

Providing a Real-time Lecture Content Broadcasting Platform, NoteAffect LLC is taking Digital Learning to the next level by Enhancing Student Engagement with Live Polling, Gamification and Annotation Capabilities



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CEOCFO: *Mr. Tokosch, would you tell us about NoteAffect?*

Mr. Tokosch: What we do is we take lecture content, which today is generally all digital and we broadcast that out to students' digital devices; it could be a phone, tablet or a laptop. We broadcast in real-time and we allow the students to make notes directly on that lecture material. They can highlight it, they can annotate it, and we built in live polling and gamification, so if the teacher wants to have fun with the class and break the class up into teams, they can do that also with the live polling. We built in the ability for the students to be able to ask questions directly through their device to the teacher real-time. The other students can see those questions but they cannot see who asked them. However, they can upload them if they would have the same question going back to the teacher. We built in the ability for the teacher to record the lecture, so the students can play it back later on. We also built it so that it can work in Asynchronous mode as well. Maybe it is a situation where the classes are online and you have students coming in at different times to view that recording. We built it in a way so that if it is the first time you are viewing that recording, and a poll was in the middle of that class, when the poll comes up you would answer it just like you were there when it first happened.

CEOCFO: *Are parts of what you do, available today or is this a brand-new concept? What makes it different and better?*

Mr. Tokosch: It is new and it is available today. What we have tried to do here is take some pieces of other products that are being used regularly in the classroom today like Live Polling, Note Taking or Lecture Capture and put them all in together while adding more functionality and analytics. With all our enhancements, functionality and analytics we sort of swim in a different lane than any of those other products. For example, Lecture Capture is done today as an mp4 file. This is a large video file that costs a lot to store. When we capture a lecture, we are capturing the lecture content and matching it directly with the audio. We are about an 8th of the size of an mp4, so we are saving money on storage space, which everybody knows is very expensive. Our other advantage is, we work well in Asynchronous mode by giving the students the ability to act like they are seeing the lecture for the first time and being able to answer the polls and ask the teacher questions. Plus we update all of the analytics from all post engagement.

Those are some of the major advantages in the way that we do it compared to the way it has been done in the past. I think in many cases we just updated the things that have typically been done, to a more efficient way. The other big thing is the analytics, which we have a patent on. We have two patents on the product, one is for the real-time note-taking and the other one is for analytics. Capturing analytics on engagement gives teachers total insight to the students' learning

outcomes, and that is a huge part of what we do. Having these analytics helps guide them in their teaching and is also helps guide them so they can find that at risk student very quickly.

CEOFO: *Who is using your services today?*

Mr. Tokosch: Right now we are focusing in on Higher Ed, K-12; primarily in that space it is the high schools and the middle schools. We have a contract out right now for one of the higher colleges that is focused on nothing but online classes.

CEOFO: *Are you working typically with school districts or individual schools?*

Mr. Tokosch: That is a good question. We do not sell to less than one individual school, although we will do pilots for classes. Our product really shines when you get more classes using it. In K-12, we prefer to do districts because NoteAffect can provide an advantage with our reporting process. For example, a school district looking for analytics across the entire district can get that or they can focus down to just one school if they want. They can also focus down to just one class. We have a lot of capabilities and options for reporting from the district level to the teacher level. We give the capability for the school board of that district to be able to really see a return on investment for the money that they spent, buying those students devices by showing engagement, usage, and improving grades. We love showing the usage that is coming from those digital devices and showing the outcome of a student who was a C student, who is now a B student because their study habits are better with NoteAffect. Students love that we are giving them the ability to go in and see their lecture material with their notes, their annotations, as well as all the questions that were asked and all the polling answers. It makes it much easier to study, and the kids are getting better grades. Teachers love that they can see how their class material is being absorbed and it helps them become better teachers.

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CEOFO: *How do you reach out and gain attention?*

Mr. Tokosch: Right now, we are trying to show an ROI for using NoteAffect to what we consider are the three stakeholders in the education system: Student, Teachers and Administration. From a marketing standpoint it is about trying to find what will be the driving force with people, and what resonates with what they are looking for. When I sell the product to educators, everybody seems to take something a little different away from it that excites them. Some people love the reporting and the analytics piece and other people will look at it and love the fact that a student could look at their material and it makes it so easy for them to study. I think it just depends on the person and what they take away from it. For us, it has been a challenge because we are forging a new road. What we are doing today has never been done. There are people out there who have tried to use multiple products on their own to provide a total solution; we do, but they fall short. Taking separate disparate products and trying to combine them makes it hard to support and they don't talk to each other. We need to show them there is a better way and it costs less using NoteAffect as well. Today, we do not “swim in a lane” like so many others, which has been a challenge. Once they see the power of all we can do and deliver, it is easy to get them to onboard.

CEOFO: *NoteAffect has been recognized by CIO Review, as one of the Most Promising. How is that helpful for you?*

Mr. Tokosch: It helps give some legitimacy to what we are doing. It is a nice honor. When you have someone that recognizes everything you put into your product and gives you that kind of an honor, it is nice to have. I think people look it up and like it too.

CEOFO: *While you do so much with NoteAffect and it encompasses so many categories, is that sometimes daunting when you are talking with someone. How do you strike the right balance?*

Mr. Tokosch: That is our biggest challenge when we sit down with somebody. People want to compare you with another product that they know, and that is natural. Someone will say we are like Lecture Capture and we are; we technically do capture the lecture but we just do not capture it as a video file. We do it different because we want to make sure that we can provide the analytics, work better asynchronously, and save on storage space. We provide ten times more analytics than any Lecture Capture software can do. We want to make sure that it can function the same as it functioned in a synchronous environment, which the Lecture Capture software cannot do. Many times what happens is I have to break it down to whomever I am talking to, and relate it to products they understand today. Then I describe the differences between our product and that product they know, plus all the other advantages we have in NoteAffect.

CEOCFO: *How are reaching out?*

Mr. Tokosch: We are trying all kinds of things to see what works. We have done everything from postcard mailings to direct mail which seems to work well. We have done email blasts and we are attending industry tradeshows like FETC and EDUCAUSE. It is about getting out in front of the education market. Working with industry experts. We are trying all those things to see what works best for us and what resonates with the people that are out there. Being new to the space is not easy and there is no great one direction that I have found so far.

CEOCFO: *What was the challenge in putting all the various aspects together?*

Mr. Tokosch: We have had two challenges. The first is that we are first to market with a product like NoteAffect. Nothing like what we do has been done before. So it is getting people to understand your vision and laying down that new road!

The second challenge was getting some educators to be open to a new concept and allowing students to use their digital device in class. Many educators were afraid that the students would be using their devices for social media and not paying attention to what actually was going on, but what we found was completely the opposite because we tracked their participation, so we knew that they were involved with what was going on.

We also had educators that said to us that they did not want to take their lecture material and have to load it into some sort of software and do a bunch of things to make it run. They wanted it to be simple and easy. We built around that idea and made it very easy to use. We made it so that you did not have to re-invent your class material and you would not have a learning curve to use it. It is literally one button - "Start lecture"; that is all you do. Hit that button. You start doing your lecture like you would in any other case.

CEOCFO: *What is the business model?*

Mr. Tokosch: The business model today is where we charge a per seat license per student. Depending on the size of the school, it is a small per-seat license per student and it is a lot less than they are paying for any of that other software they are using like Polling or Lecture Capture. We are saving them money on storage for Lecture Capture and that is huge. That is the business model we thought would work best. It is a small single-digit charge basically. That way all of the students can use it.

CEOCFO: *How does a school get started with NoteAffect?*

Mr. Tokosch: If they have a learning management system (LMS), we have an LTI integration into most of the top LMS systems. We are just a menu item in their LMS. It takes us about an hour or less to load that into the LMS system and integrate so that you have the student roster for your class and the teachers have a roster for the classes that they are teaching. So it goes quickly. If they do not have an LMS, we work outside of the LMS as well and in that particular case it takes a little longer to install it since we are setting the web space for it and things of that nature.

CEOCFO: *What have you learned from past experience in bringing a company and a product to market - what to do and what not to do?*

Mr. Tokosch: I just sold Core-apps, which 10 years ago was the very first company to do a mobile app in the event space. In 2009 we launched the product and at that time we were forging a new road too; no one else had done mobile apps for the space. We had a lot of people who said they did not think anybody would use a mobile app, as no one would want to go on their phone. We heard every excuse in the book. Being patient and trying to bring out all of the functionality and showing a return on investment for the stakeholders that are a part of that ecosystem won them over. In our case with education, we see it as three stakeholders, which are the student, the teacher and the administration. Having something that each one of them can gain a return on investment out of using NoteAffect, we feel should be what we need to get it to market and build the market space.

CEOCFO: *Why is NoteAffect important for education?*

Mr. Tokosch: The reason that NoteAffect is important for education is we are not trying to reinvent education. What we are doing is leveraging techniques and technology that instructors and students are already comfortable with and adding NoteAffect on top to provide better engagement. Each one of the stakeholders within that education ecosystem all get a benefit out of that. The students will get better grades, the teachers get insight into the learners' process as well as their teaching process, and for the administration we will give a return on investment on the usage and analytics, all the way down to the student level. Something they never had before. I think that is our benefit to the education market space.