

PODCAST Episode 460

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Right Hear, orientation app, beacons, markers, Bluetooth, accessibility, vision loss, independence, navigation, smart glasses, Meta Glasses, privacy concerns, assistive technology, app integration, user experience.

SPEAKERS

Steve Barclay, Shanell Matos, Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault, Lis Malone

R Rob Mineault 00:25
Hey, and welcome to another episode of AT Banter.

R Ryan Fleury 00:30
There's a super long delay because our 'Banter Banter' guru is like in Asia right now, so he's a long way away. So I left my long pause in there.

R Rob Mineault 00:40
Okay, that makes now makes sense. It all makes sense.

R Ryan Fleury 00:47
You're very calm this week. Last time you were on, like, what, Red Bull and vodka was it?

R Rob Mineault 00:54
Well, no, it wasn't really. I had a four day weekend, I took some, some, a little bit extra time off, so I'm just, I'm very zen, I'm very relaxed today.

L Lis Malone 01:08
So nice, your mouth is still on vacation.

R Rob Mineault 01:16
Oh that's right, well, my name is Rob Mineault, and joining me, of course, is the peanut gallery themselves. Hey, look, it's mr. Ryan Fleury ...

R Ryan Fleury 01:27
In the house,

R Rob Mineault 01:28
and hey, it's Miss Lis Malone.

L Lis Malone 01:32
F the damn house,

R Rob Mineault 01:37
You just ruin everything. Okay, I guess we're discontinuing the in the house thing. We tried it for last week, it kind of worked. I thought it came okay, came across okay. I think we could have made it work if we were just stuck with it for a year. I think could have been a real thing. Well, okay, listen, you just kind of give things space to breathe and to develop, but it's okay.

R Ryan Fleury 02:01
It's not wine.

R Rob Mineault 02:03
It could be wine.

L Lis Malone 02:06
I'll be in the house if there's wine.

R Rob Mineault 02:10
You don't even want.. we just don't have any wine.

R Ryan Fleury 02:17
No, she can't, because she ever fancy dancy voodoo diet thing she's on.

R Rob Mineault 02:23
Oh, oh, right, right. I forgot about that.

R Ryan Fleury 02:27
It's that like eat grain that you've washed three times.

R Rob Mineault 02:33
Yeah, right. And washed in goat pee, oh. Oh, yeah. No, no wonder. Okay. Well, listen, she has her, she has every right to be grumpy. How is that going, incidentally? Let's talk about that. Just, how.. yeah, how are you doing, Lis?

L Lis Malone 03:01
I'm fine. I'm fine.

R Ryan Fleury 03:02
We love you, Lis.

L Lis Malone 03:06
I know, kind of some days more than others.

R Rob Mineault 03:12
Like, no, I don't know that you love me. What the frick am I saying? Why am I talking about?

R Ryan Fleury 03:23
We wrote a song for you.

R Rob Mineault 03:25
Well, you did, Ryan.

L Lis Malone 03:26
You did, Ryan,

R Ryan Fleury 03:27
Right? Okay, so I love you.

L Lis Malone 03:29
I think you do have some love for me, Ryan. I do.

R Ryan Fleury 03:32
I do,

L Lis Malone 03:32
Rob. I think I think you could take me or leave me, probably.

R Rob Mineault 03:37
I mean, do I have to say?

L Lis Malone 03:42
I know. Okay.

R Rob Mineault 03:44
Well, then I'm taking the fifth.

L Lis Malone 03:45
I feel it, I feel it, man. I get it. It's all right. It's okay. All right.

R Rob Mineault 03:52
Well, listen. Yeah. No, it's fine. You're sad. You're bringing down the show.

R Rob Mineault 03:56
The Show would be very different without Lis. Let's just say that,

L Lis Malone 04:00
Yeah, it'd be good.

R Ryan Fleury 04:03

No, we tried. We tried it for, I don't know, what, six, seven years without, without a Lis. Yeah, it's better with you.

R Rob Mineault 04:15

Yeah, there you go. Well, listen, we'll write another song about you.

L Lis Malone 04:19

All right. So, okay, enough about me. Let's, let's move it along. You know, it's not all about me right now.

R Ryan Fleury 04:25

That's right.

R Rob Mineault 04:26

She's got a hell of a point there, right? So, without further ado, what are we doing Ryan?

R Ryan Fleury 04:32

So, today we are speaking with a community manager over at right here. She is Shanell Matos. Is that even close? Shanell?

S Shanell Matos 04:43

Yes.

R Ryan Fleury 04:47

So glad you could join us today. Hopefully you can fill us in on more about who you are and what you do over at Right Here.

S

Shanell Matos 04:55

Absolutely. Let me start with saying that I am blind. I do have light perception, but I have chosen for myself the label of blind, because I feel that if I have no usable vision, then that is a fair title, and I know that is a controversial concept in the community. Some people have their feelings on it, but that's my choice of my label. With that said, I work with Right Hear, and a big part of what we do is making sure that everyone has the same access to information when they enter a space as everyone else. So, we like to say that we're not a navigation app, we're an orientation app. I personally feel like that's really important. I don't like being told what to do. I don't like being told where to go, and I don't like being told how to do it. And I don't appreciate technology feeling that it has the right to do those things. So one of the nice things with this particular app that we have is that it doesn't do any of those things. It just informs you of what's around you. If you were sighted and you walked into a room, you would know immediately as soon as you walked in where the desk is, where the doors are, where the elevators are. If there are chairs, you know any of that information would just be immediate. You would just walk in, look, and there it is. No one has to have a sign, no one has to tell you. If there are signs on the wall, you'll see them, you'll read them, and you'll move on with your day. You'll make your own choices. And what we do at right here is the same thing. We allow people this with vision loss to have access to that same information. So when I walk in, I open my app. It immediately reads to me, you have arrived at such and such location. Business hours are this directly in front of you is the reception desk, directly to your left is your elevators, also directly to your left is a bank of chairs. If I move my body toward the direction of the elevators, so I've now moved left, the orientation of that information will also change. So, for example, at that point would tell me that the reception desk is now to my right, the elevators are directly in front of me to my left, and the chairs are in front of me directly to my right. So I'm able to decide, given that information, what I want to do, and how I want to do it. I still need my orientation and mobility skills. I still need my white cane. We at no point ever advocate for leaving your cane at home, that's crazy. But I can make the same decision that a sighted person would make upon entering the room, without ever having to talk to a person, without ever having to hear the beleaguered sigh, the huff, the inconvenience, the I don't work here, ma'am, kind of condescending, patronizing tone that I get from so many people. Unfortunately, when I enter a space and I'm trying to receive help. I don't have to deal with that. I can completely bypass that, have access to the same information everyone else does, and make my own choices. So that's a what we do, what we are in a very small nutshell.

R

Ryan Fleury 08:16

So, Shanell, is this the same Right Hear that years ago had the Beacon technology? Is it using the same beacons, and is that how the app is communicating the information to the user?

S

Shanell Matos 08:28

It is the same, Right Hear, but we've now upgraded, and we are no longer just beacons, we are beacons and markers that work in tandem with each other. So, the beacons are Bluetooth, they do not require Wi-Fi, and our IT people at any organization we work with absolutely love us, because we do not have to be hooked up to their security. Nothing we do will interfere with their system. There is no information sharing or interfering kind of overlap. None of that happens. It's all completely separate, and the markers are - imagine a super powered QR code. They're colorful, and you can access them at hard angles. You can do it from about 50, 60, even 70 feet away from them, and all you have to do is have the app open and pan vaguely in its direction. If it's there, the camera will catch it and immediately bring that information to your phone, so they work in tandem. The reason for that is, if you imagine the beacon as your umbrella, I like to use the conference room as an example, so for example, you're at a conference, and the beacon would immediately tell you, "Okay, this is where you are, this is, you know, welcome to such and such conference. The tables are laid out in this direction, the men's bathroom are on the left, the women's bathroom are on the right", you know? Whatever the location may be, in however descriptor it may need, maybe the check-in table, maybe there's a, you know, interesting aisle layout, whatever it needs to tell you. And then, as you're walking through each of those spaces, there would be a marker on them, so maybe you're scanning for a specific table, and you can just scan each table, and it'll tell you who's at that table, whatever information is input into it. So, maybe it's their website, maybe it's a contact information, maybe it's a very difficult to spell name that no matter how many times they repeat it, you'll never remember it. Maybe it's a phone number, whatever it is that they needed to put in there. You will have access to that right there on your phone immediately. And what's nice is it means that you can skip having to go to every table and have that awkward, yeah, sorry, you're not who I'm looking for conversation, because you know it's really, it feels really unfortunate when you're, especially here, when you're at a conference and you're like, yeah, I was looking for this table, sorry, I don't want to hear your pitch, this way you can kind of scan and just go straight where you actually wanted to go.

R

Ryan Fleury 11:18

So it almost sounds similar to the GPS app Voice Vista, where there's beacons that you can actually place yourself, so that the next user can come along as well, and find your beacon or marker if you want.

S

Shanell Matos 11:36

Very similar in concept, except for these beacons are actual physical beacons that are about the size and shape of probably a lipstick tube, for lack of a better description, they usually are hidden, and so they are specific to a location.

R Ryan Fleury 11:59
Okay.

S Shanell Matos 12:00
But the markers can be put anywhere.

R Ryan Fleury 12:02
Right

L Lis Malone 12:03
Shanell you said that, that it's, it's going to, it's using Bluetooth for connectivity?

S Shanell Matos 12:08
Yes.

L Lis Malone 12:08
So, what is the range for this, this lipstick-sized beacon?

S Shanell Matos 12:14
I would say approximately 30 feet, but generally speaking, the beacon is not used in a way that it needs more than 30 feet, because it's usually to identify that you have found a location, for example, you are now at the front door of a building, or you're at a back door of a building, or you have entered a new room, a whole new space. So it's not meant for granular description, it's only meant for the overarching information in the first place, that you don't really need a wide range for it.

L

Lis Malone 12:57

Yeah, and so right now, where are these systems being utilized right now?

S

Shanell Matos 13:03

We have over 2500 locations worldwide, so there's a lot of places I can't even begin to get into the list of specific locations, but I can say that here in the US we have hospitals, like there's a Children's Hospital in DC that I can think of off the top of my head. We have two major league soccer stadiums that are currently.. we have a museum that is enabled.. there's just so many restaurants.. there's a brewery.. there's a little bit of something for everybody at this point. I know that overseas we even have a Microsoft Office that is completely right here enabled. There's a few Lighthouses here in our country that are so, yeah, there's a little bit of everything.

L

Lis Malone 14:01

And so, for let's just say it's like a, like a restaurant or a brewery, as you mentioned. Is it the actual business that is that is paying to have the service for its patrons?

S

Shanell Matos 14:15

Yes, so it is the, the organization, or the business that would be paying for it, so the idea here is that our app is free and will always be free. That's non-negotiable. In fact, we don't collect any data from our app users, so there is no login process. We will never ask for your email, your social media, none of that. Our CEO likes to say that it's like your calculator app is just there, you just open it and use it, nobody's collecting anything. So that's what we do. And as far as the function, we think of it very similarly to, you know, if you're a business and you want to install an elevator, you're going to pay for an elevator. If you want ramps put in, you're going to. Pay for those, the user doesn't pay for those, so it's the same thing in our, in our opinion. So that's usually the process of it, and just like an elevator or a ramp, nobody's collecting the data, which is why we, we feel very strongly about that.

L

Lis Malone 15:17

And I'm all about privacy, so I'm not going to, I got nothing against you guys not collecting any data, but I am kind of curious about if you're not collecting any data, are you at least collecting some raw numbers? Because I'm wondering if businesses are wondering how many app hits did we actually get, like how many patrons are using this, I mean, if they're, are they looking for any kind of metrics to, to justify their investment?

S

Shanell Matos 15:47

Oh, absolutely. So we do collect, like, for example, we do see how many, how many times specific beacons were triggered at a location, we do see how many unique hits that that particular beacon may have. We also are able to see, for example, how many downloads we get, new downloads, how many times people have opened and logged into our app. So there are things like that that we can collect. We just don't collect anything about you as an individual.

R

Rob Mineault 16:21

So I want to sort of go back and talk a little bit about the sort of the philosophy behind the app, because I thought what you were talking about earlier was really interesting to me, because for a lot of navigation apps that do a lot of manufacturers and app developers and stuff that we've talked to a lot of the navigation apps sort of go the opposite way than then Right Hear has in the sense that that they they try to become super specific. I mean that's kind of the drive, it's like everything is like well we we have to get it right down to you know, take three steps here, turn left, go here, you know, it's, it's very specific, and it's very sort of micro managing your route. So I find it really interesting that Right Hear, you guys have sort of gone the other way, and this idea of the difference between navigation and wayfinding. So I guess my question is, did you guys sort of grow into that type of philosophy, just to talk, maybe talk a little bit about about that philosophy, and how it sort of came about.

S

Shanell Matos 17:31

I think I think it was very much, at least in part, from the very beginning, I think it evolved and grew and became bigger, more clear, and more solid as time went, but I think the seed of it was definitely already planted. I think the reality is that our CEOs very feel very, very strongly about independence and what that means, how they define that. They are from Israel, and so English is not their first language, and they feel very passionately about how they, about how they define terms and words, and perhaps that's part of, you know, learning different cultures, and perhaps part of that is learning different languages, but through that process of really sitting down and going, well, what does this word actually mean? They feel that it, it means the freedom of choice and opportunity and options, and it's not about necessarily telling someone just how to get somewhere, but giving them the freedom to decide they want to get there. Edan always talks about how, when you come into a place, you know, like for example with me, he goes into a place with me, I'm perfectly cognizant of what I want, what I think, and how I feel. He doesn't have to walk me into a space and then try to help, help me figure those things out. So, why would he help me figure out the basics of how to walk from one space to the other? That's not his job. He's not an orientation and mobility instructor. He's not, he's not my Dad, you know. He's not my husband. He's like, it's not my place to make that choice for you. That's your choice. He's like, all I can do is provide information and let you make that, and that's what he genuinely believes. That's what independence is. And so I think that's where the philosophy really really grew, grew into, I would say, with the whole company and the way the app is designed, and the approach I would say that he took, or that they took with it, is just really trying to make sure that they keep that in the forefront of their mind, they're not. Adding to the problem of taking away our autonomy, because that's very frustrating to them, to them both. If it's very frustrating to them to see people like me get frustrated and struggle, and go, I don't need you to do this for me, I need you to use your words and explain what this is, so that I can make it for myself, or I can make it myself, or you know, there's just this instinct for so many people to just, it's okay, here, let me give it to me, I'll do it, or here, let me take your hand, I'll take you, and I think that's a big barrier they were trying to break down with this app.

S

Shanell Matos 18:37

They absolutely are, and I think I think you're absolutely right. I feel someone else mentioned it before, you know, like what happens if your phone dies. Well, the nice part with something like this is it's you've been almost subconsciously building a mental map, as you've been hearing all this information, so you have context of what the space is. You don't necessarily, you know, if you still have your orientation and mobility, you still know how to troubleshoot a space that didn't just suddenly go away, you didn't get rusty, but now you have some context, some, you know, puzzle pieces to kind of fill in the empty spaces,

R

Rob Mineault 18:40

It also lets people maintain these Orientation and Mobility skills that, that are so important in the, in the day to day, you know, you know, there are, there are really cool, there's really cool stuff out there, you know, like the, the Meta Glasses, you know, we hear, we hear all, all kinds of things about smart glasses are on the rise, and sure, that's great, and we've talked about this on the show too, you know, Ryan's, Ryan's talked about this, it's kind of one of his favorite talking points. These tools are really great, right up to the point when your Wi-Fi fails, or whatever, you can't get a signal, and all of a sudden you've, you find yourself without that tool. Well, if you don't have, you know, a real solid basis to fall back on, a real, you know, solid understanding of orientation, mobility, and can you know problem solve your way through that? You're kind of hooped, so I think that that's another aspect of this that's that's really important, is that it helps you really, it encourages people to maintain those skills, and it still highlights the fact that those skills are really, really important to have.

R

Rob Mineault 19:33

So is that kind of the use case for this? Then is, is this, we would, would somebody say use this, say they were going to, whatever, they were going to college, and we college was equipped with this, and so they would kind of, you know, initially they would use it to sort of learn everything, but once they, once they've visited the campus, and they know the campus kind of well, then it's kind of just kind of sits in the background, and it just, it gives them like little reminders, like, okay, yeah, I'm passing, passing, whatever, the concourse, and you know, I know how to get to the library from here, or is the use case for this more like more around people coming into new spaces?

S

Shanell Matos 23:02

I think it's both. I think obviously most people are going to instinctively reach for it when they're going into a new space, simply because it's new, and we always want more information when things are new. But I think it's, it's a helpful training tool if you're trying to understand a space and learn a map, like you said, with universities. Which, by the way, we are in some Universities, but I think it's also a use case of, you know, like, especially for example, if you're going to a university, it's so easy to get disoriented because you're walking down a path and someone yells, "Oh, hey, yo, and you stop, you talk, and then you're like, Where am I standing again? I can't count how many times that's happened to me. Don't judge. And then you know, but there's also updates. These, both the beacons and the markers, can be updated as quickly as . So, for example, maybe you're walking up to the bathroom, and it says Men's Room on the door, but for whatever reason it's closed, so now they can update it to say Men's Room Closed For Cleaning, or Men's Room Caution Wet Floors, so they can constantly change that. So you get real-time information updates just by having the app open, and maybe you already knew that was the Men's Room, but you didn't know that the floors are wet. The other thing that I've seen people do is for weather alerts, where there's the little one of the Universities up in Alaska said that they've actually done it, where they've actually told the students, hey, you know, we have imminent weather concerns, please be mindful, pay attention. We may have to close early, you know, things like that. And they put them on all the different markers throughout the building, or the beacons, whichever they are using at the moment in the space that they're in, and say so that wherever a student is, they, they're getting that alert, even. And if they're not seeing the signs, you know, the digital signs flashing, warning, warning, they're still at least getting that information too. Because they don't want to rely on other students telling the students around them that, you know, there's a caution to be to be aware of,

R

Ryan Fleury 25:19

Right, and again I think an app like right here is in some ways similar to IRIA or Be My Eyes, it's an assistant tool you can access if you feel you need to access a little bit more information, because like any of these things, they are based on technology, batteries die, information may not be updated in timely fashion, right? If the owner doesn't take responsibility or ownership of the beacons and does renovations, but doesn't update the beacons, guess what? The next time you go in there, your information is going to be incorrect, but that's why you still fall back on your O & M skills, your troubleshooting skills, right? It's another tool in the toolbox that you still need to be able to choose to use or not.

R

Rob Mineault 26:02

One of the other things I'm curious about is talking a little bit about the difference in use case between the beacons and the markers, like, so what, what's kind of the different ways that that companies are using these, and is that pretty flexible in the sense that they can kind of be creative and use them however they want?

S

Shanell Matos 26:29

So it is a hybrid thing, and it is very flexible. Some organizations have all only markers, some have only all beacons, some have a combination of both, some have a lot of both, some have only a couple of beacons and a lot of markers. It's really subjective to the space, the need, and the budget. So, for example, an airport needs a lot of beacons, there's a lot of spaces in there, it needs a lot of information, and it has a lot of markers, so it's a lot of both. A library could be kind of hit or miss. It could be maybe only two beacons, one at the front door, one at the back, or like in a back entrance area, and a lot of markers, or it could even just be the one front entrance for a beacon and then all the markers, and then there's been others, really big libraries that have several beacons for several different, like wings, if you will, plus a bunch of markers. It is really, really dependent on the on the location, I think, as I mentioned, generally speaking. The beacons are the overarching kind of lay of the land, if you will, whereas the markers are more granular, so like I use that conference example. But also, like, for example, if you think cafeteria or a restaurant, you know, I think I like to think of like university cafeterias, where there's a lot of different food stations, you know. You would still, you would use the beacon at the door to basically say that you've now entered the cafeteria. This is the layout of the cafeteria, and then the markers that would actually have the information of, like, this is the salad station, and at this station you can find this, this type of food, and maybe the prices, or something like that, all of the, or a link to their menu, if they have a digital version of it. But that would be more often the use case, if you're like at a library, it might be that they have the markers on the different reading sections, and on the different aisles, and the different, like, counters, you know, this is the check-in, this is the information desk, that kind of thing. If it's a.. it's really.. it's so subjective. For example, I just went to the Sports Illustrated stadium a couple of weeks ago to catch a Red Bulls game, and at their stadium they have it, the markers on all, like all the bathrooms, they have it on every stadium seating, like aisle, so that you know, like, what seating section you're in, and they have them on every food vendor that gives you an idea of, like, what the food is in that specific section of what types of food are available. They have it, they have beacons, obviously, at the different entrances, they have them located throughout the building to sort of kind of help orient you at major connection points, where you, you have a lot of different directions you could possibly go to kind of help you better understand your space you're in, and and how to navigate that specific kind of more confusing webbing interface of like you have like. Five directions you can go right now. Which way do you choose?

R

Rob Mineault 30:03

And you know, so it's.. it sounds like, too, for any business out there that's interested in this, it's.. it's kind of a very flexible price point for them to implement.

S

Shanell Matos 30:13

Absolutely

R

Rob Mineault 30:14

They can go as deep as they want to, so that's pretty nice too, in terms of selling the system.

S

Shanell Matos 30:22

It's also very buildable, meaning you know, for example, we've had major companies and organizations who are like really big, who come to us and say we have a limited budget, but we'd really like to at least start the process. So they'll come and they'll start, and they'll do maybe just the essentials, and then they'll come back in a couple of years, and say, well, we got more Grants, and we'd like to do more, and they'll come, and they'll, they'll start filling in more accessible spaces, and more, more granular details that they wanted for their specific space, so it's not something that's like, okay, now you're done. You can always build on it, you can always grow, and the markers are so easy to kind of, you know, set up and move around as much or as often as needed, that it's not really difficult for anyone to set up. In fact, a setup can be done within a day.

R

Rob Mineault 31:15

Wow.

S

Shanell Matos 31:17

Maybe not for, like, JFK Airport, not probably more than a day, but for the average allocation it could be done in a day.

R

Ryan Fleury 31:27

Shanell, how do you, you guys, how do you guys focus on discoverability? And what I mean by that is, as I mentioned earlier, with IRIA, you got to look at IRIA partners or locations, so you got to look at the app or their website. Be My Eyes, same thing. Who's a Be My Eyes partner? Do I need to have the app open in order to find the beacons? How do I know who has a beacon? Because discoverability to me is now I've got another app on my phone I have to have running in order to detect a beacon for right here right have you guys tried to address discoverability or do you, how does that work?

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Shanell Matos 32:15

Yeah, so right now we do have to, you do have to have the app, and you do have to have it open in order to find out that you are at a Right Hear enabled location. You, we do have a, a directory, if you will, inside the app, where you can kind of look in your local area and see which locations are currently accessible, and Right Hear enabled, you can also look up areas like maybe you're going on vacation, I don't know, to California or coming here to New York, and you want to know before you even get here if there are locations of the kind you're looking for, so you can, you can look all that up and have that information before you even get here, but as far as right now it is definitely app based, both the beacons and the markers are all integrated into one app, so you're able to access that information without having to swap between two different apps, which is a recent update, in fact, because previously we had two separate apps, we had the Right Year app and we had a Markers AI app, but we recently, in the last month or two, actually just released a brand new, completely overhauled app that integrated the two together, so that's a little less frustrating and confusing for users. Android is in the process of receiving the same update, so stay tuned if you're an Android user. But we are working on it. We have not forgotten you. And as far as trying to work on the discoverability, we are in talks with other companies with other products like the smart glasses and stuff like that, trying to see if there's ways to partner or integrate or make things hands free, like we do recognize there's value in that, and that people are hoping for it, and we would love to make it happen. It's just a matter of having the right conversations with the right people, and where we're working on that.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:25

Yeah, so a couple things, you know, a few years ago there was supposedly a protocol for smart home called Matter that was going to unite and bring everybody all together, so the Apple Kit stuff could talk to the Google stuff, and the Google stuff could talk to the Amazon stuff, and that never really came to fruition, and that's almost, I think, what we need when it comes to navigation or orientation, because, like, as I mentioned, you know, 3,4,5,6, apps on our phone, having to do all this research as to who was a partner with who it. Be great if there was a united protocol that everybody's app or technology, you know, I know there's trade secrets, but there has to be some sort of data that could be shared amongst the different partners and somebody like Meta, you know, who've recently opened up their developer kit, there's an opportunity there. We already see IRIA there, Be My Eyes there. We see Orion. There is that something you guys are looking at as well?

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Shanell Matos 35:29

Absolutely, yes, we are. I cannot speak more on that, other than to say that we are absolutely looking at that. But yes,

R

Ryan Fleury 35:42

Come on, you can tell us.

S

Shanell Matos 35:48

I will say that it is my greatest wish for it to come to fruition. So, don't worry, I'm in the background being very pushy about it.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:00

Well, and you know, as you know, as somebody who is a cane user, by the sounds of it, hands free is just the end all be all. You've got your backpack or a purse in a hand, a cane in a hand, something else going on. Hands free is so much easier.

S

Shanell Matos 36:17

Yes, and I'm a Mom, so in New York City means it doesn't matter how old your child is, hand in hand is a requirement, and so hand in hand, cane in hand, I don't have a third hand.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:30

Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 36:31

Yeah, yeah.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:33

So it's coming.

R

Rob Mineault 36:42

I'm always curious to hear people's opinions about things like the smart glasses, because you know this isn't the first kick at the can, of course. Everybody remembers Google Glass, and that was different times, and, and I do feel like people are pretty much ready for it. Shanell, have you tried, like, Meta Glasses, or have you tried any of the smart glasses yourself?

S

Shanell Matos 37:16

So I personally, I am a Meta Glasses user, I own a pair. I was also an EnVision user, so I am very familiar. I also teach assistive technology on the side. I am a private instructor, so I'm very, very familiar with the different, different Smart Glasses, and it's funny because they get this question all the time. People are always wondering, like, you know, how do you choose, like, which one's the better one? Everyone wants to know which one's the best one, and the reality is, none of them are best, none of them are great, none of them are perfect. Some, a lot of them are useful, and I think it's very dependent on your lifestyle and your specific use case needs. I think, for example, I tell people, if you're an everyday user, you don't do a lot of reading, you don't do a lot of much of anything other than wanting to be able to ask some random questions, and occasionally take some pictures, and go, I wonder what that is. Then the Meta Glasses are perfect for you. You don't need more than that, but if you're a student, or you're working, and you, you have a heavy load of needing to be able to constantly check documents, and you need to be very detail specific, then the Meta Glasses aren't going to support your need, like they're not enough, and something a little more robust and a little more blind specific is going to be worth the investment for you. So, I always tell people it's like you really, it's there, really is no cookie cutter answer right now. I would love there for there to be a day where you know they're all so robust and useful that there is such an answer, but I don't think there is right now, and I think that's about to change.

R

Ryan Fleury 39:06

Google IO had their big event on the day we're recording this conversation, and the Apple Glasses are rumored to be coming very shortly. So, for us who are used to iPhones and accessibility, it could be a game changer.

S

Shanell Matos 39:21

I hope so, I really do, but I don't know. They've hyped me up before. Yes, I have learned to take it with a grain of salt, not to hold my breath, and just wait and see. I err on the side of live in the reality we have, and hope for the better, you know, coming forward, but you know, don't don't put all your ducks in a row and then start shooting, because you could be out all your ducks.

R

Ryan Fleury 39:57

Sure, and you know, look what happened, you know, Meta released a mainstream product that I don't know, was it adopted by the mainstream as well as it was the blind community? I don't think so, right. The Meta Glasses took off in the blind community.

R

Rob Mineault 40:09

Yeah, well, you know, that's the interesting part, right? That's the piece of it that's that I think is really important, because you know, the thing that made those, the Meta Glasses stand out was the fact that it was a mainstream device that, by accident - I'm assuming I really don't think I don't think Meta did this on purpose - but by accident they created a really great piece of AT. And the nice thing about that is that you know, as everybody knows, normally when it, when you're talking about a niche at product that's it's going to be expensive because it's not a mainstream product, and you know there's that the economy scale type of thing where they have to sell it for more because it costs more to manufacture. But for a mainstream, if it's if it's mainstream product, well, then you know it's the price point is going to be a lot cheaper, so for the Meta Glasses, people like this is great, you know, for whatever, 500 bucks, which for a piece of AT is a steal, so to me I look at all of this stuff and I'm going, man, I really, I want things like smart glasses to really take off in the mainstream, because that's going to mean that the price point for folks in the blind and low vision community that want to implement these things, they can actually afford them. But see, that's the thing I'm worried about, is that I don't know, in the mainstream, seems to be kind of like, well, I don't know, they, it feels gimmicky to them, I think, and it's been getting that, you know, a little bit of pushback from, you know, people really don't like the fact that you can't always tell if somebody's taking pictures or if they're recording. I know there's supposed to be like a red light or something on it, but people have got a way to cover those up. My point is, it's going to be a really interesting couple years, I think. What, as these newer generations of the smart glasses come out, really see the mainstream, how they, how they sort of embrace them.

L

Lis Malone 42:13

Well, Rob, I'm going to point out another big flaw with them, is that they're completely non-adjustable. If they don't fit your nose, you're screwed. If they don't fit your ears, you're screwed. I hardly use mine because they hurt, and I hope I practically have to hold them up, because I am one of those who was born with a tinier nose.

R

Ryan Fleury 42:33

You can get nose pads.

L

Lis Malone 42:35

No, I tried that already. Yeah, no, they, when they put them on, they're like, yeah, they're like, man, they just, man, they just.. I don't know what kind of figure they used as the mold, but this is the all-encompassing facial structure for the human race that you must fit into this profile. But I'm a perfect example of someone I paid for them, I am not using them, because if I can't, if they can't sit on my head, what good are they?

S

Shanell Matos 43:06

So I agree with that. I've had, I've had many clients who felt the same way, or they felt like they didn't make a large enough size for them to fit, like width wise, for the ears, and so the pressure was too much, it was too uncomfortable for them to wear them for any length of time. For people who have the tiny nose, I have found that there are some like silicone sport hooks that you can get for the back of the ear piece that will hold, you can slide them onto the earpiece, and it kind of like hooks them and pulls them, pulls them towards your face a little bit, and puts the weight of them more on your ears than on your nose. Some people like those.

L

Lis Malone 43:47

I mean, I know, and these are all, these are all band aids, and exactly. And I'll tell you, though, it may, I believe me, I've tried a couple different options, but they're very heavy, and it's like, if you just don't have the right face for them, and you know, like, again, if you pay \$500 for sunglasses, whatever, I mean, yes, they have the technology, you want them to freaking be able to sit on your damn face, I mean, that's kind of the point, that's it, you know?

S

Shanell Matos 44:10

That is true, although the, the on the flip side of that, what's nice with the Meta Glasses is that for the first time we have this technology, and we don't have to look like we're sci-fi characters to wear them, so you know we're already..

L

Lis Malone 44:24

I just look like I can't afford glasses that fit me, but hey, that's still at least more of a normal issue than what is that weird thing on your head.

R

Rob Mineault 44:34

But it is really interesting that everything you hear about it, it's.. it's all branded, right? Like it's the Ray Ban, so it's interesting that they're really leaning into the look and how they look and the form factor above anything else, and I think that that's because they kind of learn that lesson from from before, where people aren't just gonna wear like ugly ass glasses that makes them stand out, right? So you. Interesting, so I know that they are, they're really, they're really trying to make smart glasses go, and I'm, I'm, I really hope that this next generation, yeah, we really see some, some cool stuff, because it is, it's a, it's a really, really great solution, if, if we can just get adopted by the mainstream.

S

Shanell Matos 45:19

I would love to see a world where at some point we can just untie from the phone altogether and just wear a pair of smart glasses, and it does everything I need it to do. Yep, that would be fantastic.

R

Rob Mineault 45:32

Yep.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:32

Yeah. And we'll get there, we'll get there as soon as the technology can miniaturize even more, and developers, you know, again have to really buy into this. I don't know how many of you who have Meta Glasses go into the Meta store, app store, whatever you want to call it, but more and more there are blindness specific apps than there are mainstream apps. So you know, if that continues to be a trend, how long will Meta continue to pour money into this if the mainstream is not adopting it.

S

Shanell Matos 45:57

Well, and I think Meta has been putting some serious money into medical research and understanding just how effective their glasses are for the low vision community, which I think is great, which is why you're seeing a lot of features over the the updates that keep coming out for for us. There's a way you can now change the verbosity in it, so that it can actually be more descriptive or less descriptive, depending on what your preferences are, and all of this is coming back from feedback from our community, specifically saying, hey, these are the things that we want. When the Meta Glasses first came out, you couldn't read word for word. Now you can. You just have to do it very specifically, not for like long dissertations, but you know, for you know, a page worth of information, you can. And that wasn't even an option in the beginning. So, like, they are listening, which is really nice, and it's kind of a change of pace for a lot of companies, frankly, so I'm grateful for it, but I think you know, like you guys were saying earlier, there is a point of like privacy concerns, and I think that's really where the mainstream folks, the non-blind and low-vision people, are really kind of digging their heels in a bit, like not just the gimmickiness of it, but it's sort of like, you know, we don't want everything tied to our social media accounts, and we don't want you, like, who are you, like, why should we give you all of our access to all of our information, and you get to see our videos and our photos, and whatever issue they may have in their head about it, they feel away, and that makes it really hard to push forward, I think.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:46

Yeah, and I don't know, I want to flip that around sometimes, though, because how many times are those people in the public that are cited able-bodied, holding up their phones, taking pictures of everything and everybody without my consent.

S

Shanell Matos 48:04

Absolutely.

R

Ryan Fleury 48:05

So, how are the glasses any different? They're not.

R

Rob Mineault 48:07

For sure. They're no different.

R Ryan Fleury 48:09
It's a camera.

R Rob Mineault 48:11
Well, you know, and I do remember there was talk about, yeah, you know, they could load in facial recognition software in there as well, which got some pushback ,

R Ryan Fleury 48:18
Which the iPhone has already.

R Rob Mineault 48:20
Does it?

R Ryan Fleury 48:21
Yes, it does. My doorbell has it.

R Rob Mineault 48:24
Sure. But I guess, I guess the concern people, the concern that people had with that is, is that you know you're walking down the street and somebody you know goes by you wearing a pair of these, you know, is the, is that a privacy concern here? They're going to walk by and they're like, boom, up, they know your name? it sounds very sci-fi, and sounds very paranoid, but, but also like that, that could totally be possible, right? So I think people are pushing back against those ideas, so I don't know, they'll work it all out, we'll figure it out.

L Lis Malone 48:57
AI cat is already out of the damn bag.

R

Rob Mineault 49:05

People will just get used to it. It used to be people were really concerned about, you know, giving our data and everything, and now we, you know?

R

Ryan Fleury 49:12

The only option we have is if you're really concerned about privacy, then buy from an AT specific company, like maybe a Giga, right, because they're blind and specific, working on blindness-specific glasses for the blindness community with input from the blind. They're probably focused a little bit more on privacy than the metas who's been gathering our data for 20 years on Facebook...

R

Rob Mineault 49:37

And if, you know, and if you're really concerned about, about, you know, having walking down the street and being identified by somebody wearing a Meta Glasses, then just do what I do, and just stay home, and just, you know, become a recluse.

R

Ryan Fleury 49:53

There you go.

R

Rob Mineault 49:54

Easy, easy solution. Shanell, we want to thank you so much for coming on. Before we let you go, where the heck can people find out more about Right Hear? And yeah, how do they find you guys?

S

Shanell Matos 50:08

Absolutely, so I think they can go to our website, which is right-hear.com if they would like to join our movement and learn about how they can advocate for spaces to be accessible in their own homes, locations, and whatnot. They can go on to the community page and join the movement there. It's a, it's a registration link that they can click on. We also have an advocacy page where they can look, check out the different templates and stuff that we've already pre-created to help with that entire process. Additionally, you can always connect with us on Facebook or LinkedIn. Any of our team would be happy to hear from you on LinkedIn. So, feel free to send us a connection and reach out to us directly. We do not mind meeting new people and having new conversations, so if you just want to know what we're doing, or you want assistance with advocating, or wanting to know if a place is already accessible, feel free, just reach out and say hi.

R

Rob Mineault 51:14

Thank you again so much for taking some time out of your evening and chatting with us, anytime you want to come back, we're always happy to have you.

S

Shanell Matos 51:29

Thank you so much. I really appreciate you guys taking the time and inviting me here today.

R

Ryan Fleury 51:35

All right, thanks, Shanell.

L

Lis Malone 51:37

Shanell, nice to meet you.

S

Shanell Matos 51:38

It was nice to meet you all.

L Lis Malone 51:40
Take care of my city.

S Shanell Matos 51:43
I will.

R Ryan Fleury 51:45
right

R Rob Mineault 51:49
Where people find us?

L Lis Malone 51:52
www.atbanter.com

R Rob Mineault 51:55
They can also drop us an email if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com. And they can also find us on some social media stuff there, so there you go. All right, well, I think that is gonna go do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course, to Shanell for joining us, and we'll see everybody next time.

S Steve Barclay 53:10
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