

The meeting was promptly called to order and Gary Shepard made several announcements to a record 47 attendees. Several new members were welcomed and volunteers solicited to help with the sign-in process and photography needs.

A new start-up hearing aid company known as Audiotoniq, Inc., recently was founded in Austin and accepted our invitation to present their marketing approach, production time line, products, unbundling concept and user programming details to our group. The founder has been in the hearing aid business over 40 years and produced the first sound processor ever built.

Audiotoniq is just back from the national convention of the Hearing Loss Association of America where they were a major sponsor and were reported to receive “WOW” acclaims.

THE Q&A PORTION OF THE PRESENTATION AS WELL AS MEMBER POSTS, RESPONSES, ADDITIONAL PRODUCT INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION CAN BE FOUND ON THE HEARING SOLUTIONS FORUM.

AUDIOTONIQ PRESENTATION SUMMARY

(Presentation by Harold Mindlin, Greg Bryant, Courtney Johnson)

Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic health condition facing seniors (1)

Only one out of five people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually wears one (2)

In a study of “non-adopters”, 76% mentioned finances as a barrier to adoption. 64% said they cannot afford hearing aids. 50% indicated cost as a definite reason why they do not use hearing aids (3)

Sources: (1) Prevalence of selected chronic conditions: United States 1990–1992. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital Health Stat*, 10, 1–89.) (2) (<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/quick.htm>)

(3) Kochkin, S. (2007). MarkeTrak VII: Obstacles to adult non-user adoption of hearing aids. *Hearing Journal*, 60, 4, 24-50.

“When left untreated, hearing loss often leads to isolation, depression, and other emotional conditions that can affect both mental health and quality of life. Yet, hearing loss remains one of the most commonly unaddressed health conditions in America today.” - *Sergei Kochkin, PhD Executive director of The Better Hearing Institute*

Positives of Getting Hearing Aids

93 percent of consumers indicate that their quality of life has been positively impacted by their hearing instrument usage at least some of the time (1). Areas of improvement included: Effective communication-Social life-Safety-Relationships at home.

State of the Hearing Aid Industry

In the last 30 years, despite improved technology, advanced degrees in audiology and more public knowledge about the dangers of loud noise levels, the hearing aid industry has seen only a 5% growth in hearing aid usage (1) Hearing products are a class 1 exempt FDA product (2) No visit is

needed to either an MD or ENT to purchase hearing aids (3) In the United States there is approximately 1 audiologist for every 24,523 persons (4). Only 14% of physicians routinely screen for hearing loss during a physical (5).

Sources: (1)International Journal of Audiology 2010; 49: 195–202, Telehealth in audiology

(2) CFR - Code of Federal Regulations Title 21 <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/cfrsearch.cfm?fr=874.3300>

(3) Hearing Mojo, Thursday, May 27, 2010 <http://hearingmojo.com/with-fdas-blessing-new-over-the-counter->

[hearing-aids-and-personal-sound-amplifiers-promise-to-disrupt-global-hearing-industry](http://hearingmojo.com/with-fdas-blessing-new-over-the-counter-hearing-aids-and-personal-sound-amplifiers-promise-to-disrupt-global-hearing-industry)

(4) [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291121.htm#\(8\)](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291121.htm#(8)), <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/>

(5) http://www.betterhearing.org/hearing_loss/myths_about_hearing_loss/index.cfm

Bundling of Services

Hearing Aid Manufacturers to Audiologists/HIS to Hearing Aid Customers who cycle back and forth with Audiologists/HIS to make adjustments

2009 Consumer Reports Study

This first study on the hearing aid industry involved 12 Secret Shoppers and 48 Hearing Aids and Lab tested features on 44 hearing aids. 1100 hearing aid purchasers were surveyed. The results were: Audiologists used a “real-ear test” and other tests to check the hearing aids’ fit- Each user visited Audiologists at least once for follow up adjustment after purchase-After 90 days, Two-thirds (32)of the 48 aids they bought were improperly fit. Among the issues were: Hearing Profiles were not programmed correctly to the consumer audiogram-Users found the adjustments uncomfortable.

Audiotoniq Mission is *Supporting affordable hearing healthcare* by making hearing testing part of baseline health tests, increasing access and convenience to affordable, high-quality hearing aids, and offering people with hearing loss more choices and putting control in the hands of hearing aid users,

Audiotoniq Business Model includes unbundling of audiology services- reduced price to \$1,800 per hearing aid pair (\$900 per aid)-Selling directly to users from Audiotoniq online-hearing aid programming to fit specific hearing needs from a submitted audiogram-emphasis on serving each customer personally-remote audiology support where customers can make appointments for video chats and/or phone calls with an Audiotoniq Audiologist.

Audiotoniq Hearing Aid System:

Uses technology to wirelessly communicate a software application on a Smartphone or Android device.

Uses a rechargeable, built-in lithium ion battery that lasts up to 24 hours and is charged in a storage case

Utilizes magnetic connectors allowing users to listen to music, talk on the phone or connect to any audio device at his or her corrected sound profile.

Utilizes the Audiotoniq Professional Hearing Test which does not require an operator to administer the test and has wireless connectivity, which allows for results to be printed or sent to an electronic medical record system. The low-cost testing system includes a computer with video instructions and easy-to-follow prompts. Live, online chat capabilities with audiologists and Audiotoniq customer care representatives, as well as live video conferencing