PODCAST Episode 455

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R **Rob Mineault** 00:15
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter,

R **Ryan Fleury** 00:20
Banter, banter.

R **Rob Mineault** 00:22
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, look who it is, the Master of Disaster. It is Master Cowbell Player Extraordinaire. You want to be like him, but you can't. It's Mr. Ryan Fleury.

R **Ryan Fleury** 00:51
I'm back everybody.

Lis Malone 00:54

And hey, look who else it is. It's Lis. I'm sorry. I'm just kidding. It's Lis Malone. Look at that.

Lis Malone 01:05

Well, still may be Lis. I started doing a Duolingo. I'm trying to learn a little Espanol.

Rob Mineault 01:15

Oh, are you?

Lis Malone 01:16

I suck at it. I'm terrible. My pronunciation, my pronunciation is horrible,

Rob Mineault 01:21

Whenever in my in my life, whenever I've tried to pick up a second language, I've gotten really, like, enthusiastic about it, and then after about two weeks, I'm just like, Yeah, I'm not, I'm not made for another language.

Ryan Fleury 01:31

But you know what? You don't need to do that now because you have like, AI translation built into like, Meta RayBans and apps on your phone.

Rob Mineault 01:39

I don't know. There's something about knowing another language and being able to, like, chat with people. I don't think it's the same talking to somebody through your sunglasses.

Lis Malone 01:51

I just want to be able to communicate better with my non English speaking Uber and Lyft drivers.

Rob Mineault 01:58

That makes sense, because that happens.

Lis Malone 02:00

And sometimes it's just takes too long to go through and open up the Google Translate app or something, you know, right?

Lis Malone 02:07

so that is really a use case scenario, yeah.

Lis Malone 02:13

So that was, that was that was that was what motivated me to do it. However, you know, learning how to say, I eat apples is not necessarily going to help me.

Ryan Fleury 02:27

You never know.

Rob Mineault 02:38

I learned, like, I think in university, that I was just like, Yeah, my brain is not big enough to hold more than one language at a time. I could have to do a complete English wipe, and then maybe I could learn French.

Lis Malone 02:50
We need, like, the Matrix plugin, you know?

Rob Mineault 02:52
Who knows, maybe we'll get there.

Ryan Fleury 02:55
Listen, people all have AI bots to just speak for us.

Rob Mineault 03:01
Maybe, if we can, if we can make enough, RAM, that's a whole other podcast.

Ryan Fleury 03:09
It is indeed,

Rob Mineault 03:11
well, great. How is everybody real quick before we get started, speaking of AI, I'm excited for the show, but Yeah, how's everyone doing?

Lis Malone 03:27
Muy bien. Mucho gusto.

Ryan Fleury 03:29
Muy bueno.

Rob Mineault 03:32
Bonus nachos.

Ryan Fleury 03:40
Okay, well, now we've, yeah, never just insulted half our audience,

Ryan Fleury 03:46
I know, well, maybe a quarter. Okay, sorry, everybody.

Ryan Fleury 03:50
Sorry, yeah, we apologize.

Lis Malone 03:53
I'm legitimately trying to learn.

Ryan Fleury 03:55
Okay, good luck.

Rob Mineault 03:57
To give us, give us a weekly update. Well, we'll check in with you.

Ryan Fleury 04:01
We'll get you to do the intro in Spanish.

Lis Malone 04:11
I need a little more than a month.

Rob Mineault 04:13
You can memorize it, right?

Lis Malone 04:17
I'm gonna do a synthesized voice and have the pronunciations, right?

Rob Mineault 04:25
All right. Well, in any case, let's get started with the show.

Ryan Fleury 04:29
Let's do it.

Rob Mineault 04:30
Mr. Ryan.

Ryan Fleury 04:32
Yes, Rob?

Rob Mineault 04:33
Would you do the honors and tell the fine folks at home just what the heck we're doing today?

Ryan Fleury 04:38

Absolutely, I'm excited about today's show because there's a lot of talk about AI and voice interaction going on right now. And so our guest today is Andrew Gillies. He is founder of Guide, which is an AI powered assistant for Windows, Andrew, thank you for being here today.

Andrew Gillies 04:58

Thanks for having me. Ryan, Rob and Lis, great to meet y'all.

Lis Malone 05:03

Mucho gusto.

Andrew Gillies 05:04

I was gonna say I can't top bonus nachos, but ...

Rob Mineault 05:12

It's okay. We love talking about AI on the show. We've we've talked about it at great lengths in the past two years. So maybe, just to get us started, tell us a little bit about yourself and and what exactly your role is at Guide.

Andrew Gillies 05:28

Yeah. So like you said, Guide is a AI assistant for Windows for those with blindness or low vision, and it helps them navigate inaccessible content. So if you're using a screen reader, and, oh, some developer made a piece of software, but the main button you need to click actually isn't, isn't in the index, and the screen reader can't get at it, then Guide is able to take a take a message from you, maybe click that button by taking control of the mouse, keyboard briefly, and then kind of speak back to you what it's what it's doing. I started Guide back in early 2025 I mean, the inklings of it were late 2024 when I started seeing some of the AI services that were coming out and the improvements that were happening, and I started to think, like I had done some work with accessibility standards and screen readers, and I just knew that there was a lot to be desired or issues where, you know, a lot of software and websites were not really made to spec. So I thought it was an interesting opportunity. And then so started messing around with it, talking to people, doing some tests with people, and people started finding it pretty useful so that. So I founded Guide. I'm CEO. I'm working with a friend of mine, Nick, who's CTO, and we're building out the product.

Rob Mineault 07:03

Tell us a little bit more about the sort of the genesis of all of this. Like, was there an aha moment that you had where you're just like, yes, we can really leverage AI to really try to fill in some of the accessibility gaps that are still hounding the internet.

Andrew Gillies 07:23

Yeah, so, so sure, I'll give you a little more detail. So there were European Accessibility guidelines that were being put in place last year. And so I was working at Amazon at the time, actually, way back, and was kind of working on that, helping parts of Amazon.com hit the compliance spec. And it was really cool, because for the first time, you know, companies were required to pay attention, you know, and get suspect, because the there was a big regulatory body that was requiring it, which was really cool because, you know, I've worked at at a few companies, and there's different, you know, varying levels of how much focus and resources different places dedicate to to accessibility. So it was really great that finally, like a regulatory body was was enforcing some of these WCAG Standards. And so anyway, I'm working on this. I'm trying to to get parts of that site compliant, and then I'm also watching all the news right, like we all, we all are. And then I saw for the first time some of this, what they call the computer use tools where the AI services were able to actually, like, you know, look at your computer, see, see what's going on, and, and take, you know, make a click coordinate and press a key for you. And it wasn't working very well. And, and when it first got announced, I think people were like, oh, this is, you know, it's, it's a interesting prototype, but it doesn't really work very, very well at all. And that's then, that's true. But I thought, hey, this is just going to get better. So I decided to start, start building.

Rob Mineault 09:12

I have to admit that when I first saw the product and started digging into it, on the one hand, I was really excited, but then, on the other hand, it actually really makes me mad that a product like this still has to exist, you know, especially after years of awareness campaigns, awareness days, legislation. All of these accessibility standards are all baked in, yet it seems like it's still so difficult to get like web forms, or, you know, online booking sites, or, you know, name fill in the blank, you know, everything from any sort of online system to be 100% accessible seems like it's really still difficult. What's your take on that? Like, why do you think or things are still so inaccessible?

Andrew Gillies 10:09

Yeah, I think, I think it's a few things, but it really comes down to legislation and enforcement. I would say, if great, we determine what the web standards are. Everybody agrees what an accessible piece of software looks like. Some companies will be great stewards of that. Some will be poor stewards of that. Ideally, the big companies are good stewards of that. But that's not as you'd know, not always true, and often actually not true. And maybe, you know some, some small company out there who's just getting started, who maybe doesn't have anyone in their life with disabilities, doesn't really understand it, and they never even knew they had to look at it. So I think, I think there just needs to be more of of enforcement, because if you don't have any kind of body that's sort of any, any check and balance on it, then, then how is any company going to keep up with it? Right? If they don't feel like they they have to, or maybe they're not aware of it, or maybe they're just worried about their business. I don't, know, but with, without that, I would worry that that, that the improvements we all want to see will will get made well.

Rob Mineault 11:29

And it sounds like, what we need here is exactly what they're doing in Europe. We need a, you know, a regulatory body with enforcement. And I think that really, realistically, that's really the only way to get a lot of these developers to pay attention to it. We just have to mandate it.

Andrew Gillies 11:50

Yeah, and the way I've seen it happen in the last maybe, you know, 20, years, Canada or the US is just lawsuits, right? There's been a few famous ones. One was, like, some, you know, Domino's website wasn't accessible, and someone who was blind couldn't order pizza, and then actually started a lawsuit. But you know that the lawsuit takes a lot of resources. It's like not everybody can, can start a lawsuit when something doesn't work work for them. So then, how do we, you know, create, maybe an organization where there's some collective bargaining or ability to, like, throw up class action lawsuits when things are not working, right?

Ryan Fleury 12:37

Yeah, and we do know that, you know, really strict regulations like the UK or Europe implemented have affected change if, if it was them that really forced Apple's hand into putting USB-C into their iPhones, right? Everybody else had kind of adopted that standard, but Apple was still holding out, and now we have USB-C on our iPhones.

Andrew Gillies 13:02

Yeah, exactly. Mine's still too old, so it doesn't.

Rob Mineault 13:07

And I think the real problem with this is that, more and more, I mean, heck, this was, this was true 10 years ago, but it's even worse now is that we really live a digital, online life. You know, almost everything that you you want to do, if you want to book a trip, if you want to sign up for a trivia night, if you want to, you know, check your particular City's events and stuff like that. We're all we do that all online. Online banking, all of these things are online. And so really, accessibility is just becoming more and more and more of a real problem for for folks that are just out to live their day to day life.

Andrew Gillies 13:52

Yeah, that's interesting, because it's like the technology you should be, you know, advancing and getting better but, but you know, your lived life may not map to that if you're doing more things with the technology. That's super interesting point. Yeah.

Ryan Fleury 14:05

And then, of course, you know, app developers release an update which breaks the accessibility they had in the first place, so there need to be checks and balances in place at the development stage before it even gets released. Look what happened - I don't know if you guys follow WhatsApp, but WhatsApp was very, very accessible, and they released an update which totally changed the interface and kind of screwed all the blind users using screen readers. And so that's slowly being rebuilt, and accessibility has improved, but it just goes to show that if it's not implemented through every stage of development, something's going to fall through the cracks.

A **Andrew Gillies** 14:45

Yeah, yeah. And you it's interesting, because you've seen these, you know, lay a lot of layoffs at tech companies in the last few years. And I think I was just thinking, what would it? Because oftentimes accessible, like teams that work on accessibility, I've seen get hit by those layoffs. And so that's, that's exactly how something like that can happen, right? You've got all these people advocating internally so that the app is good, and then they and then they get laid off, and then nobody's looking at it anymore. And you have to keep, keep looking at it constantly as you add new features or change things. So I think the I'm trying to think, the only thing that would maybe change that is, I think it just goes, goes back to legislation, because then you have to have some, some, you know, VP or something, is making a decision on who to lay off, and they're not going to be, they would be more afraid to lay off that. So you might hate, you know, maybe it's cynical to say it that way, but if there were more regulations protecting the accessible software output?

R **Rob Mineault** 15:45

And I think that you know, the other challenge too is that nobody builds their website from the ground up. Everybody's on a platform. And those platforms are, you know, CMSs or content management systems, and so they're building their website using those tools, and if those tools aren't putting out accessible code, that's that's when you get things like, you know, broken forms. You know, because if whatever, if you're on Wix, or you're on Squarespace, you're on WordPress, and their form isn't built to accessibility standards and isn't working there, the buttons aren't labeled or whatever the organizations, they they don't have any necessarily, control over that that web form, unless they really dig in and hire a web developer to sort of build custom code and such. But so I think that in a lot of cases, and I'm sure app development is, is similar. You know, you're using tools that that aren't necessarily built for accessibility and the organization. I mean, they, they don't know, you know, they don't know anything, right? So I think that's another sort of challenge in sort of the the landscape of what it's like to build an app or a website.

R **Ryan Fleury** 17:05

And that's why we need a product like Guide.

R **Rob Mineault** 17:07

Exactly So, which is a great segue. So, so let's move on, and let's actually talk a little bit about Guide. So can you give us a little bit of a use case and explain exactly how it might work for a user?

Andrew Gillies 17:21

Yeah, sure, so I'll give you an example of someone who kind of messaged me about something that worked for them that was just a kind of simple one. So one of Guide's users opened up their Steam app one day, and suddenly everything was in Chinese. So they don't know how it got there, but for some reason, it was in Chinese. And unfortunately they hadn't been on Duolingo learning Chinese, so it was like really difficult to find, you know, the language selector as it is. So they opened up guide, which is a little windows app that they had installed, and they typed in, hey, can you help me change the language to English? And then Guide, what it does is it sort of it takes a look at your screen, just through screenshots, and tries to find what buttons are available. And then, you know, create a create a plan to go, to go do that action. So it, in this case, it was able to find the language selector, which helped, because it can understand many languages. Clicked it and then clicked and then clicked English, so a series of clicks right after. So the idea is, just when you've hit something where you're kind of hung up, or the software isn't accessible, and you just have a roadblock that you need a quick help with unblocking. You know, I've heard some, some people have said, hey, you know, this is great. I can do some things where, you know, one of our users was also a podcast host, and the podcast recording software that he was using, the stop recording button was not he was not accessible, so he couldn't get the stock. Couldn't stop his recordings without the help of a sighted person. And so guy now helps him do that, click stop and kind of move along by himself.

Ryan Fleury 19:26

And I'll be the first to step up and say I actually downloaded and tried the software yesterday. And I have, I was saying to Rob earlier, an audio interface that has software that no screen reader will read anything on the screen. And so I couldn't change audio buffer settings, I couldn't change sample rates. I couldn't wrote audio where I wanted it. I couldn't do anything. And so I used it to basically tell me what was on the screen. And it did. It said top section was this, bottom was this. It read to me the labels of the items that were there. There. And I said, Okay, you know, open up the buffer settings. It clicked on the buffer settings. I said, change it to 16. It changed it to 16. It confirmed all that. And I said, Rob earlier, this is a game changer. This was amazing, because I would have had to have sighted assistance to do any of that. But then I tried another software, and that was mixed results. So welcome to the world of AI, right? But it was great. I couldn't have done that without a tool like yours. So thank you for that.

A Andrew Gillies 20:35

Awesome. Well, thanks for giving it a try, and I like to hear the honest feedback as well. I think it's good to call out right now, which is some things and some software, it's going to work, and may not even be every time, right? You may have triy a different function in that first piece of software, and then maybe it didn't work. One thing that's been pretty interesting to watch is, if you know, some people tried it a year ago, I found some things that worked for and some that didn't. But because of the models just improving, I've seen that it's able to do more and more things every every few months, as we update the models, just from, you know, the model companies competing and updating their model. So it's been pretty interesting to watch. So, you know, maybe in, maybe in four or five months, you try it on that software again and and hopefully it works.

R Ryan Fleury 21:32

Well, I definitely will. And this piece of software, you know, it's called Guitar Rig Pro 7, and so it, from what I've read has really no accessibility frameworks, tools, whatever built in. And so Guide really, really tried. Guide would come back and say, I've clicked on the scroll wheel to try and scroll down through the presets. That's not working. So let me try this. It would try that note that didn't work either. So let me try. It was very persistent in trying to do what I asked it to do, and at the end of the day, it just couldn't do it. So I don't know if it's the AI, if it's the program, and the way it was built, which is the way I'm leaning. So yeah, there's going to be roadblocks.

A Andrew Gillies 22:17

Yeah, I'm sure, yeah, it could be both. It could be the tools just not there yet. It's interesting because audio software is famously difficult, from, from, from what I hear anyway, like people, I'm not, I'm not an audio software expert, but I get people sending me all these applications all the time, saying, Hey, I tried it with so and so, and it's because they, they always have all these weird UI components where they're trying to, like, represent the physical world in software. And it's, it's just they don't use standard stuff, so they don't get any of the benefit of standard accessibility text built in.

R Ryan Fleury 22:57

Yeah, but it is coming. It definitely read to me things on the screen that I didn't know where they know were there because MVD or JAWS wouldn't see them. I couldn't navigate to them. So it did some stuff really well. So it's getting there.

Rob Mineault 23:12

Well, I mean, heck, I think it's just amazing that we're here, in a place where something that would just be functionally unusable. Like, you know, five years ago, you would have just been screwed. You just would not have even had a shot at being able to operate that independently. And now, you know, you at least have a chance. So, you know, I think that that is really amazing, but, you know, but Andrew, you know, we've talked to a lot of developers who are using AI and a lot of their products, and the question that I always ask, because AI is such a rapidly evolving field, because they're they're constantly updating these models, is that a bit of a challenge for you, having a product that's that's based solely on using AI, or does it make it a little bit more robust because there are always sort of changes coming down the pipe?

Andrew Gillies 24:09

Yeah, it's really interesting. I was just listening to a podcast from someone who works at Anthropic who helped kind of develop their big popular Cloud Code tool now. And he was saying some companies try to put all these gates and walls on the on the AI for their particular use case, and then that makes it really hard when things change, for them to kind of keep that quality. And he said that it doesn't often drive a measurable difference, or maybe drives like, the 5% positive improvement for their for their use case, and then the new model comes out, and then it breaks, and they have to build a bunch of stuff again. And he's like, well, some, you know, we see the teams that are kind of just trusting the model a little bit more or having an easier time. And I, you know, so I do think as the AI models get better, it's actually great for Guide, and it's kind of, it's, it's not that hard to keep up with them. We just kind of get a bunch of improvements, you know, for free, in a way, every time it comes out. And it's always interesting, like, oh, what? What's going to work now, that didn't before, if anything at all. And so it's just really interesting to watch. And I get kind of excited every time there's a new model, like, oh, maybe something will get better. And I can't, I can only, you know, we can only test so many things, and when we bring it out to the community, we we see that like, oh, okay, people can actually see measurable improvements for things that I would have never thought of trying to use Guide with, so I find it exciting. I think we find it exciting. I think it's more challenging for big companies, probably to move quickly on on these updates and try to keep up. We're kind of riding the wave and getting improvements as they come.

Ryan Fleury 26:04

Right, right.

Ryan Fleury 26:05

With Guide, did you go through a lot of different testing of models to find one that worked best for the multitude of tasks you're asking AI to perform?

Andrew Gillies 26:15

Yeah. So we, we are always trying out the new models we have. So initially, the Anthropic was the first company to really invest in these computer use tools. Now open AI has started to more. Gemini has started to more a little bit, and we found that we're also just tracking their performance against the benchmarks. And so we found, until now, that that anthropic we believe works best for most of these cases. However, we're open to we're open to changing that. We're open to trying different models for different types of queries. We've just seen a better performance for Anthropic so far for this use case.

Ryan Fleury 27:17

Would there be an option for users of the software at some point, maybe, or on the roadmap, to be able to switch which AI they want to use?

Andrew Gillies 27:30

Yeah, I think, I think that's a interesting idea. I think, I think there's, there's probably a lot of things that Guide could open up for power users who kind of understand things, and we're maybe a little more technical or keeping up with the news, I think. And definitely a lot of Guides users are that way. So, so it's something to consider. But one principle and tenant, we've tried to stick to so far, is making it kind of simple to set up. Someone who's not so technical could could download and use this tool pretty easily, so, but I could see us having more of the like Power User Settings in the future, where there's a lot more customization like that.

Ryan Fleury 28:22

Yeah, it was dead simple. I think all I did was download it, install it, click next, next, next, next, put me into a chat window. I typed in what I wanted, and it went and did it. It was pretty simple. Yeah.

Rob Mineault 29:58

And so we should make it really clear that you know this, this isn't necessarily something that you're going to use as a screen reader.

Andrew Gillies 30:07

Oh, yeah, for sure. So, so like you said, it's, it's not a screen reader. We have people using JAWS and NVDA with it simultaneously while it's while it's working. So you can even here, like you ask guide to do something, it starts working. It clicks on something, and you get, you know, the NVDA message about what it clicked so and definitely it doesn't replace screen reader tasks. I think it's still pretty even if you tried to use it for everything. For example, it's still slower than just doing it yourself with the screen reader for like most things that in your work in your day to day, that already work pretty well. So we do have the Guide has its own voice, so by default, it's using Cloud voice and reading out to you what it's doing. So your screen reader voice lives simultaneously. We've recently also added a feature for the SAPI to use the built in SAPI voices on Windows if you want you if you've kind of configured that and want to use your your local voice that you already have. And then there's a third option, if you are an NVDA user, to have Guide just work through the NVDA library. So that also works. It's a little I don't, I don't love that mode, because sometimes NVDA will choose to not, you know, if we, if we send three or four sentences of context, we might get chopped off because we're no longer in control of what volume plays. So it can be a lot sometimes, and when you've got the two voices kind of going at the same time, and that's something that we would love to improve in the future. But it's a hard nut to crack.

Ryan Fleury 31:56

Yeah, you almost need, like, a verbosity level setting, like low, medium and high to get the amount of information you actually want back, because I don't necessarily need to know that I've moved to the top left hand corner and clicked the button. Now I've clicked the drop down menu, and now I'm scrolling down through the menu items. Right? Sometimes I may just want to do the task.

Speaker 1 32:18

Yeah, definitely. And so we started really verbose, we got that feedback a lot. Now it's less verbose, but actually that is a feature we want to add. I'm curious from your own experience, when you tested it, if you found it too much, or too little.

R   **Ryan Fleury**   32:35

I didn't, because I was experimenting with it to see what it was actually going to do, how it was going to do it, and how it was going to give me the feedback as to what it was doing. So I really enjoyed hearing everything it was actually doing. Being totally blind, not seeing anything and not having any feedback from the screen reader it was really interesting to know it was moving, you know, to the top left hand section, and it clicked the buffer setting button right like it just gave me a tour of the application. And I was just really blown away. I was really impressed by that, because, again, without sighted assistance or access with a screen reader, I have no idea what's on the screen, how to navigate to specific item, if it is a button, if it's a scroll, a menu, you know it, it just it described everything. It was great.

A   **Andrew Gillies**   33:35

Well, I have a question.

A   **Andrew Gillies**   33:36

Yes, okay.

L   **Lis Malone**   33:41

Does the application run any risk of piercing any privacy barricades on any of these sites? So like, for example, on your website you, I saw you, you had, like, a little YouTube video where you were booking an airline ticket. And so if you were to be using a site and you're booking an airline tickets, a great example. And here are you are now, you're entering in your credit card information and things like that, because it's not like a screen reader that sort of exists as a program in your hardware. And this is something that's pulling information, like an app. And I'm not as techy as these guys are, so excuse me if I'm sounding as big of an idiot as I am with this sometimes, but does this in any any way breach any of the security when people are using something like this, like, can they feel really safe? Like, what if you're doing something with your online banking account and there's something that you're not able to get access to? Or is this really something that you should consider just using for things where security should not be, as you know, something that isn't super high risk?

Andrew Gillies 35:02

Yeah, that's a great question. Lis. So first of all, I think we, as with some of these AI tools, we say, and we have kind of a screen when you first open the app that says, hey, here's other things we don't think you should use Guide for. And it's some of the things you just said, like if you're entering a password that's visible on the screen, if you're entering a credit card, if you're maybe in a banking app where you know your account number may be visible, or anything like that. We recommend you don't use Guide for that, and the reason is, not only you know privacy and security well, but like, imagine you said, hey, help me transfer $10 from my account to my spouse's account or something, and then Guide accidentally adds three zeros, you know. So, so I think there are certain use cases where we want to be really careful. And so I would say, we say use it in things that you already trust and that doesn't you know, have that have that level of private information visible on the screen at the time. And so it's not like it's taking a video of your screen. Always, it's only taking screenshots well after you've asked it to do something, and then once it you know, it does a ding at the end, when it stops, when it stops taking the action, and in that point, there are no more screenshots would be taken. And also, so you may ask as a follow up question, like, what happens to these screenshots? So I think I just want to explain that a little bit too. So we take these screenshots, we send them up to the AI models that we're using. You know, we're using solely using anthropic right now, so that's the company that is also handling this data, and we don't store them. So we don't have, we don't have copies of people's screenshots at all, so the only place that does have any copy would be anthropic, and they said, and their terms of service are that they only keep the screenshots for up to 90 days for analytics and logging and things like that. So they're not, they're not using it for training. They're not using it for, you know, any other analytics or sharing it with anyone else. So that's, that's how we keep it. But yeah, I just, just maybe I don't know, out of an abundance of caution, we, we, we don't recommend using it for any of those, those scenarios. You know, some people are a little frustrated by because it's some of those things are often the also inaccessible, right?

Rob Mineault 37:49

Yeah, but that's, you know, an even bigger case for, you know, these things are so sensitive in terms of privacy, then those things should be rock solid, accessible, right? So talk to me a little bit about the development process, because I think you said that you started this project in early 2025 is that right?

Speaker 1 38:09

Yeah, yeah. A little like, maybe, you know, did some some research in December, November of 2024 but, yeah, started kind of playing with with early versions around early 2025.

Rob Mineault 38:21

So that's a that's a pretty quick development cycle. Talk to me a little bit about about how that was. How did you find it?

Andrew Gillies 38:29

Yeah, I guess looking back, I probably did make a kind of early prototype in the in the fall 2024 because before I went to testing, I did have a version that was working, that I was kind of showing people. So we had, we had an early version that we thought was interesting enough to kind of show the idea, and then we did some user research sessions with with folks with vision impairments. And so I was just trying to decide, hey, does this have enough potential, or is this going to be useful enough? And people were really excited by the idea of it, so that that gave us the confidence to kind of move forward. And then, just from some of those early people we talked to, we ended up pulling together like a Slack, a Slack community, and getting a bunch of feedback and sharing all the early builds. And then I think we did a public launch in kind of March or April. And so we've been just sort of iterated, iterating and improving and adding things ever since and ever since then.

Rob Mineault 39:36

So then it sounds like the the community is really super important when it came to development. And it sounds like it's, it's still something that that's really, really important now, even even upon release.

Andrew Gillies 39:53

Oh, definitely, yeah, I think the most valuable things we get are email, calls and Slack messages from people with you know, both problems they're facing or improvements they wish the app had, or, hey, can we get on a call so I can talk you through my problem? Some of the users will send me videos of them trying to do something and it not working, so I can fully understand and without that, I don't think it would get to, it would be at the point where it was, you know, as usable as it was today, like as a sighted person, I'm gonna miss things. And so this is just invaluable to making this product better.

Rob Mineault 40:41

So when it came to developing the product, because it really is AI driven, did you find that that kind of sped up the development process at all?

Andrew Gillies 40:53

So it's interesting. Nowadays it's all in the news about how AI coding is really powerful and changing software development, and that's all true, definitely. But I think something changed, and it's been useful for a few years, but it wasn't until maybe November this year or last year where things really started to change. December where, like the model started getting good enough to really change the process. So I think it definitely helped back then, because it was sort of a new resource that was available to help experiment code things, get ideas on on things. But nowadays, you know, new features can be added, definitely faster because of the AI tools and then the capabilities, right? It's been pretty crazy to see, as someone who's been working on software for quite a long time, how good some of these tools have gotten.

Rob Mineault 41:58

Well, you know, and it's, it's, I know, it's a double edged sword, you know, I'm sure there are a lot of developers and programmers and stuff out there that this is a very scary but the flip side of that is that it also allows for for some fairly speedy development on some ideas that people have, like this, and in people, you know, small teams can kind of pull the trigger on something, develop it and get it out the door in a timely manner. These are really things, you know, given the state of of accessibility, certainly in that framing, we we definitely need more programs, more apps like this out there.

Andrew Gillies 42:43

Yeah, that's really it. That's really good point. I think, I think over time, you will start to see more apps that, you know, in the past, maybe were considered niche use cases, even though they're they're not, and some people may, may see them that way. And so I think you'll start to see more software for that kind of thing going forward. Of thing going forward. But, you know, we were kind of catching that wave, but early on, you know, it was still, still a lot not AI driven development.

Rob Mineault 43:14

Right, right, sure. So just in general, like, what are your thoughts in terms of how do you see AI playing, playing a role in accessibility?

A Andrew Gillies 43:29

Yeah, I think it's a I think, you know, what was that? What was that Accessibee? That's a good example for the industry to and for those who don't know it was like they were, I think they were using correct me, if I'm wrong, they're using AI to sort of add accessibility tags and area labels and things to websites. And then they were kind of saying, Oh, we're we'll make your website accessible for you. But then it didn't work half the time, and they made a lot of money, and then got sued and went down in like a wildfire. So we, you know, I think tools are getting better, but there's sort of a, there's not a trust and verify, there's a, you know, use something. Figure out how it works, figure out how well it works, test the hell out of it, and then, and then, you know, ship it. But I think we have to be really careful about the claims we can make about it. Like, if you took one of those audio applications and spend some time with it - maybe with the AI tooling, I could make it accessible more quickly. But there's still the larger systemic problem of, okay, someone who, who develops that software, and they have to go do it themselves, or hire someone to do it, and but maybe the bar, the bar to doing that, is lowering, and that's a good thing.

R Ryan Fleury 44:59

Well, that was one of my questions. You know, if you can look at an application that your product is having some issues making accessible or giving a user access to how much control do you actually have over the AI product, which belongs to anthropic to tailor it, to customize it?

A Andrew Gillies 45:24

Yeah, that's a good question. I think it's a, it's a delicate dance. We've gone too far sometimes where we've said, hey, you know, in this situation, when you don't have focus on this application, try to click it first and then scroll and then do this. And we tried to add a bunch of these custom rules, which sometimes work, and then the new model comes around, and it actually could do that without us saying it, and has even other ideas. So it's it's kind of like every time the new models come out, it's playing around with them, figuring out whether we need to make any tweaks, and whether we can kind of trust it with something new, if that makes sense.

R Rob Mineault 46:06

So before we start to wrap up, I just want, I'm just curious to hear about what's on the roadmap that you can talk about, what, what are you guys sort of working on in terms of the next phase for Guide?

Andrew Gillies 46:18

Yeah. So definitely verbosity, verbosity setting. But I think one thing that there's, there's a couple of things that we think are interesting. One would be like, hey, could you limit Guide to only seeing one window on your screen, just kind of an advanced privacy setting. And then one that I'm really excited about which, which would love to do, would be audio input as well. So right now it's, it's only text based input. So I think if we had audio input, it could maybe be a useful tool for people. I mean, make it easier for everyone to use it, but then it could also maybe help someone who had a mobility impairment who didn't have, like, full use of their hands, maybe to use the tool and be able to speak to it if they couldn't use a keyboard. So that that's that's something that's really interesting to me.

Rob Mineault 47:18

Yeah, that would be really great functionality, for sure,

Ryan Fleury 47:21

Especially because some of us are so used to typing in or using voice with our chat, GPTs or whatever AI we're using of the day. And depending how long your prompt is, I'll tell you I'd rather speak to it than type it all out.

Lis Malone 47:37

I speak to it all the time. I just turn on the little microphone and I have to talk because, I mean, those prompts, I'm surprised. I'm surprised that Chat-GPT hasn't just given me the middle finger internally. It's like, oh my god, she is so unreasonable.

Andrew Gillies 48:00

Do it again, this way? No, again this way.

Lis Malone 48:03

No, the elbow doesn't bend that way. Dummy, I guess calling it names doesn't help either.

Ryan Fleury 48:11

April Fools is coming up. Can you create a sarcastic Guide?

Andrew Gillies 48:17

You help me record the video.

Rob Mineault 48:19

Okay, we'll do it too. Well listen. If people are interested in checking out Guide, what's, what's the best way that they can they can check it out?

Andrew Gillies 48:33

Head to guideinteractioncom. We've got updates there. We're notoriously bad at social media, but we've got, you know, you can download that there try it out for yourself. There's a there's a trial, and if you have any issues, you can just, you know, email support at guide interaction.com we love hearing from people, even if you don't try the app, but you just have kind of thoughts or questions about it, feel free to, feel free to message us.

Rob Mineault 48:58

And you guys, like, have a, like, a Discord server or anything like that? How do you interact with your community? Just out of curiosity.

Speaker 1 49:06

Yeah, we have a Slack. We have a Slack so feel free to message us, see if you're interested. We can add you to that as well.

Rob Mineault 49:15

Okay, great. Thanks so much for joining us and talking about Guide. Come back anytime, if you have any announcements, or you just want to chat some more about accessibility, we're always happy to have you.

S Speaker 1 49:26

Great. Rob, Ryan, Lis thank you so much for having me. It was great talking to you.

R Rob Mineault 49:32

Bye, bye, bye. Well, there you go. AI to the rescue once again.

L Lis Malone 49:37

Adios!

R Ryan Fleury 49:39

You know, it's not going to be long before we have, I think, a voice interactive operating system where we'll be able to use our voice to do everything we want to do, email, text, word processing. We're close. There's applications that are working on it, but we're not quite there yet.

R Rob Mineault 49:57

I don't know. Microsoft trying to do that with copilot. They're trying to make Co-pilot a thing but nobody wants it. So, I don't know.

R Ryan Fleury 50:06

Yeah, and I think there's still - like, I say, AI is not there yet, you know? I listen to a bunch of different podcasts like the rest of you. And there's, you know, this week, people are in love with Co-pilot, and this week, next week, they hate Co-pilot. Now they're on Claude. Or now, no, you know, Claude's leading in the app store right now. Or it was a week ago. Open now, Chat-GPT is back at the top again, right? Everybody's flip flopping between AIs. Nothing is settled right now.

Rob Mineault 50:31

It's not even technologically based, right? Like, look at, look at OpenAI a few weeks ago, right? Like, that was all that was a political thing that that made OpenAI, like, fall out of favor, and everybody is like, oh, no, I'm switching to Claude. So it's, the industry is very, very evolving, but it's interesting to hear, you know, for Andrew, where you know that's, that's sort of, that's, that's exciting for them. It's, not really a hindrance. So, yeah, it's, it's, it's very, it's a very interesting landscape. It's always changing.

Lis Malone 51:07

Either of you guys have RING doorbells?

Ryan Fleury 51:10

No, I have a video doorbell, but it's not RING.

Lis Malone 51:14

So RING is rolling out their new AI tool feature, whatever it was just like, forced on us, like, all of a sudden I knew I'm getting all these alerts. And then I asked, like, what is it? What is going on with my damn cameras? Like it was just bugging out. And it started telling me, we see a black UPS truck. Yep, you have a delivery. And, I'm like, and we have a delivery. So it is making all of these assumptions. Did you see it like a nice, strapping dude come out of the UPS truck carrying a big ass package, walking up my driveway, into my front door and leaving it? No, it's just seeing a truck and saying, oh, you have a package, right? That must have happened like four times today, and I had to, I had to actually switch off the AI feature. I said, No. I said, No, no, no, no.

Ryan Fleury 52:08

Wow, yeah. And it's great that it'll give you that description, but it still needs to be fine tuned, right? Because it's great to know, you know, like my doorbell says you have a package, right, or it dings or alerts me when there's activity near the door, which is great, but it doesn't tell me anything.

Lis Malone 52:26

But this was saying, because it saw a UPS on the road that I have a package. Yeah, there were a lot of UPS and Amazon trucks that go up and down my street, sure, all throughout the day. And I was like, okay, it's been an hour, and it thinks I have four deliveries, yeah, oh, my God. I wanted to just, I wanted to hurt somebody.

Ryan Fleury 52:49

You need to change the field of view that your camera is seeing, bring it in.

Lis Malone 52:53

No, it's, no, it's, it has nothing to do with that, except because it sees a truck on the street, but it's not even taking it to effect that. I'm like, well, I have like, three other linked cameras. Do you see a person actually making a delivery? So the AI is just taking one teeny breadcrumb of information and then now making the assumption, oh, you have a delivery. No, Mother, I don't have a delivery.

Rob Mineault 53:21

And that's a whole other conversation. But I because I do think that there it is a little it feels like an AI gold rush out there. It feels like every single product is just like, oh my God. Like, how can we plug AI into our product to make it even, even more appealing, or even cooler? And without stopping think that we don't actually need this, like nobody wants this, and it's not needed. Especially when you consider, you know, the ridiculous, you know, power consumption around AI. Like, you know, we can't, we literally can't sustainable into everything. I think companies have to be a lot more selective in what they're plugging AI into and the value of that. Because, I mean, that's ridiculous. We had to drain a whole lake in order to tell Lis, she her four false alarm packages.

Ryan Fleury 54:23

Which makes you wonder, though about, you know, a, the current models aren't sustainable, and B, what happened to apps like DeepSeek? Remember when DeepSeek hit the scene? It was very, very energy efficient. Was very, very minimal on resources, and was outpacing Chat-GPT, Gemini and the others like it. It was revolutionary, but then it faded away really quickly, and we don't hear about it now, it's a good question. So efficiency, yeah, efficiency needs to be top of mind as well, because, yeah, we don't have the oceans to cool these data farms.

Rob Mineault 54:59

Well. You know. I won't go on, but you're going for another hour, but, I mean, they do say that, you know, this is a bubble. There is an AI bubble, and it will burst, like the dot-com bubble burst back in the early 2000s. I think that people, companies need to stop trying to plug AI into everything that we don't need, like, we don't need an intelligent fridge,

Ryan Fleury 55:27

Well, we have guitar amps with AI now as well. Like, I can't turn a knob, hit a button.

Rob Mineault 55:33

Yeah, exactly. I mean, I do think that it will regulate, right? It will has to equal out. I think it probably will burst at some point, and we're just going to realize that, you know, we there are limitations on what we're going to be able to use AI for, just because, just because of the energy consumption issues, and the cost will become sort of prohibitive, is probably what will happen.

Ryan Fleury 55:59

It's the way it's always worked. There's always been, you know, format wars, right? Whether it's Beta, VHS, whether it's, you know, name your two brands, there's always one that wins and there's always one that falls by the wayside, right? Kellogg's, they become a name brand, right? Everybody recognizes Kellogg's. It's gonna be the same with AI. We can't have 25 different AI models out there. It just won't last. Somebody will be the top top dog at some point.

Rob Mineault 56:32

Yeah, I guess so sure. Yeah.

Ryan Fleury 56:34

That's the way history has always worked. There's always been a format war, and somebody comes out on top.

Rob Mineault 56:39

But we don't need AI in our doorbells. And I don't know, I don't know that I want to know my computer judging me.

Ryan Fleury 56:48

Oh, you just want the AI girlfriend. We know that's coming.

Rob Mineault 56:54

Well, of course. I mean, I know it's here,

Ryan Fleury 56:56

But I know it's coming to your house. She's already here.

Rob Mineault 57:03

There you go, yeah, I'll get right on that. I can just use Chat-GPT and code the software for it. Oh, there you go. See thinking outside the box, right.

Ryan Fleury 57:19

Look at you all right.

Rob Mineault 57:22

Well, let's get out of here. Hey Lis?

Lis Malone 57:29

Hey, Rob?

Rob Mineault 57:31
Where can people find us?

Lis Malone 57:33
They can find us at www.atbanter.com

Ryan Fleury 57:37
Does anybody pay for that domain still? Is it still there?

Rob Mineault 57:41
God, I hope so/ I think Steve's paying for it.

Rob Mineault 58:13
They can also drop some email if they so desire, cowbell@atbanter.com

Ryan Fleury 58:13
Perfect.

Ryan Fleury 58:18
And you can also find us on social media, Instagram, Facebook, all that stuff, Mastodon.

Rob Mineault 58:30
All right. Well, I think that's gonna about do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Andrew for joining us, and we'll see everybody next time.

S Steve Barclay 58:47

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