

The doctor will see you now:
Seniors avoid COVID-19 exposure
with online medical consultations on

Constant Companion Q Tablets powered by AT&T IoT connectivity

- **Business needs**

Entrepreneur of smart homes and security wanted to protect nursing home residents and other seniors against COVID-19 and feeling alone during social isolation.

- **Networking solution**

Tablet computers preloaded with telehealth apps let seniors with medical concerns talk face to face with doctors without leaving their homes.

- **Business value**

Protection, connection, peace of mind

- **Industry focus**

Smart healthcare

- **Size** - Working with partners in 200 cities nationwide

About Constant Companion

Constant Companion uses voice technology and video to create engaging experiences for older adults, anyone living alone, and senior communities. The company's mission is to make people's lives better by increasing their connection and protection. Constant Companion's systems are supported by advanced security to protect privacy, as well as professional 24/7 monitoring. The monitoring system is voice activated, eliminating the need for wearable devices. The company protects individuals throughout the U.S. and partners with home care providers and assisted living facilities in about 200 cities nationwide.

The situation

As the COVID-19 outbreak spread to the United States, people were advised to avoid crowded medical facilities and consult a doctor before seeking treatment at a clinic or hospital. Constant Companion wanted to help limit exposure to the virus by extending its Q Tablet Telehealth initiative, which provides easy online access to telemedicine providers. This required a network provider with the reach, reliability, and security to enable patients to consult with their doctors without leaving the safety of their homes.

Solution

Constant Companion keeps its clients connected with the highly secure, highly reliable AT&T IoT connectivity. Clients can use Constant Companion's smart speakers and video systems to stay in touch with family and friends plus use the secure, high-speed Q Tablet for Telehealth to consult with doctors via video house calls to receive medical advice and even prescriptions. In addition to protecting their own health, patients who use the service will also be helping others. Constant Companion has promised to donate any profits from Q Tablet rentals to charity. The company also uses AT&T connectivity in the smart speakers its clients use for smart home automation.



Protecting seniors through voice assistants

As their parents and other loved ones age, many people begin looking for ways to protect them from falls and other emergencies. Mark Gray, who spent much of his career in federal government security agencies and is now CEO of a commercial, residential, and personal security company, is no different. He bought his mother a medical-device necklace that she could use to summon help if she experienced trouble.

"She told me, 'Son, I love you, but I'm never going to wear one of those things,'" Gray said. When she had an emergency a few years ago and could not get to a phone, Gray was concerned it could happen again. What if it was several hours or days before someone found her.

Gray was understandably upset. "I've spent my whole career taking care of other people, and I couldn't take care of my mom," he said. His mother recovered, but Gray was intent on ensuring that she would never again be so helpless. He spoke with friends who had the same problem—their parents didn't want to wear a device or often forgot to wear it.

"Necessity can generate creative ideas," Gray said. He began considering whether he could adapt commercial smart speakers like Amazon Alexa and Google Home to respond to requests for help. After exploring the possibilities with some Amazon senior executives, Gray launched Constant Companion. "My mom became customer 001, and the mother of my business partner Andy Westlund, who had worked at Amazon from the garage days with Jeff Bezos, became customer 002," he said. It was clear almost immediately that the solution worked.

"The strength of network coverage, the strength of the AT&T reputation, and the people behind the brand will give our customers confidence and trust in the solution."

Mark Gray
CEO, Constant Companion, LLC



An added measure of help

Gray understood that seniors who would never wear an alert device would probably be comfortable using a smart speaker if they needed help. Today nearly a quarter of Americans, about 60 million people, own smart speakers.¹

Constant Companion is a digital voice assistant and smart-home system that is purpose-built to supplement home care. Nothing can replace dedicated human caregiving, Gray says, but having a smart assistant can provide an added measure of help for the times that caregivers can't be there.

While the company is platform agnostic, Gray says, 95% of their customers that are seniors prefer Amazon Alexa. "I think Alexa works for older adults because it's quite friendly and chatty," he said. "Google offers a little bit better search tool, so our millennial customers like Google devices better."

¹ <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/press-releases/2018/nielsen-launches-new-mediatech-trener-survey-to-uncover-consumer-sentiment-on-emerging-technology/>

Gray added military-grade security to the devices to protect users' identities and information. If a client calls for help, Constant Companion releases the security lock on the database, and the telecommunicator responding to the call for help will see the caller's information and dispatch help.

The idea took off, and Constant Companion moved beyond customers 001 and 002. Today the company protects more than 140,000 families and works with healthcare agencies in 197 cities.

Restoring independence

Constant Companion is also using smart speakers to assist veterans, especially those who suffered traumatic injuries, to be more independent. "Letting veterans use a smart speaker to turn lights or their television on and off, and lock their doors with just their voice can start to restore some personal power and independence," he said.

"Some of our customers that are state governments are using the system for suicide hotlines to help detect those who are most depressed and isolated, which can be an indicator of suicide risk," he said.



Expanded telehealth to protect seniors

Constant Companion also operates a telehealth initiative that it's using to help people whose lives have been disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak. Getting to medical appointments became difficult for elderly people and those with chronic medical conditions. Constant Companion wanted to help limit this population's exposure to the virus by extending its Q Tablet Telehealth initiative. The Q Tablet provides easy mobile access to telemedicine providers.

Federal and state governments recently eased reimbursement and other restrictions on telehealth services to cut down on the number of patients in physicians' waiting rooms and thereby prevent the spread of the virus. Florida, with a large population of seniors, began delivering technology to older adults to enable them to use telehealth services. Helping large numbers of patients consult with physicians without leaving the safety of their homes required a wireless network provider with reach, reliability, and security.



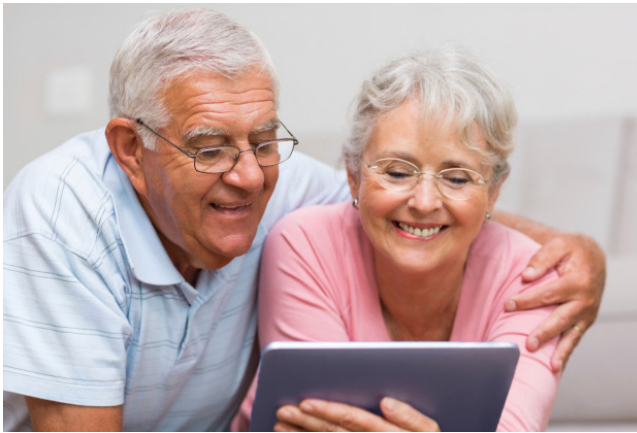
Video house calls

Constant Companion chose AT&T IoT connectivity. The highly secure network gives Constant Companion, its clients, and their families the peace of mind that comes with legendary AT&T reliability.



Constant Companion recently started shipping the tablets nationwide. Q Tablets for Telehealth is now available to senior living communities throughout the U.S. for a minimal monthly fee that includes AT&T cellular connectivity. The tablets give the residents and nursing staff highly secure access to non-emergency care from the comfort and safety of their rooms.

The highly secure Q Tablet is pre-loaded with apps from top-rated telemedicine providers, allowing U.S. doctors to make video house calls and write prescriptions.



Discharged, but not disconnected

Gray said he sees a great future for Constant Companion and AT&T. “We were pleased with the pricing, which is very competitive,” he said.

He expects the AT&T IoT platform to help ensure a smooth launch for the company’s new services, especially in future telehealth and mobile 4G solutions where everything is delivered as a single solution. One of these is a new product that would support patients and help prevent rehospitalizations. “Medicare won’t pay hospitals or doctors when patients are readmitted for the same service that they just received within a 30-day period,” Gray said. “That’s a thirteen-billion-dollar problem.”

Under the new program, hospitals would give post-surgical patients leaving the hospital Constant Companion devices that are pre-programmed with their post-surgery instructions, medication reminders, and upcoming appointment reminders. “We believe a little bit of IoT and some smart speakers can enable patients to continue communicating with the nurses and doctors who cared for them in the hospital.”

Being discharged but not disconnected from care could do more than reduce readmissions—it could also help save a patient’s life. “If they experience a real problem, they can use the smart speaker to call for help,” Gray said. “But we hope to do more. We can be part of the continuing communication and connection. And that’s the promise of IoT.”

Confidence and trust in the solution

Gray looks forward to a bright future for his company. “The strength of network coverage, the strength of the AT&T reputation, and the people behind the brand will help gain our customer’s confidence and trust in the solution,” he said.

“AT&T is a big company, but its people make you feel like you’re the only customer that matters. You don’t feel like a number.”

He is confident that AT&T will enable Constant Companion to help protect customers. “They’re trusting us with their life safety,” Gray said. “If I’m worried about anything at night, it’s letting customers down. With AT&T, I’m going to sleep better.”

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CEO, Constant Companion, LLC