



TRANSCRIPT POWERED BY [VERBIT.AI](#)

AI IS HELPING THE DEAF MAKE CALLS: INTERVIEW WITH TOMER AHARONI, CEO OF NAGISH

Host: Hi everyone, I'm Cheryl from Vertex, Today I'm joined by Tomer Aharoni, CEO and co-founder of Nagish, a mission-driven startup that makes telecommunication more accessible to people with hearing disability or loss by empowering users to take phone calls via text. Tomer, welcome to Singapore. Great to have you here today with us. As a start could you share more about yourself and what was your journey in starting Nagish?

Tomer: I am Tomer, the co-founder and CEO of Nagish. Grew up in Israel, and I studied computer science. I went to the military, spent some time in a technological intelligence unit. From there I moved to New York started studying Computer Science at Columbia University. And that's also when we created Nagish for the first time with me and Alon the co-founder. And Nagish really started out as a side project for us and carried on to become a company.

Host: So now according to the World Health Organization, over 5% of the world population has some form of hearing disability or loss. And that's actually about four hundred and thirty million people. So what's the current method of communication for such individuals and how does Nagish hope to plug the gap, especially those with limited access?

Tomer: So it really depends where you are on the globe. Some countries have no support at all to deaf and hard of hearing people. And some countries like the US, for instance have programs to enable communication for deaf and hard of hearing people. Today, most deaf people in the world have to rely on another human to communicate. So they need to rely either on an ASL Interpreter, American Sign Language or another sign language, or stenographer or a captioner that converts whatever they say into text by typing. And we thought it was insane. So we created Nagish which allows deaf and hard of hearing people to communicate directly. They don't have to rely on another human. They can just call anyone and receive calls from anyone. And we convert the calls into text in real-time. So we developed a captioning engine that is very accurate and very fast and allows for a deaf person to communicate with a hearing person directly.

Host: I think it's best that we do a demonstration on how it works. So maybe you can do a little demonstration here.

Tomer: Of course, I got the Nagish app here. And it really looks and feels just like a phone app. But basically I'm going to call United Airlines and I'll put it on speaker so you can hear. So now whatever I'm hearing on the other side is being converted into text in real-time and I can read it on my screen and I can simply reply by typing. So I don't have to speak using my voice. I can speak using my voice if I prefer to but I can also type if I'm the person that cannot speak. And I can say, I would like to book a flight. And then the person on the other side, in this case United Airlines, will hear whatever I say using a natural sounding voice that we generate. And they'll be able to reply back. Whatever they say is converted into text and I can simply reply back. So this is how Nagish works. It's really a one stop shop solution Depending on your disability or needs.

Host: That's really awesome. And I believe users will be able to choose whether they want a female voice or a male voice?

Tomer: Exactly. Yes. So when you sign up to Nagish, we personalize your experience depending on your needs. So we ask you questions like how do you prefer to communicate and how do you prefer to listen? And what type of voice do you think you have or what kind of voice do you want? A feminine voice, a masculine voice, maybe a gender neutral voice. And we let you really personalize your communication preferences in a way that fits your needs. So right now we support English, Spanish, French, Hebrew. We just added Japanese. And we're planning to add a few more languages very soon.

Host: So what's the Nagish product roadmap and what exciting new features can users expect?

Tomer: Yeah, so it's true we wanted to create a good enough experience. And I think the biggest issues with phone calls is that they can be very sensitive. For instance, when you call 911, when you call your doctor. You cannot have any mistakes and AI is not perfect and I don't think it's going to be perfect. But we wanted to let our users give them the option really to index words such as names of people and locations so that our algorithm will give them more likely right. So that's part of the personal dictionary.

In terms of roadmap we have a lot of planned features for the app itself. So if you think about the Nagish mobile app one of the things we want to do and we just created is automated responses. So based on the conversation the AI will suggest you sentences and words to put in so you don't have to type full messages. And you will have pre-recorded messages that you can send quickly. But aside from that, we also plan to create more products to create an everywhere experience where people can have accessible communications wherever they are. Whether it's in-person situations like this and you'll be able to read captions whether it's over Zoom, Microsoft Teams Google Meet, at the workplace - it's to really hope to create an accessible experience all around.

Host: And what are your plans in this part of the world? Are you planning to expand your business?

Tomer: Yes. So one of the reasons I'm here is because we are currently considering expanding our business to other countries. We know the need is everywhere. It's not just in the US, there's an obvious need in Japan and Indonesia and Singapore. Really everywhere in the world where people live. In some countries, those people make up two to ten per cent of the population. In the US alone, they're almost forty million people who are deaf or hard of hearing. And we want these people to have options.

Host: Thanks Tomer, for this conversation. Really great to know what Nagish is doing to make phone calls more accessible to everyone. To our viewers, do check out Nagish, and download the free app from App Store and from Play store. Thank you.