

Medical Alert System for Seniors Nationwide providing Alerts to EMT, Fire, Police, Family and Friends over Landline, Cellular and Mobile Technologies



Geoff Gross
CEO
Medical Guardian LLC

CEOCFO: *Mr. Gross, would you tell us about Medical Guardian?*

Mr. Gross: Medical Guardian is a medical alert company. We sell medical alert products and services to seniors nationwide. It is a device that protects and alerts a phone call to EMT, fire, police or emergency contacts such as family, friends or neighbors in the event of any type of fall or medical emergency or intruding into the home.

CEOCFO: *There are a number of companies in your industry. Would you tell us what is different about Medical Guardian?*

Mr. Gross: Things have changed since we have evolved as a company. We are actually celebrating our ten-year anniversary on Monday. In the beginning days, it really was our unique ability to market online to seniors. We came into an industry that was traditional in its advertising and marketing. We were the first company to have a Spanish website, we were the first company to have a mobile page, we were the first company to have a one-page ecommerce checkout. We have done some unique things online along with our marketing ability. On the other end of that, is our ability to have a relationship based model for selling. We have an inside sales team of about thirty-five agents. We have developed our own unique way of distributing leads and we think that gives us an advantage over the competition. In today's world, the differentiators are our service to the customer and our engagement with the customer. We are laser focused on creating a very friendly warm environment. We answer the phones quickly. We have a focus on a one-call resolution if there is ever a problem. We have a lot more touch points with the customer than I think is currently out there. We send newsletters, birthday cards, we call our customers, we send many emails to our customers and it is a big part of our contact strategy.

CEOCFO: *How do people find Medical Guardian?*

Mr. Gross: Customers can find us on any type of online means whether it is search or email. We have done television commercials, radio, print and catalog. We also have partnerships in doctor's offices around the country. You might find us through your doctor or healthcare nurse. In 2016, we are looking to expand in our partner dealer program so that we can have even a wider reach when it comes to non-marketing measures.

CEOCFO: *Why is 2016 the time?*

Mr. Gross: It is not so much that we have reached our end of the road when it comes to advertising and our main bread and butter model. It is just that we have been able to hire some personnel that has expertise in those areas and we are looking to diversify our mix. The year 2016 is not unique in its own to growth. We have had consistent large growth for the past three or four years and it is sort of an initiative on this year's agenda.

CEOCFO: *What happens when you get an alert from someone and perhaps they are non-responsive?*

Mr. Gross: We have four products that range from a traditional landline based unit so a speaker sits in the home and dials out to the landline if there is a button pressed. The button is worn as a transmitter around the neck or the wrist. The next lineup is our home unit that is cellular based so all you have to do is plug it into the power outlet in the wall and through the AT&T cellular network, our system dials out. You do not need a landline telephone in the home. The next level up is the mobile unit so when you are not home you wear the pendant or wrist button. When you go out, you take a mobile handheld unit with you which is about the size of a cell phone and it has a one-button press so wherever you are in the US if you are at home or away from home you can talk through that hand-held device and it has GPS so you cannot

speak we can still find you. Our highest end products which we call our Premium Guardian is actually a wearable mobile device. It is small and lightweight and sleek looking enough to wear around your neck or your belt 24/7. You have to charge it once a day and it has about a 36-hour charge. You can wear this wherever you go. It is really a wearable, it has GPS in it, as well as fall-detection if you would like so if you do fall and you cannot press a button, we can still alert help. It will actually dial out and connect to their monitoring center. With all of those devices with the exception of the fall detection technology, the process is you press the button on your pendent, wrist or belt. It will then dial out via landline or cellular to our monitoring center. An operator will come on the line and ask if it is an emergency and if you need help and they can dispatch accordingly whether it is your local EMS, fire, police, or they can call a list of family, friends or neighbors that a client will provide.

CEOCFO: Do the local services pay more attention when it is coming from you rather than coming from 911?

Mr. Gross: I am not sure if they do. Everywhere is different. In some towns, the emergency call goes to the fire station in a very rural area. I imagine that they treat it as a regular emergency call as if it were coming from 911.

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CEOCFO: Would the fire departments or EMT break the door if necessary?

Mr. Gross: In some cases they would. What we do is to try to avoid that situation is we sell a lockbox like the real estate agents use that holds a key which as a four digit combination which goes around the front door. It can be pinned up next to the door. In the scenario we do not have that, we ask them if they have the key hidden or if they have it with a neighbor and they will give the contact number of the neighbor. We do try to avoid that situation of breaking the door. That is why our non-emergency business is so important to talk about. Many people do not understand that if you press the button and you just need your daughter to come over and help you up or a neighbor to check on you that does not mean we are going to dispatch an ambulance.

CEOCFO: How do you ensure that your people have the right amount of empathy and the frame of mind to handle these situations competently?

Mr. Gross: It is more instinctive in your hiring and more training once they are an employee how to be that way. It is something that we take very seriously here because we are in the senior business. Some of our clients cannot hear well and many of our clients have the perception that companies that sell senior products and may be taking advantage of seniors. Our product is here to help them and keep them independent in their homes for as long as possible. We try to hire people not necessarily with a customer service or call-center background but we hire them mostly on a personality basis. Empathy is a great word for that, patience and care. All of those things are something that we look at in our service department. Many times our clients are frustrated. This is not a difficult product to install or manage but at the same time, when someone does have an issue and something goes wrong, we need to be delicate in the way that we talk and handle our clients. We put special attention on hiring towards that person. We do not have managers but coaches. Our coaches work with our agents constantly to try to improve on that.

CEOCFO: What type of service do most people take?

Mr. Gross: It is important to us to put our clients in the right product because is key for our business because it keeps customers happy and here longer. The investigation or line of questioning when our sales team talks to a prospect is very important. You ask them what has happened in the home or if they live alone. You ask if they have had a fall or if they have had medical problems. You ask if they go out of the home a lot and if they are mobile. If they do not leave the home, we certainly are not going to put them in a mobile product. If they do leave the home, mobile products make the most sense. Mobile products are at least half of our business now and I expect that to continue to grow because they do cover the home as well. It is allowing us to get into a younger demographic. I do not mean considerably younger but when I started the business, our average age was about eighty years old. Now our average new client starts at about seventy-seven and a half. That has come down significantly and I think there is an opportunity for that to come down quite a bit more. I think the largest obstacle for the success of our industry is the perception. We put special attention on making our clients understand that while this may have been marketed as a fear based product and something where you have to be in bad shape or very old to have, we feel very differently about that. We think if you are sixty-five or older and you are alone, it is something that you should have. If you have never had a medical emergency or fall, this is still something you should have. A year ago, Florence Henderson became our spokesperson. We think Florence is a great example of who

our client should or can be and that is an independent, active senior who lives alone and is not in bad shape. She has her mobile device and uses it. She travels the country and it is a great thing. This is not someone who is frail and bedridden and who has had a hundred falls. We have clients like that but you do not have to be that client. The stigma of our system is still an obstacle but I think we are chipping away at it.

CEO CFO: *Do people looking for services such as yours, do much comparison?*

Mr. Gross: Like with any product you have your shoppers, you have your people that do not feel like shopping. Many people feel the need to look at a number of services but keep in perspective this is a low-cost item. I think our accolades and reviews speak for themselves. We certainly do not speak negatively of competition. We think we have some very talented competitors and frankly with any of the top five to ten services, you are probably going to get a reliable services that works very well. We just think we do better than anybody else. We are not the low-cost provider. We are not the highest cost provider. We have competitive pricing and I think a superior service, so we think we give great value to the customer.

CEO CFO: *How do you work not only to make it easy to use but easy to understand?*

Mr. Gross: One thing we did was our team developed a buyers' guide. We actually talk about the eight most important things to look for when you are comparing and looking to buy a medical alert service for yourself or a loved one. We have a whole page on our website that is dedicated to eight most important things to look for when you are comparing and looking to buy a medical alert service for yourself or a loved one. It talks about monitoring centers, it talks about the service team and the products and offerings as well as price. We make a recommendation on which product we think you should have. That has been very helpful for our clients. We have been able to put many people into the right products using risk assessment.

CEO CFO: *What has changed in your approach over time? What have you learned along the way?*

Mr. Gross: At this point in the business, the most important thing that I can do now is hire the right leaders in my business. It sounds cliché but it is true. We have made many mistakes along the way with the wrong people, maybe people that were used to a corporate environment or think they want an entrepreneurial environment really are more comfortable in a corporate environment. Having the right types of people here who like a growing business, who like to talk to people, who like to talk to our customers, every new employee we put through as a service agent. You have to be on the phones for a week. You have to see what it is like on the frontlines with our customers whether you are in accounting, a receptionist or sales. It has been huge for our business because our people understand our clients no matter what they are doing. I think that is what makes us different. We really understand our clients have simple needs. This is like insurance. Educating our clients that this is something they should not use is an important factor because today people think they need to get value out of everything that they have and they do not understand value sometimes is not using it. Our service is there so God forbid one time, it is going to work and we are going to get you help.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEO CFO Magazine



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