

The Carroll Center for the Blind: Leveraging Untypical U.S. Collaborations for Medical and Technological Advancements in Ophthalmology

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"Collaborations and partnerships run the gamut. The technology field helps lead many of these opportunities. And the advances in technology have been so great. They change the game in our rehabilitation and education instruction every year and have, in large part, been aided by new assistive technology and software applications that have been developed, such as screen readers, low vision devices, wearable magnification glasses, GPS navigation, and so much more. New assistive technologies and devices that come out of these fruitful collaborations and partnerships will gain huge visibility and usability worldwide when developed with end-user participation."

- Greg Donnelly, President and CEO of Carroll Center for the Blind.

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Greg Donnelly is the President and CEO of The Carroll Center for the Blind, whose mission is to empower those who are blind and visually impaired of all ages to achieve independence and to lead a fulfilling life. The center uses "evolving assistive technologies" through collaborations with technology leaders to obtain the best client outcomes in school, work, home, and in the community. The center also specializes in and sells low-vision and blindness products.



Donnelly clarifies that the center's services *"are not of a clinical nature,"* but instead of a functional nature, often utilizing the latest and most advanced technologies available for innovative instruction. He explains that the center supports patients in achieving their life goals during and after they have been served in a clinical setting. *"So much is needed beyond the doctor's office for those struggling with vision loss and blindness,"* he says. *"This is a great challenge to address by organizations like The Carroll Center for the Blind and those developing emerging assistive technologies for individuals with disabilities. Partnerships can disrupt the industry while advancing success for those most in need at the same time."*

Donnelly and the Carroll Center are strong proponents of unique collaborations. The Carroll Center partners with many nontraditional technology organizations for user testing to aid their accessibility and inclusivity mission and advance technologies in all spheres. *"We are very connected to all business sectors to be a creative partner in furthering technology and accessibility areas that have a positive influence relative to individuals with vision loss and other disabilities,"* says Donnelly.

According to Donnelly, blind consumers often *"participate in research and user studies, and many are willing to try new technologies or clinical/surgical devices or treatments that may change the game for those with blindness."* The Carroll Center is open to participating in medical and technological advancements through collaborations to improve lives in all manners possible.

For instance, their team works closely with the New England College of Optometry so patients can benefit from clinical care and vision rehabilitation training all in one location. They also *"work with those in ophthalmology, from a clinical, research, and functional rehabilitation perspective relative to advances in technology,"* says Donnelly.

"Whether it's smart glasses for the visually impaired or the potential for a new medical device that maximizes usable vision, emerging technologies can also change the quality of one's life.."

Other untypical partnerships and collaborations the center has participated in around the impactful issue of accessibility include *"companies like Verizon, Microsoft, and Google."* In addition, The Carroll Center even unintentionally prompted a call from Amazon. *"One of our technology instructors was providing a group training for blind and visually impaired clients on the accessibility features on Alexa, and we ended up getting a call from Amazon after they saw the training on our Youtube,"* says Donnelly.

The Carroll Center for the Blind has partnered with other untypical players in business segments such as the automobile industry, healthcare, colleges and universities, banking, major league sports, technology, retail, e-commerce, and web development companies, app development, and more..

Carroll Center is willing to expand its collaborations with Korean start-ups. *"Not only do we work internationally with clients for distance learning or in-person training, but we also work with companies worldwide."* Donnelly says international partnerships increase *"visibility and product usability here within the U.S."* and *"across the world."*

Donnelly highlights the benefits of working with centers like his that are focused on creating technologies across industries that are more accessible for all, mainly that by doing so, you can save your company money and time. He says, *"many companies make the big mistake of bringing in subject matter experts and end-users at the end of product development. And it's costly to make fixes. Sometimes, it's a bolt-on fix or a complete rebuild and design. It could be a big expense and PR issue."* Ultimately, partnering with organizations like the Carroll Center when developing accessible, inclusive technologies can benefit companies by doing it the right way the first time.

International companies can also attend annual events such as the [CSUN Assistive Technology Conference](#) in California, meeting next in March of 2023. This event focuses on inclusion, as it is the *"ultimate community experience and the premier forum on technology for all persons with disabilities."* This event would be the perfect opportunity for international Korean startups to connect with the Carroll Center and others to discuss or present innovative accessibility technologies.



*Greg Donnelly, President and CEO,
Carroll Center for the Blind*

The Carroll Center hosts its annual technology fair each November, "*where we invite technology companies to talk about, display, and educate the public on new advances in that technology that can help our consumer population.*" The center hosts frequent corporate lunch-n-learns "*where all international and domestic technology companies are welcome in-person and virtually.*"

The Carroll Center also has a Businesses and Professionals page for companies to learn more about their professional development services and opportunities, such as seminars, courses, conferences, and sponsorships.

International startups and emerging technology companies should understand the value of nontraditional partnerships for advancing technologies in all spheres. It is essential to expand your company beyond your specific segment or industry. Consider blue ocean opportunities for partnerships and leverage untypical collaboration to gain visibility and build relevancy in the U.S.

-Content by Emily Curtis, Junior Marketing Associate at BDMT Global

If you are interested in connecting with Greg Donnelly or in working with Carroll Center for the Blind. please send an email to sim@bdmtglobal.com