



## The NEAT Podcast, Episode Four

### **\*Podcast intro plays\***

#### **Steve**

You might have noticed that we haven't been around recently. We've been very busy, each of us. And myself and Adam, in particular, went on the road for a while. We attended the American Council of the Blind national convention which was held in Rochester, New York.

I thought it would be a great idea to interview some of the technology vendors who were in attendance at the conference. So, you're going to hear from some of them during this podcast, and a couple of other podcasts coming up in the future. But I just wanted to talk briefly a little bit about the American Council of the Blind national convention.

This was my first national convention, held specifically for people with visual impairments or blindness. I've been to other conventions and conferences before, but their focus wasn't solely on low vision, blindness, and that kind of thing. So, as I said this was my first one, and it was really exciting. I got to meet a lot of people. I got to talk to a lot of vendors, and I got to go to a lot of exciting presentations, given by many inspirational and exciting people. And I would say, hands down, it was my best experience at a conference in my professional career so far. And I'm hoping that next year we get lucky enough to be able to go to another national ACB, American Council of the Blind, conference in 2020.

So, one of the things that really struck out to me was we went to two presentations that that stick out in my mind. One was given by Apple, and the other was given by a group of people who actually I don't know who they're affiliated with, I think they were just members of the American Council of the Blind. But the one that was given by Apple was really interesting because they went over a lot of the up and coming accessibility features that they're building into iOS 13.

But the thing that really caught my attention about them was, they're starting a program on- it's like a program series. It's called See, spelled S E E, like how you see with your eyes. And it's basically about the Earth and the people who live on the Earth after an apocalypse. And everybody on the planet is blind.

And they've been this way for many years. So this is the premise of this series. The interesting thing about it is, there are twins born to a couple. The twins are the only two people that have vision. This is the premise of this program that's coming up that Apple has basically written, produced, done everything. And we got to meet one of the producers of the program, and another individual as well, I

think one of the writers, and it was really exciting to hear about that. They were not able to give us details of when it's going to air but they did say that it would be later in 2019. So, we'll see.

The other interesting thing that we experienced was, one of the presentations we went to was a mock trial. And it was about an individual who worked in a company. He ended up suddenly losing his vision, and had to be accommodated. In the mock trial he was suing the company for firing him, the company gave him what they felt was a reasonable accommodation. He turned around and said it was not a reasonable accommodation. And so we got to be the jury in this mock trial. And it was absolutely fascinating the way they did it because they wrote everything out. They had attorneys for the plaintiff and the defendant they had witnesses for the plaintiff and defendant. They had experts coming in on both sides. And it was like three or four hours long, it was great.

So those two things really stuck out in my mind and I just thought I would share them with you. Today on the podcast we have one of the companies that I met with in the exhibit hall. And I know I just said that the two presentations I went to stuck out in my mind. But these people also really stick out in my mind because of what they're doing. And so today, you're going to hear the first interview is going to be with a company called Aira. And so you'll hear all about them and the wonderful things that are doing. And I have signed up to be an Aira Explorer which I'm very excited about. So without further ado, here is Aira, and a little bit about their background, their story, and the services that they offer.

### **Steve**

So I am standing here at the ACB convention with Janine Stanley from Aira. So Janine, can you tell our listeners an overview of Aira?

### **Janine**

Sure! Thank you so much, Steve, for interviewing us. And Aira is a visual interpreter. So think of it as a pair of eyes in your pocket. We've all had those times when we really just need that glance at something from a sighted person, or we just need somebody who gets blindness, to actually help with some visual input. That's what Aira is. So we connect you to our team of trained agents through a smartphone app, and or a pair of Horizon glasses. And those agents are going to literally tell you about your world, we're going to provide you with information to do with what you need to do.

### **Steve**

That is so awesome. What are the kinds of services that Aira offers to people?

### **Janine**

Well our agents can do just about anything. In terms of describing things, they've done everything from describe TV programs and movies. I'm a Game of Thrones fan, and they did that for me for the final season, which was awesome. Yes, I never get out of an interview without mentioning that one. Because it was it was a lot of fun. But in the convention setting, for example, agents have been helping people set their thermostats in their hotel rooms, that's a big one. And finding lost Air Pods. "Oh, my gosh, I dropped my Air Pod! I can't find it." And how many times does that happen? You've dropped something and can't find it. Our agents do a lot of that. Helping with recipes, helping to cook, we had a lady the other day who got an Insta pot. And she said, "I don't know how to use this thing." Our agents can

actually go out online, look up the manual, look up recipes, and hints on using the Insta pot, and read those to you. So she's going to be up and cooking I think pretty soon.

**Steve**

Oh, that is SO fun!

**Janine**

Yeah! And my second favorite thing, airport traveling, I love Aira in airports. And a lot of the airports around the country, we have over 40 airports now that are free access location. So you can download the app, fire it up in an airport, and you've got an assistant right there with you.

**Adam**

So cool.

**Janine**

So I'm not gonna say you won't ever need airport assistance, human airport assistance, but I call it the Aira magnet effect. Whenever you are wearing Aira, using Aira, helpful sighted people come out of the woodwork. Hahaha.

**Steve**

Of course they do!

**Janine**

Yes, yes. And, it is very nice in an airport setting to just get up, move around, go where you want to go when you want to go there.

**Steve**

So I was at a seminar the other day where they were talking about using Aira for employment. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Janine**

Absolutely! So, we have a job seeker promotion. If you're looking for work, we have just opened this up to not only Aira explorers, but also our guests. So if you go into the app, you will see a "Search for free offers." And under that button, you're going to go into another screen. And our job seekers offer allows you to get help from an agent with things like formatting your resume. Because you know, no matter how much you know about your screen reader and your word processor, it's always good to have another set of eyes or set of brain, whatever, looking at that resume, make sure it looks like what you think it's supposed to look like. Picking out your clothing for your interview. I have a friend who said, "You know, I went to work someplace. And I didn't know what business casual meant." So the agent went online and described to her business casual clothing, and what it was, and what kinds of things she might want to get. Helping with filling out job ads online, that's another big one. Getting through those inaccessible captchas to put your job application on a board, put your resume up. Help with your LinkedIn profile. All of those important things for job seeking with your agents can help you with.

**Steve**

Absolutely incredible.

**Janine**

And the final thing, Steve, that's really cool, is we can even call you a Lyft or an Uber to get to your job interview, track that ride for you, make sure it's the right one.

**Adam**

Oh wow!

**Janine**

Yeah, yeah, you can link your Lyft and Uber apps to the Aira app, and your agent could call the ride for you. They can track it, all of that. It's a huge safety thing for a lot of us. So yeah, I enjoy that feature almost as much as the airport feature.

**Adam**

I didn't know about that use. That's really cool.

**Janine**

That's a great one. Because, oh my gosh, how many times have you been at a busy parking lot? You know, and say, "Wait, aren't there like five Uber's?" And I got into the wrong one once because I wasn't using Aira! Oops! And I'm all, you know, secure in there with my dog. And the guy said, "So you're Elena?" "Oh, crap. No, I'm sorry. Oops!"

**Adam**

Well at least that Uber driver confirmed! That's good!

**Janine**

Exactly!

**Adam**

But, the fact that Aira can help with that is awesome.

In a session we went to Saturday, for Aira, it was announced something about a free version. Would you be able to speak a bit to that?

**Janine**

Oh, absolutely.

**Adam**

Because, we're excited!

**Janine**

Absolutely, we are excited too! So in the fall, we will begin to roll out a free tier of Aira service. And what this means is that Aira will be free to everyone eventually, at least daily, there will be some portion of service. And it's still being developed at this point. So we don't have any details. But that free tier of service will first roll out to our current Explorers. So you become an Explorer, you're already an Explorer, you're going to get a little something back, because you guys have supported us through our growing and everything. And so you know, time to give back. So you can actually become an Explorer at any point in time. You can use the service for free and our free access locations like airports, like Walgreens is a great national chain that is free. It's a free Aira access location, you go in and do your Walgreen shopping, which I switched my pharmacy, because my pharmacy didn't have free Aira service. And I really like the fact that I can just walk into Walgreens and I don't need help from anybody, I'm going there and get whatever I need whatever I want. And that's all free.

**Adam**

So Walgreens offers Aira?

**Janine**

They do!

**Adam**

Oh, OK!

**Janine**

Okay, so if you download the app, and you go into your Walgreens, you will get a notification on your phone that says this is a free Aira access location, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, there's actually a noise! So it will notify you and it will also if you go to an airport, and that's a free access location. Aira is free here, just as it is here at the Rochester Airport, at a number of airports around the country.

**Adam**

See, its details like this this and how the app functions and I think it's going to be great for our listeners to learn about. That's really cool.

**Janine**

And we are happy there are as many ways to use Aira as there are people using it. My absolute favorite use, and I just love this, a mom used Aira to look at her son who was supposed doing his homework.

**Adam and Steve**

Hahahaha!

**Janine**

He was playing video games! Yes, that's why it's so beautiful. I really love them. Yes, one of our Explorers is a Beekeeper. And he uses Aira to help him manage his hives and manage his land that he's got the hives on. And I thought that was fascinating! Because you know, that's just something you don't even think of. And here's this guy, he's out there doing it. Yeah, I know. A lot of our explorers have very

unusual jobs or unusual hobbies, things like that. That Aira is just a lot of fun. And it really adds to what they've been doing. And then there are some people who take up or rediscover hobbies and interest because they've got the visual support.

**Steve**

That's so cool.

Do you have anything else that you'd like to share with us that you think our listeners would find valuable?

**Janine**

I would definitely say, for folks to please download Aira, you can download the app for free on the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store. Runs on both iOS and Android. Go ahead and download the app, you'll put in your phone number, and we will then send you a code and you put in that four-digit code, very simple. And then, you can use the app wherever it's free. You can also have a free trial of the app, we have a free seven-day trial. If you're doing it here through convention and you decide, hey, I really liked the app, you can sign up and get your first month free.

**Adam and Steve**

Awesome. Awesome, thank you so much!

**Janine**

Let me give you our 800 number. It is 1-800-835-1934. And we've got our customer service folks. That's 1-800-835-1934, and our customer service folks are there. The hours are on our website, which is Aira.io, that's A I R A dot I O.

Adam and Steve

Awesome. Thank you so much!

**Janine**

Yay!

**Steve**

That was a great interview that we got to record and I thank Janine Stanley for doing it for us. So without further ado, here is some really awesome information about the BrailleNote Touch Plus from Humanware. I am so glad that I was able to catch up with them.

**Steve**

Can you tell us about the new BrailleNote Touch Plus?

**Humanware**

Yes, absolutely, I would be happy to tell you about the new BrailleNote Touch Plus. It started shipping in February of this year. And it is an update to our BrailleNote Touch, which we released in 2016. So the BrailleNote Touch Plus is running Android Oreo 8.1, We still have our touchscreen, so you're able to do

touch Braille, we have a USB C charging capabilities now. And the BrailleNote Touch Plus has a greatly updated processor and internal board. So you're able to experience a startup time, that's about 20 to 25 seconds, we have Chrome as our browser now. So all of our standard keyboard shortcuts if you're using a screen reader apply. So if you want to navigate by headings or buttons or links, you just press the associated key such as H for heading, And L for link, and B for button and so much more. We've added an Easy Reader Plus application, which is based on the application built by Dolphin. And that is what we use for navigating Bookshare books so we can easily download, navigate Bookshare books, we can download and navigate NFB-Newsline content, Project Gutenberg, and 14 other online libraries. So those are all available just from within the Touch Plus itself. We have support for five gigahertz networks, support for printing is much easier. We're able to navigate around support for third party apps is greatly improved, because the updated Android operating system. You can cast the Touch Plus to a screen if you own a Chromecast or if you own a computer with Windows 10, you're able to share the screen very easily. You can, of course, connect it to the HDMI port in the back. But really you'll notice the speed and the performance increase when you use the Touch Plus. So it's much faster, really fun to use. Google Docs support is awesome. Microsoft PowerPoint support is excellent. And it's a lot of fun. It's just like you're zooming around and you can get stuff done very, very quickly.

**Steve**

Awesome. Wow, that sounds really, really fascinating and wonderful. I love when I come to these different conventions, and I start seeing, you know, the latest technology, it gets me very excited. If someone has a BrailleNote Touch, can they upgrade to a Touch Plus?

**Humanware**

They can! This is another really exciting thing that we're doing. So it's called the boost up program. And if anyone has a BrailleNote Touch version one, they're able to upgrade their unit to the Touch Plus. That includes a new BrailleNote Touch Plus, the new board inside, they will get a battery, they'll clean the Braille display and just put it in tip top shape, boost it up and send it back to you all the very quick turnaround time for a fraction of the price of a new brand-new Touch Plus. So we're pretty, really, really excited about that.

**Steve**

That's so cool.

Thank you for telling us about that.

**Humanware**

Thank you so much for having me. I'm really, really excited about the Touch Plus, and if anyone has any questions, please feel free to reach out to anyone at Humanware we will gladly tell you all about it or give you any information that you need.

**Steve**

Excellent.

**Steve**

That was some really awesome information about the BrailleNote Touch Plus from Humanware and I'm so glad that I was able to catch up with them and everybody else that I caught up with in the exhibit hall at the ACB convention.

Now you're going to hear from Douglas Gerry from Freedom Scientific about some really awesome licensing and purchasing options for JAWS and some of their other products. This is going to be part one of a two-part interview that you will hear on the podcast. Part two will come next month. So here is Douglas Gerry from Freedom Scientific.

**Steve**

So I understand that you guys have new home licensing for JAWS and some of the other products, can you tell us about that?

**Douglas**

Of course. So now we have what we call our home annual license. And this is a way for somebody to have JAWS, or ZoomText, on their home computers, for \$90 a year just for the JAWS, or \$80 a year for the ZoomText. You can go to our store and buy it right off a store.freedomsscientific.com. Once you make that purchase, and you go then through the checkout, you'll get emails and I'll explain how to activate it on your computer. And here's the kind of fun thing about it: So you get your JAWS. And you click on a link to the portal, which is portal.freedomsscientific.com, and it shows you your license. And then you have an option right there on that page to activate this computer. So you'll activate that computer, and you can activate up to three computers. And if one of those computers, should happen to it, and you need to deactivate, instead of contacting us or going to Fs activate, just log into the portal on any other computer and deactivate because you'll see the list of computers that are activated, and you can deactivate. So you can manage your own licenses.

If you here at the show, we're actually giving 20% discounts. So a JAWS instead of being \$90 is \$72 for a year. If you activate it today, you will get version 2019. And in October, at the end of October, when we drop 2020, version 2020, you will also get that. Two months prior to it being the end of your year, you'll start getting notifications, and you'll be able to go to the portal and renew. So you'll already renews yours. So it's only \$90 a year for JAWS, and this is for Home. It's licensed for your home computer and it's just managed by you through our portal.FreedomScientific.com. Or when you purchase it, just go to store.FreedomScientific.com. You can find both of those also by going to our homepage.

**Steve**

So this is for JAWS and ZoomText?

**Douglas**

JAWS and ZoomText. We do not currently have a Fusion, you'd have to buy them separately. We plan to have one as well, we just have some technical things to go through first.

**Steve**

So what about people that might have the professional version of JAWS, they need to upgrade it, and they're not using it in a professional environment, like if they happen to have JAWS professional on a home computer. Okay,



**Douglas**

Okay. So as you know, the professional is for commercial use. So if they're currently not working, and they still want their JAWS at home, here's the best part about this. Let's say that they have version 2018 or version 17 or version-anything about the current version. Now, they can convert their professional to a home annual license instead, instead of paying the upgrade costs that are associated with going from 2018 to 2019, instead just buy a home annual license and use that as your main license from that point forward.

**Steve**

What if someone has professional and they just bought a new SMA?

**Douglas**

If they're working, then obviously that's the right product for them. If they're at home, and they just bought their SMA, and they've already paid for it. But if they're about to renew their SMA, they can say "Hey, can I renew this as a Home instead of a Professional license," and they can save some money that way.

**Steve**

That's really cool.

**Douglas**

If you already have your Home license, and you already have your SMA, the whole annual may not be the best step for you now, because you've already bought two years, right?

**Steve**

So you way want to wait for the SMA to... (expire)

**Douglas**

And then weigh that decision. Am I going to spend the \$150 to renew the SMA, which turns out to \$75 a year, right? Or, am I going to go with the annual which is \$90? Again, that's for JAWS and ZoomText.

During that course of the year any update that we push out is part of that license. And there is no functional or feature difference between the annual license and the what we call perpetual license.

**Adam**

That's cool!

**Douglas**

It is really cool.

I'm going to give to you. Now, these coupons are only good until the end of September. Here's a 20% coupon. I'm gonna hand it out to you. It's got a code on it. And make sure you get this to people.

**Adam**

Oh, we will!

**Douglas**

Well, you know, we know through all of our discounts that we've been doing over the years here and here at ACB and NFB. We've been given these just as we know, it's very popular. And we know that people want to have access to JAWS, and we had to make it more accessible to them financially. And in response to a lot of that demand, we've come up with this program, and we feel pretty positive about it.

**Adam**

That's really awesome.

**Steve**

That's cool.

Anything else happening at Vispero that you think we should know about?

**Douglas**

We do have a new product. So we're, as you know, Optelec is also a part of us. And I don't have one here because truth be told we sold out of them very quickly. It's called the Clear View Go. And the Clear View Go is a collapsible 15 inch, folding, portable CCTV. It has a battery in it, and it lasts, and it weighs approximately nine pounds. It's a great school product. We have a sister product called the Jupiter that's available through APH for the federal quota money too.

**Adam**

We'll have to keep an eye out for that! Thank you so much!

Yeah. All right. Anything else, Steve? I think that's about it.

**Douglas**

Hey, nice meeting you.

**\*Podcast outro plays\***

**Adam**

For more information or to subscribe to our newsletter, please visit us at [AssistiveTechnology.OakHillct.org](http://AssistiveTechnology.OakHillct.org) or hit us up on twitter @TheNEATPodcast. Today's podcast was hosted by Steve Famiglietti and produced by Kris Thompson and Adam Kosakowski. Our theme music was composed by Andrew Pergiovanni. Tune in next month for another episode and thanks for listening!