



Transcript of podcast with:

Martin Lampner, chief financial officer, [Chimes International](#)

Chauncy Rucker (CR): Welcome. I'm Chauncy Rucker. I'm at the 2008 Technology Innovators Conference. It's being hosted by the National Center for Technology Innovation. The theme this year is "Thriving in a Global Marketplace." I'm having a conversation right now with Martin Lampner who has a very interesting project. I'd like you to simply give us an overview of that.

Martin Lampner (ML): Thank you Chauncy. Just a quick identification of what Chimes is because people often think it's an acronym or it means something, it actually is a reference to where we were founded some 61 years ago in the basement of a church in Baltimore. A group of parents thought their children had potential and at that time the educational system essentially thought folks with cognitive needs were not their responsibility, that there was really very little to do for them [beyond] send them to the state hospital, put them out of sight, out of mind. This group of parents objected and started something that honestly goes on today trying to take advantage of the world around us and making sure these individuals reach their maximum potential and contribute to the benefit of everyone around them not just themselves.

In that regard, we embarked on a new website now almost 11 months ago and as an outgrowth of it, the project you reference is the concept of creating a social network for individuals with cognitive limitations. And out of that making sure that the content is meaningful not just to them but to people at any level so that essentially you know it is a tiered content but a contiguous one making sure that it's what we say to one group translates no matter what their particular limitations are and giving them the ability to interact amongst themselves and with others.

One of the biggest disadvantages this group has is that they are often perceived as unemployable. They are sometimes seen as isolated. Sometimes that's by choice of their own, sometimes by the society around them, and this project is working at least as its major thrust to break that down. We've been fortunate we hooked up through one of our board members, a gentleman named Matt Kaplowitz, with the ITP center at NYU in New York. Frankly they got us thinking about the use of innovative technology. I saw things there that really amazed me. The work of students – a lot of rather crudely put together a piece of scotch tape here some solder there – but you know taking things we take in commonplace and making them available and changing what they do.

I think taking that technology and you know based on what one of the speakers [\[TV Raman\]](#) said this morning, moving beyond the user interface and saying that the content's there. The content's is available and that we need to provide people the tools to gain access to it, manipulate it, sort it out, translate it to whatever level of cognition they're most comfortable with is really a critical piece for us.



National Center for Technology Innovation

Advancing Technology Innovations for All Students

The world we operate in as an organization is changing. 35 years ago, 40 years ago, 85-90% of the people we serve were in state institutions and essentially the door had been locked and if the key hadn't been thrown away, it had certainly been misplaced. Organizations like ours came back and said no, they're a part of our community. It's time now to give them access to the tools and content that most of us are beginning to take for granted.

No one would have perceived what the Internet could do for a person five years ago. I do 85-95 maybe even 100% of my research on many projects strictly on the web and I've got access to material and information never at my finger tips before. If I had a personal library or even a good community or academic library, I couldn't get it. Trick is how do we get these folks that content, make sure that it's intelligible and meaningful to them. How do we create that ability to have multiple interfaces to this cloud of information and content that really, you know, scales properly, allows someone who may not be able to ask the question they really want to ask and get back the answer they really wanted.

You know I was thinking during one of the presentations today and I thought this was really an interesting point. A PDA works differently than the desktop, screen real estate's different. Now how do we make the PDA make, do we build into it some of the functionality that allows a person with a cognitive limitation to get the answer over that different interface from that central database, from that warehouse of information and I think we're taking some of the first steps at Chimes.

I think the new website with its multiple layers of content targeting different constituencies but with a common theme through all of it will be a first step and I think the social network where people can reach out to their peers and some of them can help each other and others who are dialing into that network can help them bootstrap their questions. I think we're at the beginnings of a golden age. The only hope I have is that the incoming administration exploits it that we don't lose what I think is a slight head start in this country on that technology and that it is fostered and given the potency it needs to move forward and I guess that's really what's driving us and what's fascinated me about what I've heard this morning and what I'm hoping to hear this afternoon.

CR: I was impressed when I listened to the man from Google [T. V. Raman] the whole question of knowing when a person needs these other kinds of adjustments?

ML: Well, you know I was thinking of a very tangible example of that and I was tempted to ask the question, but I couldn't quite get my hand all the way around it. We have individuals who travel independently in the community, but they get disoriented. But they're not at the stage where we're saying they should have some sort of tracker on them so we can find them. We want to give them the ability to get back home, to give them that independence so they're not limited by the geography they know, the block or



National Center for Technology Innovation

Advancing Technology Innovations for All Students

two from the house where they live and I was thinking, taking his departure, alright, Google does maps, many of these folks have the literacy necessary to read it but certainly have the auditory processing skills to process it if it was read out. What if you had the PDA say here's where I am and you have programmed into it because it is this person's, "Get me home" and the question's already been sort of asked, it just gets asked as needed you know perhaps. He sort of touched on this, maybe the device queries the individual. It recognizes by the types of things they're saying to it that this person needs a different approach to gain access to the information. Maybe instead of you asking the question, it questions you.

CR: Excellent, I wish you the very best. Is there any question I should've asked you that I didn't ask?

ML: No I don't think so. I think you know I've got lots of questions of my own. I'm just not sure we've got all those answers just yet. We're going to work on that.

CR: Great. Thank you very much.

ML: Thank you.