

VisuALS Technology Solutions

*The Inspiring Intersection of Tech,
Marketing... and Accounting!*

by **Russ McGuire**

Sometimes things just come together in a special way. The world calls that coincidence, but we know it's God's providence. This month I'm excited to share the story of **VisuALS Technology Solutions**, a company that sprung forth from the Oklahoma Christian University campus where I serve, and the story of Jevon Seaman, a young man being used by God to give a voice to the voiceless.

Human Flourishing

Six months ago **my monthly column** talked about entrepreneurship and human flourishing, and throughout the Spring semester, that was the theme for my discussions with students. So I guess I shouldn't be surprised that God would bless us with a student project that is becoming a business

that can greatly enrich the lives of thousands.

About three years ago, Ash Srinivas, a student in OC's Masters of Engineering program, approached Professor Steve Maher with a proposed project for an undergraduate senior capstone electrical engineering systems team. Ash had a friend from church with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, aka Lou Gehrig's Disease) who was losing the ability to control much of his body, including his voice, his hands and his arms. Ash knew that technology was advancing fast and a communications solution should be possible for much less than the \$20,000 price on existing products.

In the Spring of 2015, a team of three engineering students started working on software to enable ALS patients to type, and with text-to-speech, to speak with their eyes.

Before their graduation in the Spring of 2016, Ash's friend tried it out and said it was a good start. The team handed it off to a new team of four engineering students, who called the project VisuALS. Professor Maher recognized the commercial potential and asked me to help. I recruited a marketing student and an accounting student to help build a business plan.

An Accountant With Heart

Jevon was that accounting student. For as long as he can remember, he's been serving in the church. Being in a small congregation, everyone in his family finds ways to serve, and they've taken missions trips to help another small church in Germany with community outreach.

When Jevon arrived at OC, he thought he wanted to study



Russ McGuire

russ.mcguire@gmail.com

A trusted advisor with proven strategic insights, Russ has been blessed by God in many ways including serving as a corporate executive, co-founding technology startups and writing a technology/business book. More importantly, he's a husband and father who cares about people, and a committed Christian who seeks to honor God in all that he does. His newest venture is as Entrepreneur in Residence at Oklahoma Christian University.

English, his dad thought Marketing would be better, but God had something else in mind. Jevon wasn't able to get in all of the classes he wanted, so he found himself in an accounting class, and he loved it. He truly felt called by God to work with numbers to help businesses prosper.

When he heard about the VisuALS project, it was an answer to prayer. While Jevon felt called to be an accountant, he struggled with how he could use accounting to love God and love his neighbor, beyond just making good money and being generous with his giving.

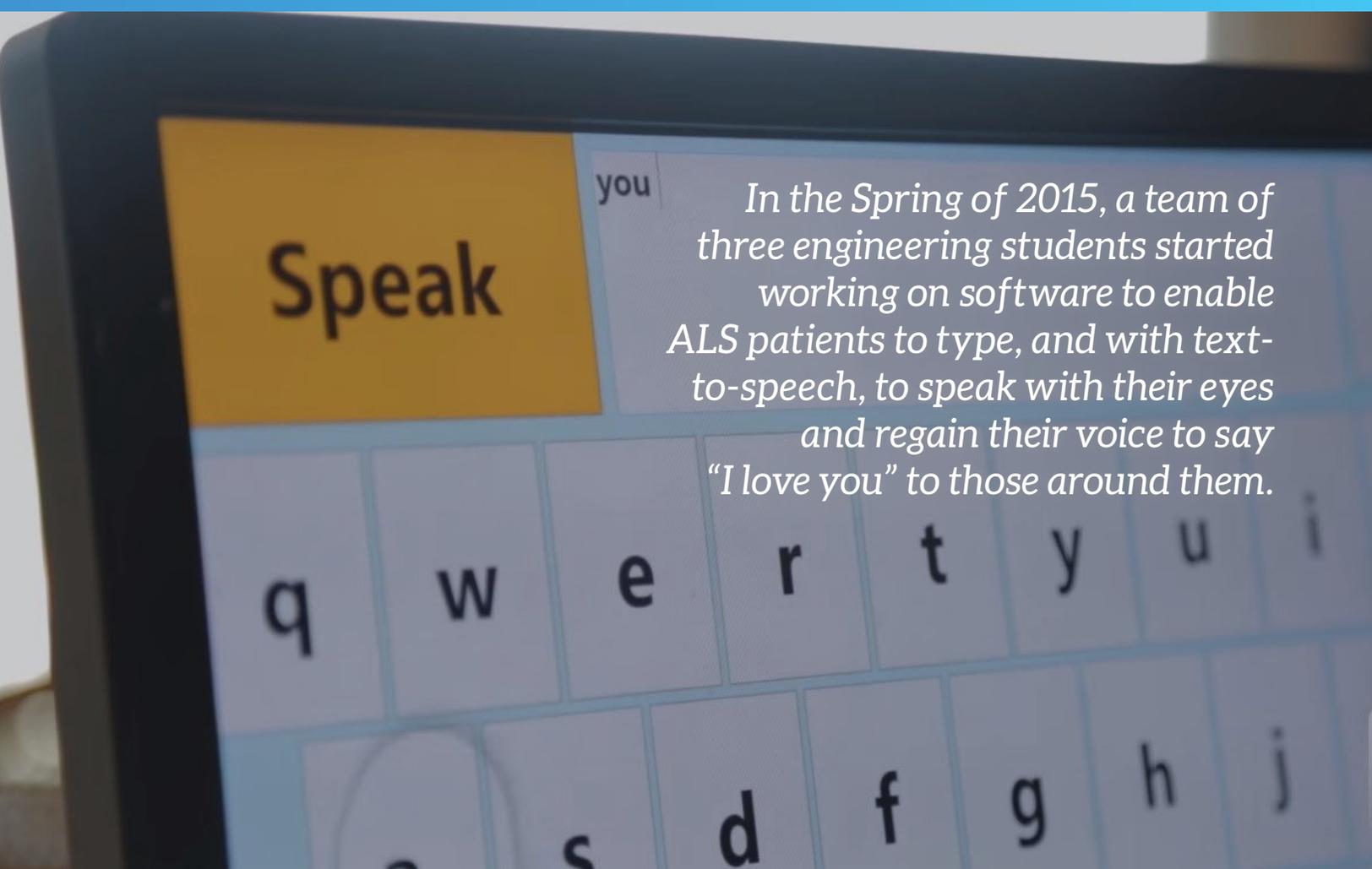
“I Love You”

The engineering team did a great job with the software, and by January of this year, they were ready to get some feedback. The team, including Jevon, went to a local ALS Support Group meeting and explained what they'd been working on.

Carl Phelps had been diagnosed with ALS two years before and had been unable to speak for the past year. He could still walk, but was losing the ability to use his hands and typing had become very difficult. He walked over and sat down in front of the VisuALS system and started typing and talking with his eyes. For

the first time in a year he was able to say to his wife, Janice, “I love you.” He also gave the students feedback on how to make it better, and after using the system for 45 minutes, told them, “I'm not giving this back until you tell me when I can have my own.” Two weeks later, the students brought the system to the Phelps home and got it set up. You can see the impact on their lives in a video on YouTube titled [“VisuALS—Christian Entrepreneurship at OC.”](#)

Through that interaction, VisuALS became more than just a school project. Jevon shared, “Getting to know Carl and Janice,



In the Spring of 2015, a team of three engineering students started working on software to enable ALS patients to type, and with text-to-speech, to speak with their eyes and regain their voice to say “I love you” to those around them.

and giving Carl a voice, showed a world beyond his disease—who he was and continues to be. Carl was able to share with us that he still wants to be a disciple of Christ and he shared his favorite verse, Hebrews 12:1, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that

so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

Impacted

Jevon has been personally impacted by this encounter and has also adopted Hebrews 12:1 as his own mission. “What do I want those witnesses to see in my own life? I need

to run with perseverance the goal set before me. It’s easy for me to say, ‘I don’t know how’ or ‘I can’t’ but I need to throw off those hindrances, get out of my comfort zone, and do what needs to be done.”

That’s the mindset of an entrepreneur, and doing it all for the glory of God as a Christian entrepreneur. The engineering students have graduated and started their corporate careers. Jevon will be an accounting senior at OC this year, but he’s also stepped up as Chief Operating Officer for [VisuALS Technology Solutions, LLC](#). He’s helping launch the business to help thousands of more Carl’s. Lord willing, at the beginning of September, VisuALS will begin selling their product for \$3,000, a fraction of the cost of existing solutions, so that many who couldn’t previously afford it can now regain their voice and say “I love you” to those around them. **MT**

In this article series, we’ve defined a Christian entrepreneur as a person driven to glorify God in all he or she does, and ruled by the Word of God, who starts a new venture and is willing to risk a loss in order to achieve the success of the venture. Each month I’ve been introducing you to specific Christian startups and entrepreneurs, some of which may be helpful to your church, ministry, business or family, but my main intent is to encourage and inspire you to be entrepreneurial in your ministry and career. Are there Christian startups I should know about? Contact me at russ.mcguire@gmail.com.



Altimeter Software
A Mobile App For Your Church Members

Increase Engagement

Drive Accountability

Evaluate Program Effectiveness

405.425.5123
www.altimetersoftware.com

The advertisement features a hand holding a white smartphone. The phone screen displays the Altimeter Software app interface. At the top, it says "HOME BASE" with a hamburger menu icon. Below that, it says "YOUR BRAND" and "TRACK YOUR PROGRESS". A large circular progress indicator shows "GOAL 12 / 15" and "2 ahead of pace".