hear stories all the time that of youth and kids that, you know, they they might be getting their very first mobility cane. And for them, you know, it's a real process, because, you know they there's, they're still very self conscious about, say, quote, unquote, looking blind. Do you find in your experience when you're providing a lot of these customization options, where they can really make that cane their own? Do you find that you hear stories of youth, or even anybody who's getting their very first mobility cane? you do you hear stories about that difference for them adopting the the cane?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 30:05

Yes, especially with younger kids. The cane colors is a very - I don't know how else to say it - other than a touchy subject, just because some people are very for having the customization with the colors and everything on the canes and other people are very they're more focused on what the cane represents and what the cane colors should be. So we've kind of been a bit careful on how we either promote the colors or how somebody would want the colors. So we try to make sure that people know that you should be checking your local bylaws and laws within your city, your town, country, just to make sure that you're following any proper cane laws. What some customers are doing, actually are they're ordering a regular, traditional cane, white or white with the red bottom, and then they're ordering a different colored cane for them to use at other times, like, say, if they're not crossing the street and that sort of thing. So I think a lot of teachers actually will encourage their students to use a cane with, say, a blue grip, or a pink grip or green, because then it reflects more of what they want as a child, they they don't want to have a white cane with a black handle. So if they can personalize it even a little bit, then they find that the students are more likely to use the canes and want to actually have the cane, because then they can kind of show show it off, like, hey, look at my green cane. Isn't it so cool? So yeah, we have a lot of people that do that. We have a lot of even regular cane users that are like, hey, you know what, I'd like to have a different color cane just to be fun, because it's quirky, it's new. Why not? And so they'll have a cane that's every color of the rainbow, and it's just something that they can have that's personally theirs. And some people have even said that they've had more notice on the streets, like, Hey, why are you carrying that cane? And they're like, oh, well, let me tell you. And they've had more notice than, say, just the white cane with the red bottom, not saying that that's a good thing or a bad thing. It's just people may look at it and go, oh, I wonder what that is. Although, having the white cane with the red bottom should be identified by everybody, it's not always, which is a sad thing, but it should always be identified as a cane for blind or visually impaired. But yeah, we do a lot of customizations. We've done some for weddings as well, where a bride wants it to match their bridesmaids dresses, or the groom would like it to match their tuxedo. So if they wanted all black cane, well, we've got black tape for it. So yeah, we've got a variety. We have 10 different cane tape colors that we offer. So like your traditional white, red, black, as I had mentioned, we have a purple, orange, pink, blue, yellow, green, and then a sand like a matte gold, not a metallic gold, but more of like a brass color. So we do have a variety of different colors for the tapes and then for the grips. We have a baby blue, bright pink, a bright orange and a lime green. And also, actually, recently, just started with a purple, like a darker purple color. So there's a wide variety of different options. So if somebody wants still the traditional white cane with the red bottom, but they want to have a different colored handle, it's still going to fall technically under that white cane law, which will be nice too. So you can dress it up, but you can still be, I guess, quote, unquote, legal.

R

Ryan Fleury 33:46

So just doing a quick search, it doesn't look like there actually is a Canadian law that says the cane has to be white if you're blind. Now I need to double check that, but it is the international recognized blind uniform, if you want to call it that, the white cane with the red tip. So where did that come from?



M**Mellyssa Lyght 34:06**

I think it was just because canes back in the day were just it was either a stick or something like that. But I think it just started out with white, and then I want to say the red came in so it would identify someone as partially sighted, not fully blind. In some countries, they have two tones, so like one section is white, one section red, and it alternates, and that identifies somebody as deaf, blind. In other European countries, they used to have a white cane with a yellow bottom, and that would identify you as either partially sighted or fully blind. I can't remember. I think it's just the standard. To be quite honest with you, I know most of the bylaws have more strict so like, if you're on a university campus, or if you're on a college campus, they will have specific outlines of what it would be. But yeah, that's why we encourage people to just check and make sure that you're aware of what, what's within your rights, especially if there's something that that you're being affected by,

R**Rob Mineault 35:13**

Right. We hear all the time, you know, people have relationships with their with their canes there. It's, it's a big part of their day to day life. And so having something that they feel like a connection to because they designed it, or it reflects a color that that they really enjoy, and it and it, and it has a weight and a and a tip, and it's made of the right material that is their preference. I really do think that that is important for the community.

M**Mellyssa Lyght 35:46**

Yeah, absolutely. We've even had customers come back to us with a repair cane that's 20 or 30 years old. I think, I think the oldest one we had was around 30 years old, and it he had carved his name into the handle, and he wanted to make sure that we repaired the cane as much as we can, but send the the actual material of the cane back to him so that he could have it like he was very insistent that I need it repaired, but please do not change out the tubes. Please just fix this, this and this, and send the cane back, the original cane back. And it's definitely understandable. It is something you use every day. So you will, you will feel like this is my comfort. This is what I want. So we try to be as respectful as possible when we're doing repairs, when we're placing orders. I mean, we talk to people from very early ages to very elderly, and we have to be very careful about what we say and how we say it, because some people are new cane users, and they're terrified and they don't know what they're doing. So we're the we're the ones that are helping them get say their first cane. And it's always nice. When you get to the end of that conversation, they're like, hey, you know what? This was really easy. You made this really, really easy for me to do. Thank you so much. That's what we're here for.

R

Rob Mineault 37:14

Something I'm really curious about - we just, we had a conversation about CES last week, and, you know, talking all about AI and stuff and and smart glasses. And, you know, we have seen manufacturers out there, you know, trying things like smart canes. Where do you guys sort of fall with that? Do you have plans for, you know, something along the lines of a smart cane, or those things that you're looking at, or do you just believe, no, the future of the cane, the whole point of the cane is simple and reliable, and you're just going to stick to that?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 37:57

I think we stay out of the technology side of it, because we're not as we don't have as much as, say other companies do technologically wise. We have the manufacturing for the canes, and we have all the knowledge and the ability to do that. So we do have customers that use our cane shafts on their electronic devices like but we do have our canes on the WeWalk handles, which is an electronic device. And people do, they seem to really enjoy that we stay away from the electronic side for, I guess, sensory just because we're not as familiar with it. But we have every hope that the canes would be technologically advanced, where people could move around safely and not have to worry about where they're going, and just relying on, say, like just your traditional cane, if it can be advanced, we're all for it. We will help anybody that wants to do that sort of thing. So if you want to use our canes and you want to test out something, by all means, it's, it's the best way forward.

S

Steve Barclay 39:05

So what are you guys at Amutech doing for white cane week? Kind of your party?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 39:11

Well, we're just basically placing orders. We're we're placing orders, we're talking to customers. We're doing this podcast, which is really awesome. Glad to be a part of it. I don't know that we have anything planned right now. We've got lots of trips coming up. I think Candace is going to be in Sight City, and then myself and Laura in the back, we're going to be at CSUN this year, so that'll be really nice. But yeah, as for cane week, we just kind of sit here, we hold down the fort and we wait for everybody to kind of contact us with any questions that they have, any ideas they have, and just be here for people.

R

Rob Mineault 39:51

Well, listen, we appreciate all the work you guys are doing. And yeah, if people are interested in looking at all the different options that are available if they want to put put a cane together, what's the best way to reach out to you and talk to you?

M

Mellyssa Lyght 40:09

Yeah, for sure. So our we have a toll free number. It's 1-800-561-3340. You can also email us at [orders@ambutech.com](mailto:orders@ambutech.com) and speak to anybody here as well. And then we do also have our website, which is just [www.ambutech.com](http://www.ambutech.com).

R

Rob Mineault 40:32

Thanks again for taking some time out of your day and coming and chatting with us and helping us celebrate White Cane Week.

M

Mellyssa Lyght 40:43

No problem at all. I appreciate the offer to come on to the show. It was really great. Thank you so much.

S

Steve Barclay 40:50

Thank you.

R

Rob Mineault 40:50

Take care.

M

Mellyssa Lyght 40:51

Bye, bye, you too.

R Ryan Fleury 40:52  
Bye, bye.

R Rob Mineault 40:54  
Well, Ryan, what? What color would you get if you could get any, any cane?

R Ryan Fleury 40:59  
I had a black one. It was all black, yeah.

R Rob Mineault 41:04  
Is it gone?

R Ryan Fleury 41:05  
No, I still have it, but I think the tape has been peeling off a couple of the sections, so I think under the black tape, they're white. So it's kind of a black and white cane now.

S Steve Barclay 41:16  
We can get more tape for you, right?

R Ryan Fleury 41:18  
Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 41:20

No, that is really interesting. I don't know, maybe I'm off. But I just, I think it's so silly to that there's bylaws that would dictate the color of a mobility game. I just think that it's ridiculous, especially we live in a world where we can't get the, you know, everybody else, we can't get, people to stick to the disability legislation that's on the books. Why? You know, it seems insane that we hold, you know, users of mobility canes you have to have a white and red cane.

S

Steve Barclay 41:57

It is a little weird, you know. And you know, certainly in some place like Canada or the US, you'd think it would violate somebody's freedom of expression too, right? Because cane is, or can be, such a personal item to people. So yeah, yeah, kind of strange, yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 42:15

What says that you know when, when somebody, somebody's out and about with their mobility cane? Why do they have to have something that immediately identifies them as as as blind or partially sighted if they don't want to?

S

Steve Barclay 42:29

Yeah, weird. Yep, odd.

R

Rob Mineault 42:33

But I, yeah, I don't think I, I have the feeling that that doesn't really apply in Canada. Like Ryan and Steve, you haven't heard of any, any sort of person running afoul of any sort of bylaw or law by having the wrong color mobility cane, have you?

S

Steve Barclay 42:49

No. Mostly, I've just heard criticism of different cane colors. You know, it's not, not because of any particular bylaw. But I've heard, you know, O&M instructors who've said, no, no, the cane should be white and red and nothing else. No, it's just wrong.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:06

I like to know where they get that from. Like, was that educated at the O&M school? Was that something that was promoted and educated 85 years ago and just never left society's mentality when it comes to the blind uniform must be white cane must be sunglasses, must be, you know. And now we're trying to, you know, we're trying to be person first, and not disability first. And you know, we're still trying to be pushed into this box of you must be, you must have a white cane.

R

Rob Mineault 43:39

Yeah, yeah. It seems a little out of touch. Yeah, you're absolutely right. So I wouldn't be surprised if eventually that gets phased out, as we see, you know, a new generation of, say, O&M instructors take the place of the old school ones, because I do think that's a bit of an antiquated notion, especially when you when you've you consider, like, all the benefits that we were, we were talking about, about someone being able to put together, you know, a custom cane. It just it gives that, it gives that sense of agency and empowerment to somebody, especially a kiddo that's that's getting their first mobility cane, it just makes a huge, such a huge difference.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:22

Like, how would you feel if I told you, Steve, you cannot buy a black Mazda? Yeah, not allowed. You can't do it. It has to be red.

S

Steve Barclay 44:33

Oh, okay, I like red.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:35

But you know what I mean? Like, who's to dictate to you what you can and cannot use or buy?

S

Steve Barclay 44:40

Yep, or Yeah, that's true. Well, they do it all the time with guns.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:47

Depends on the country you live in.

R

Rob Mineault 44:51

It's an interesting debate. I would be I'd be interested to hear, I don't know. I. I mean, I get it. I get that O&M instructors, you know, their number one concern is going to be safety, and is going to be like, you know, they want to make sure of that. So I kind of get it, but at the same time ...

R

Ryan Fleury 45:15

But if your O&M instructor has done their job, well, a white cane is not going to make any difference over a pink cane, you'd hope so has. If the instructor has taught the person how to be safe and use their cane properly, it doesn't matter if you're using a stick or using a broom handle, you have the skills the cane is not going to make a difference.

S

Steve Barclay 45:41

Yeah. Other than possibly public perception.

R

Rob Mineault 45:44

Exactly, I think is a big part of it, yes, exactly. Screw the public. Sorry. I helped record a Limitless podcast episode all about Uber denials so I'm still a little bit salty after, that.

S

Steve Barclay 46:06

Oh yeah, that would make you mad.

R

Rob Mineault 46:07

It does it just it infuriates you, especially you looked at the at the BC Guide Dog Act, and you just realized that just how many, how many people just completely ignore, you know, the law, the the act, and people aren't aware of it. They don't, and they don't care.



Ryan Fleury 46:23

They'll just, they just, they'll take the fine and move on with their day.



Rob Mineault 46:27

Because they don't. They don't even get a fine, that's the thing. I mean, the the reporting - anyways, yeah, different show, whole other podcast episode. But it's frustrating when you see that, you know the general public aren't, certainly aren't following disability legislation. So why the hell should you know people, folks in the in the blindness community, follow, you know, follow, quote, unquote bylaws, or whatever that says, that dictates the color of their canes.



Steve Barclay 46:56

That's right. It's probably unconstitutional.



Ryan Fleury 47:00

Yeah. Rise up. Rise up.



Rob Mineault 47:08

Right after my third coffee.



Ryan Fleury 47:10

Well, we should wrap it up.



Rob Mineault 47:12

Yeah, let's get, let's get the heck out of here. We got things to do. Hey, Ryan,



Rob Mineault 47:20

Yeah, Rob?



**R** Rob Mineault 47:22  
where can people find us?

**R** Ryan Fleury 47:24  
They can find us at [www.atbanter.com](http://www.atbanter.com).

**R** Rob Mineault 47:29  
They can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cowbell@atbanter.com](mailto:cowbell@atbanter.com). Where can they where else can they find us?

**S** Steve Barclay 48:17  
Well, they can find us on the socials, say, Instagram and Facebook, for example.

**R** Rob Mineault 48:22  
Yeah, there you go. All right. Well, I think that is going to do it for us this week. Of course, Happy White Cane Week. Hopefully everybody's out there having a fruitful and safe week. And yeah, hey, if you need, if you need a new cane from Ambutech, get a get a lime green and purple cane.

**R** Ryan Fleury 48:46  
And somebody set up a petition on the website somewhere where we can promote the use of color canes.

**S** Steve Barclay 48:56  
Yeah, colorful canes for Canada.

R**Rob Mineault 48:58**

There you go. And don't forget your hand warmer idea. The Margarita handle, one that was good one too. Yeah, all right, that is gonna go do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course, Mellyssa for joining us, and we will see everybody next week.

S**Steve Barclay 49:19**

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