



The Torch



Edition #11

Guide dogs to transform how visually impaired customers use ATMs

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The South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind, with the support of Absa, train guide dogs to assist visually impaired customers at ATMs

The South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind and Absa have today formalised a relationship that will see guide dogs undergo rigorous, dedicated training aimed at assisting visually impaired customers at ATMs.

Increasing safe and secure ATM usage across the differently-abled communities is a priority for both Absa and the association. Given concerns that visually impaired customers have around ATM usage, and the ever-present risk of fraudsters, this is the latest step in improving and increasing self-service banking usage in South Africa.

“As a bank with more than 8 000 ATMs across South Africa, we are constantly seeking ways to make the experience more accessible to customers from all walks of life. From multiple languages on ATMs, braille to audio prompts, we have been on a constant

journey to improve Absa's self-service channels. Our latest partnership with the South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind will have long-term benefits for visually-impaired customers using ATMs, regardless of who they bank with," said Tshiwela Mhlantla, Managing Executive: Physical Channels, Retail and Business Bank at Absa.

As part of the partnership, Absa, with the support of Metal Techniques and Bytes Technology, installed a fully functional ATM at the association's headquarters in Paulshof to assist with the training of guide dogs.

"Security concerns have always been a major impediment to ATM usage for the visually-impaired community. As an organisation, the South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind aims to enhance the mobility and independence of people with visual, physical or developmental needs. The effort to insert an ATM card into the machine and key in the PIN can be exhausting and the act of a service dog retrieving the card and giving it to them makes the task less onerous.

Having access to our own ATM will allow us to teach our client and dogs in a relaxed, controlled environment without disturbing others. We can show our clients how to instruct their dogs and practice as much as they need to," said Vernon Tutton, Executive Director of the South African Guide-Dogs Association for the Blind.

Furthermore, the association provides training to student Orientation and Mobility Practitioners (O&M Practitioners) and directly to people who are visually-impaired. "We currently have nine O&M Practitioner students who will also be taught the skills needed to train people with visual impairment on how to use an ATM. Once they are working in the community, they are able to teach these skills to approximately 40 people with visual impairment a year.

All our future students will also undergo this training. Our deepest appreciation goes to Absa Retail and Business Bank (RBB SA) for their support, and for empowering us to train clients and service dogs, which will ultimately assist customers from all the major banks, not just those who bank with Absa," he said.

To ensure maximum flexibility and relevance, the nature of training will be enhanced and fine-tuned in line with real-time insights from the initial programmes. Feedback from customers and the dogs' uptake of the training will be closely monitored to ensure that this is meaningful for both ATM users and their furry friends.

In addition, Absa will analyse first-hand customer experiences and feedback to inform ongoing enhancements and functionality on ATMs, to further improve the experience for visually-impaired customers.

"Making a meaningful contribution to the communities in which we operate, particularly the vulnerable (and differently-abled), is of paramount importance. Gaining insights and learnings is critical in tailoring our offerings to cater for all our customers. Absa is proud to support the training of both guide dogs as well as the blind community on the use of ATMs," noted Mhlantla.

EDITED BY: Creamer Media Reporter

Source: [Engineering News](#)

Hap2Phone Allows Users to Feel Objects in Photos on Their Touchscreens

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Hap2U, a haptics developer specialized in integrating sensory intelligence into tactile surfaces, will unveil Hap2Phone, the world's first haptic smartphone display, at CES 2020.

Sensations in smartphones are currently limited to a vibration when receiving a text message or a click via vibrotactile technology. Hap2U is introducing HD texture sensations to offer new performance capabilities, potentially leading to the ability to feel the texture of, for example, clothing displayed on an online store.

One of Hap2U's aims is to allow smartphone users to send a text message without looking, by being able to feel individual letters on the screen keyboard.

Hap2U will demonstrate a prototype Hap2Phone at booth #41958, Sands Expo (level 2), during CES 2020, Las Vegas, January 7 – 10. Hap2U is a CES 2020 Innovation Award honoree; it also garnered a CES award in 2017.

“Hap2U's haptic smartphone touchscreen, Hap2Phone, is an outstanding achievement,” says Cédric Chappaz, CEO of Hap2U. “We anticipate that Hap2Phone will attract strong interest from OEMs and system integrators seeking to enhance the end-user experience by improving their interaction with connected objects and machines. We believe that haptics will play a bigger role in enhancing sensory intelligence in smartphones.”

The company integrates a thin film piezoelectric solution (2 micron in thickness) under the glass cover, meaning haptics can be felt over the full screen. Once this hardware is installed, it is the role of the software to get the exact haptic feeling in the right place.

Any additional weight is marginal (<1g). The impact on display power consumption is also minimal, at roughly one per cent.

By applying a friction coefficient, Hap2U can make distinct variations in touch sensations (intense or soft nicks, springs, buttons, elasticity and all kinds of high-to-low

elevation points and textures, etc.), allowing the nerve endings in fingertips to detect different sensations, then signaling the brain to interpret them.

Hap2U's touch sensation technology is not only intended for smartphones. Its solution is compatible with all touch interfaces.

Founded in 2015, the company has pioneered developments in haptics beyond glass surfaces to include wood, metal and plastic. It has applications in the automotive industry for HMI displays, controls for manufacturing equipment and smart buildings. Daimler AG, the German multinational automotive corporation, invested €4M (\$4.4M) in Hap2U in 2018 for applications in future car models.

As sales of its prototypes grow and preparations for a new fundraising round get underway, Hap2U will aim at licensing its technology to the smart home and smart buildings markets as well as the healthcare and manufacturing industries.

Source: [Cool Blind Tech](#)

How to Persuade Your Loved One to Seek Professional Help

By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S.
Associate Editor



Research has shown that mental illness tends to disrupt people's lives even more than physical conditions, said Dr. Mark S. Komrad, MD, a psychiatrist and author of the excellent book [You Need Help! A Step-by-Step Plan to Convince a Loved One to Get Counseling](#).

“On average, a person with [depression](#) is at least 50 percent more disabled than someone with angina, arthritis, asthma or diabetes,” according to [this report](#) by The Centre for Economic Performance's Mental Health Policy Group.

The good news is that treatments for mental illness are highly effective. The bad news is that only [one out of three people](#) might actually seek help. And [some research](#) suggests that the people who need help the most are typically the least likely to get it.

People understand that you can't treat a lump in your breast on your own, Dr. Komrad said. But that same understanding doesn't extend to mental illness.

Self-reliance is deeply imbedded in our society's psyche, he said. That becomes problematic when anything that's the opposite of self-reliance — such as dependency — is viewed as weakness and something to be ashamed of.

People might worry about appearing weak if they seek counseling — and they might turn that stigma inward and see themselves as weak, Komrad said.

Another big deterrent is lack of insight. Many people with mental illness simply don't think they're sick.

That's why it's critical for families and friends to step in and help their loved one realize they need to seek counseling. Don't worry about “meddling” in their lives, Komrad said. Rather, you have the opportunity and power to improve — and in some cases, save — their lives.

Warning Signs

In *You Need Help!* Komrad lists the specific signs — along with real-life examples — that signal an individual needs help. These are some of the signs:

- Behavior that scares you, such as a significant temper.
- Problems taking care of themselves or regulating their behavior, such as ignoring basic hygiene, engaging in reckless acts or drinking and acting aggressively.
- Problems with thinking, such as becoming disoriented, seeing or hearing things that no one else does or forgetting important facts.

Intense feelings, such as profound [anxiety](#) about leaving the house.

Problems interacting with others, such as withdrawing from the people they love.

Inability to work, such as not holding down a job or diminishing grades or effort in school.

Experiencing trauma, such as abuse or the death of a child.

Ultimately, the key is to look for what Komrad calls “a change in baseline.” In other words, is your loved one acting differently in any area of their life, including work or home? Komrad said that it's not unusual to see a person unraveling at home first.

Approaching Your Loved One in the Early Stages

Komrad suggested the following ways to approach your loved one about seeking help in the early stages of mental illness.

Let your loved one know that you need to have an important conversation with them.

According to Komrad, this helps to focus their attention and implies they should take it seriously.

Pick a good time and place. For instance, avoid talking during family gatherings or when you're fighting.

Approach them with empathy. You might say something like "I know this is really hard for you, but I'm talking to you because I love you. If I didn't care, we wouldn't be having this talk."

Be prepared for the person to be upset – and try not to get defensive.

Use "I" statements, such as "I'm concerned about you."

Ask for a gift – literally. Ask your loved one to give you the gift of seeking help, whether it's for your anniversary, a holiday or your kids' birthdays. Here's an example from Komrad's book:

"Getting a consultation with a psychiatrist about your mood swings would be the best thing you could do for our little girl's birthday. It's better than anything else that you could possibly give her. Please, do it for her. She, more than anyone, needs you to get some direction and proper help, more help than I know how to give you."

Facilitate the process by finding a professional and scheduling an appointment. Even if they refuse to go, see the practitioner anyway. Talk to them about helping your loved one. Komrad said that 15 percent of his practice is meeting with clients about their loved ones.

Offer to pay for the appointment, if possible. A common excuse is that [therapy](#) is too pricey.

- Don't use words like "crazy" or "abnormal."

Taking Stronger Measures

When your loved one has little insight into their illness – their "rationality is diminished" – or refuses to get help, you'll need to take stronger measures. Komrad calls these strategies "therapeutic coercion," which is akin to tough love.

An especially powerful tool, he said, is to explain to your loved one that families come with certain privileges – and responsibilities. For instance, if you're a parent who's financially supporting your adult child, leverage these privileges to get them to seek a professional evaluation.

If that doesn't work and your loved one is a danger to themselves or someone else or is very ill, contact the authorities, Komrad said. Research your city's laws on involuntary evaluation. And show up at every step of the process, he said.

"Don't just call the authorities and wait." Show up to the ER and the court hearing.

"When you do show up, tell the story." In fact, tell the ugliest parts, he said. Talk about the facts that substantiate the seriousness of the situation.

If you're feeling unsafe for any reason, articulate that to the authorities. If you're uneasy about bringing your loved one home, communicate that as well. As Komrad said, you don't want to give the system an easy way out. You want to make sure they grasp the gravity.

Supporting Your Loved One Long-Term

Supporting your loved one through treatment is "a long-term project," Komrad said.

Check in with them regularly about their treatment and how you can help.

Also, realize that "a change in them is a change in you," he said. In other words, as they're making changes in their life, you might want to seek professional help as well.

You might even realize that your relationship is part of the problem. As Komrad said, "Sometimes relationships can be sick, too."

As a family member or close friend, you have a lot of power in helping your loved one. Use it.

Source: [Psychcentral](#)

Beneficiary News

Wessels Brothers Win Sea Scout Prizes



The 1st Gordons Bay Sea Scout's held their AGM and annual award ceremony on Friday 2nd December 2019. A total of six prizes were awarded on the evening, with half of them going to three Wessels brothers.

Francois Wessels (10) received a trophy for Cub Scout of the year, whilst younger brother Gido (8), received the prize for most Cub badges in the year. In the category Junior Sea Scouts, older brother Matteo (12), received the prize for most badges in the year.

According to their father, St Dunstaner Don Wessels, the success secret of the Sea Scouts and the greater Scout movement, which was founded by Robert Baden-Powell more than a century ago, lies in the philosophy of peer leadership and learning by doing in an outdoor environment. Don had great praise for the magnificent, unselfish team of volunteers running the 1st Gordons Bay Sea Scouts in Somerset West.

"Being blind, I cannot provide many of the things my three children do and learn at Sea Scouts. I praise God for what they learn and experience through the movement".

Braam Naude kept drawings from 1978 before he had his accident. The images represent the faces of soldiers that served with him in the military at the time. In order to preserve the memories, the drawings have been framed and will live with Braam at his residence.



Manfred Ruiendo St Dunstan's would like to wish Manfred Ruiendo the very best with his studies in Media after having completed his Matric in 2019.



Michael Roberts was elected captain of the U13 Cricket and Squash teams at his school. Congratulations!



Birthday Wishes



Congratulations Lynette Ferreira on celebrating your special birthday in February

Upcoming Events



Reunion – May 2020
Project Gemini – May 2020
AGM – September 2020
Long Cane Rally - TBC