



SoundBites Podcast Transcript

Episode: Navigating the Intersection of Healthcare and Retail: Transforming Hearing Care with Michael Tease

Dave Fabry: Welcome to Starkey SoundBites. I'm Dave Fabry, Starkey's chief hearing health officer and host of the podcast. If you've listened before, you know we love hearing care Professionals.

Today we're talking about the pivotal role in improving the quality of life that the professional plays for those with hearing loss, and the important journey that they take with each and every patient.

And my guest today is Michael Tease, Starkey's chief retail officer, well chief retail officer for Audibel, which is our retail brand and owned retail organization. Michael, thank you very much for joining us. This is long overdue that we've had you on the podcast.

Michael Tease: Well, thank you for having me. This is exciting.

Dave Fabry: Well, let's start a little bit with you and your background. So you're an attorney by training. I know we've talked before. I have a PhD, so people call me Dr. Fabry even though you don't want to come anywhere near me if you have a heart attack. But why is it that we don't call attorneys juris doctors given that you have a doctorate the same as I do?

Michael Tease: It's a great question. I have been referred to occasionally as a doctor of law. Doctor of law is to be specific. We're advocates for our clients, and so doctor sometimes doesn't come across as that kind of relationship that we're trying to put in place with our clients.

Dave Fabry: It's always interested me. And also really as an attorney, how you found your way to our discipline and our profession. And I think of you as a true Renaissance person, and the breadth of your knowledge from whether it's talking about legal issues, whether it's talking about retail, and about marketing, and understanding the consumer, supporting the professional, and ultimately supporting the patient. You excel in all of those areas. And I want to talk a little bit about the origins. I love origin stories as to how people got to where they are right now. Talk about your origin story and how you got to where you are today.

Michael Tease: Sure. I spent about 25 years in the pharmaceutical industry, and I did that because I wanted to help people. When I got married, it's about 31 years ago, my wife had hearing loss, and she wears hearing aids. Her parents have hearing loss as well. They wear hearing aids, and two of my three children have hearing loss as well. So they wear hearing aids.



I had been through the merger and acquisition frenzy of the '90s in the pharmaceutical business. I think I went through four mergers and acquisitions. And on the final one, I got a phone call from Sonova, and they asked if I would interview to be their global chief executive officer for Unitron. And I did. And that was my entry into the hearing aid business, and spent some time there with a very good organization.

Dave Fabry: Indeed. And we're fortunate to have you join our organization, where now you head up our entire retail division. As I said, brand name Audibel. And I think you stated beforehand, over 300 hearing care providers including audiologists and dispensers now under your leadership. And that's quite impressive, if I must say so myself.

Michael Tease: Well, thank you. It's a good group. We have room for more, by the way, because we always have openings. And we're all dedicated to the same mission, and that's providing comprehensive patient care.

Dave Fabry: Fantastic. So I know also, I said I truly see you as a Renaissance man. The only thing that I can see so far, the only crack in your armor is that you're terrible at fantasy football, and we play in a league together. And I also know that you have a military background, and that you are a lifelong Alabama fan, and also played football yourself as a safety at West Point.

Michael Tease: Absolutely. That's correct.

Dave Fabry: So while I can beat you soundly in fantasy football, I'm not going to take you on in real football, because one of my limbs may fall off. As I've gotten into my advanced age, I am slowly becoming a cyborg.

Michael Tease: Well, I'll give you a back story on why my fantasy football is so bad.

Dave Fabry: Okay.

Michael Tease: So I was actually boarding an airplane when you guys drafted, so I quickly sent everything to my son and said, "You need to draft for me, because I'm going to be on an airplane." He then called me afterwards and apologized. I said, "What are you apologizing for?" He said, "They didn't follow the rules." I said, "What rules are you talking about?" And he said, "Well, they started drafting quarterbacks in the first round."

And I said, "I have no idea what you're talking about." It's the first time I'd ever done it. But he said, "It caught me off guard. And so unfortunately, I didn't get the players you asked me to get." So I'm playing with a roster that wasn't the roster that I normally would've drafted.



- Dave Fabry: All right, fair enough. I'll take that as a beginner's excuse, but next year we're counting on more out of you, and we'll schedule the draft when you're not flying. But how did that time playing safety at West Point prepare you for your future career? With the number of years now in our industry, the pharmaceutical industry before.
- Michael Tease: Well, it taught me a lot about how to deal with adversity. My sophomore year, I injured myself first against Tennessee, and I had this nagging issue with my neck that I didn't quite understand. I went to the trainers. They did the normal thing, heat cold, etc., but didn't realize the extent of my injury. And we were playing the University of Syracuse one night, and I was hit and paralyzed from the neck down.
- Dave Fabry: Oh wow. I never knew.
- Michael Tease: Yeah. Ended up in Syracuse Memorial Hospital, transferred down to Keller Army Hospital. Eventually, my feeling returned first to my upper body and then to my lower extremities. But I was told I could never play again. I had compressed a disc that had flattened my spinal cord, but hadn't severed it.
- So that was difficult for me, because football was a significant part of my life, but I was a baseball player too. And so I was asked to play baseball for the team, and I went out for three days of practice and I said, "You know what, coach? I'm going to work my way back on the football field."
- So I joined the strength training team, and unbeknownst to me, put in a lot of work to try to get back on the football field. And one day the doctors told me, he said, "We're never letting you back on that football field, but we appreciate you remaining a part of the program." But I've dealt with that adversity and I still love the sport, but it taught me a lot about life, how you can encounter something that can be absolutely life-changing, but you have to learn to deal with it going forward, because it's beyond your control.
- Dave Fabry: Wow, that's a very compelling story here. I was expecting you to say something like when you said adversity and thinking team over self, and this and that, but paralyzed from the neck down. How long before you recovered well enough to start walking around again?
- Michael Tease: Well, I was in the hospital for most of the semester, and by the way, I flunked chemistry. But I was out by summer school and back walking again. And of course, had to retake that course. And even today, I've had two surgeries on my neck to continue to address the problem. But today I'm healthy, fortunately.
- Dave Fabry: Yeah. Well, learn something new every day, so I did not know that story before I asked the question, so thank you for sharing it. So now, let's transition to your role as our chief retail officer with Audibel. Start with the concept really of the



provider as the essential hear caregiver. You've really instilled that in the program since you've headed it up. How long have you been in your role?

Michael Tease: It's been two years now. So what that means is that what most people don't understand is that the provider really plays the pivotal role in restoring the joy of hearing to a patient. I think that's probably why OTC and direct-to-consumer haven't really exploded in the way that people thought, because they misunderstand that your hearing experience is about more than a hearing device.

It's really about a journey that you take with your hearing care provider, and it's a journey where you learn both the good and the bad of your hearing loss. And together, you formulate a plan for how to address that and improve your hearing experience. And it is a journey. It's not something that happens in one visit or two. Once you make that connection with your provider, it's really lifetime care.

Dave Fabry: Absolutely.

Michael Tease: My wife, for example, spent a decade traveling 60 miles to see her hearing care provider, despite the fact we have an office 10 minutes from my house.

Dave Fabry: Right.

Michael Tease: And it wasn't until this year, until just a couple of months ago that I finally got her to move away from her decade-long provider to our organization. And that's how important a provider relationship is to a patient.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. I think the majority of the listeners of this podcast are hearing care professionals, audiologists and dispensers, who share your opinion and belief. But unfortunately, I think as you mentioned, in looking at that gap between the people who could wear hearing aids who have a hearing loss, and those who actually do, the OTC category was borne out of that perceived gap. Thinking that with affordability, which is an important issue, no doubt, thinking about the accessibility to inexpensive hearing aids would close that gap. But to date, it hasn't changed the needle dramatically.

Certainly it's a new pathway, and I'd like to talk a little bit about the way that you see that working in a retail model, that can be a hybrid model. I mean still involving the essential caregiver, the provider. The latest MarkeTrak survey shows that patient satisfaction with both the technology and the professional are at all-time highs, this even in the face of the disruption. But expand on that a little bit more about your hybrid model of care that you're developing.

Michael Tease: Well, we, like everyone else, are experiencing an explosion in third-party units that we provide. And that represents lost revenue to the clinic. So my leadership



team got together, we started to do some ideation, and we looked at healthcare. And we noticed a trend that healthcare was adopting things that are normally found in retail. For example, care used to be provided in one large brick-and-mortar institution like a hospital.

Well now, it's fanning out into the communities, and you see it in urgent care clinics, you see it in familiar locations like CVS and Walgreens that have their wellness clinics. And we thought, "Wow. What they are realizing is that consumers want convenience, they want quality, and they want transparency in their retail shopping experience." And the healthcare community is realizing they need to move out into the community.

Well, we were ahead of the game because we were already doing that. So we very carefully select our locations to make sure that it's convenient for our patients. But then we thought, "What else can we learn from retail?" And we gave it some thought and we thought, "You know what? What they're really good at is merchandising the products that they sell." And not only merchandising the products that they sell, but cross-merchandising like items to make sure if you need one thing, you might need something else and make it very convenient.

So we started exploring. We have a number of beta stores that are in concept right now, where we've placed merchandising systems into our waiting rooms that not only introduced the product in the patient journey the moment they step into that waiting room, but it introduces all of the other related products, whether it's accessories, or whether it's supplies, or whether it's our hearing protection products.

And so they are now displayed in a convenient place where our patients can engage with those merchandising racks, and it creates a more holistic experience because they realize that there is more available to them to address their hearing needs beyond the hearing aid itself.

And what we found is that it creates questions that then lead to the professional, and the professional can provide more guidance to them on whether they might need a remote mic, or a TV streamer, or let's take a look at some of our hearing protection devices now that you've made the right decision to purchase a hearing aid. So for us, it's been a very eye-opening test.

Dave Fabry: Yeah, I'm really curious to see. And I know you've been under tests with this for numerous months now.

Michael Tease: It's been six months now.

Dave Fabry: And so in those test cases, has that indeed delivered more revenue for those locations than where you're not test marketing that? Has it been successful so far?



Michael Tease: Well, let me put it this way. You could not get those displays out of the locations where they are now. So it's been very successful. It is really been a win-win.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. So I think that's one tidbit. And I don't want you to give away all your secret sauce. People have the opportunity to join your team. As you said, you're always hiring. And I think it's a very novel approach to looking at conventional retail, but then bringing in that important caregiver and the trust that comes along with, your example of your wife sticking with, even though you had an office nearby, she was sticking with that provider that she had trusted for over a decade because she knew that they were delivering that product and service that provided her with delight.

And there's a large part of that, and I know you monitor that as well to look at Net Promoter Scores on your teams. And I'll bet that in those areas, the Net Promoter Scores are higher when they're feeling as though they're being offered but not pressured, the different products and services.

Michael Tease: Right. And by the way, the only reason I was able to pry my wife away from her provider is because our son is an HIS trainee. So he fit her in his North Alabama clinic. And so there was already an instant trust. That's the only way I pried her away from her provider.

Dave Fabry: I love it. In this case, you can never outshine your son, can never outshine the sun in that sense. But I mean, that's a great story, and it helps to have the products that we have now in our portfolio as well. We're not here to talk so much about product today in so much as this model.

Also within the hybrid model, I mean some of it you talked about not only the devices, but the other products that go along with that, whether they're accessories or other products that can help keep their devices working, in proper order, etc. And I've seen the displays and they're terrific. They're clean, consumer friendly, informational, as well as then delivering those results.

You could also talk about the hybrid model in terms of the service and delivery, including both face-to-face care. But telehealth, you guys have really led the industry pre-Covid with telehealth.

Michael Tease: We have. We have three values: compassion, competence, and care. And we think that what's really important to the patient experience in our clinics is that first, all of the staff are trained on being compassionate, understanding the patient's emotional concerns with losing hearing loss, and engaging and being supportive with them when they come into the clinic.

The second is competence. So not only do I mean competence, and of course we do rigorous training to make sure that everybody's up-to-date on the latest technology, but that it's a competent clinic in that it's efficient. The patient can



schedule online if they want. They can meet us remotely if that's better. We can do a house call visit if that's necessary.

And also, the second neck surgery that I had, I was required to go online and fill out a ton of paperwork. When I arrived before the surgery, they made me fill out the same paperwork on paper. And I walked up and I said, "Why am I doing this?" And the lady wasn't very nice, but just said, "It's required." And I thought, "Well, that's silly."

Dave Fabry: "Just the way we do it." Yeah.

Michael Tease: So we've worked very hard at streamlining all of our processes to make sure it's a very efficient and enjoyable event for the patient when they come in. They're already stressed out enough, because they've got this hearing loss and they're not sure how it's going to be treated, and whether it's going to improve or not. So we try to make it as simple form as possible.

And then the last piece is care. And when we say care, what we really mean to say is that everybody's hearing loss is unique, and we want to meet them with a unique prescription to ensure that we're addressing their hearing loss. It's customized and tailored to their need.

Dave Fabry: I mean, compassion, competence, and care. Those are indeed three C's that I can get behind in terms of differentiating yourself in the market. And I think whether you're in retail, whether you're in a clinic environment, whether you're in some other type of facility, it's really the differentiator. And if everyone can relay those three values, the three C's that you mentioned, and they're aligned with the organization that does deliver outcomes that, I've seen your outcomes in terms of patient satisfaction, and return for credit, and all of that, it's all really a function of where you begin by focusing on compassionate, and competence, and then that caring element. You put those together, no matter what the disruptor is, whether it's OTC or whether it's some other perceived threat, you can't be commoditized if you're focusing on what matters most to those hard of hearing patients.

Michael Tease: Absolutely. I think it was Stephen Covey who first framed the term. "The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing." And so a lot of people erroneously think that the main thing for us is to sell a hearing aid, but it's not. The main thing for us is to provide a comprehensive care plan for a patient that comes into one of our offices. And when we do that, as Mr. Austin has always said, "If you take care of the patient, everything else takes care of itself." And that's what we focus on a daily basis.

Dave Fabry: Yeah, I mean, I cut my professional teeth about 80 miles south of here at Mayo Clinic where their focus is similar, very much so to Starkey's in terms of the needs of the patient are the only interests that matter. But something I never shared before was although I learned a great deal from my mentors at Mayo, I



also learned a lot from a hearing instrument specialist who had a retail operation that wasn't a part of Mayo, but was in the shadow of Mayo.

And one thing that, he was a dispenser. What distinguished him is he went out, Bud Freeman went out into the communities and met the patient where they were to serve those local patients because he knew that in the ivory tower, they were open like many clinics are during the week. But he went on the weekends and a couple times a month to senior service centers and things like that. It was way before telehealth was ever a thing. But meeting the patient where they are is part of that hybrid model, as you said, to make it convenient for them, not just convenient for us, we're in the white coats.

Michael Tease: That's absolutely true. And it reminds me, in many of our clinics, we're at over 100% of schedule utilization. And so we are thinking of testing out opening on Saturdays and in the evenings when other folks are closed, to your point, because we want to make it convenient for patients and meet them when they're available. So again, all about patient care, all about making it as convenient as possible, and meeting them in the community where they want to be met.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. Well, I want to talk a little bit more beyond the hybrid model per se, some of the other changes that Audibel has undergone that really, again, to the degree that you're comfortable speaking about, how does it differentiate in the market, and maybe provide some guidance to our listeners in terms of ways that they can put some of those tools into practice in their own operations. Some of it, they're not going to be able to replicate just because of the size of the facility and the way that you've aligned, but are there a few tidbits that you can offer to others?

Michael Tease: One of the ideas that came out of our ideation session was this idea of modernizing everything. So we started with the brand, we modernized the brand, look and feel, the visual. We reimagined what the inside of the clinic should look like, and we now have a flagship approach that we are taking, and we'll be at some point moving all of our clinics to this look and feel.

And we're over 100 brands nationally. And so we want to consolidate those brands into one under Audibel, so that we can build awareness of what we do nationally. I think one of the most unique things that we've done is establish a sonic signature to go along with our brand.

Dave Fabry: Acoustic icon or a sonic signature. I like the way that flows off the tongue even better.

Michael Tease: Yeah, exactly. And of course, folks who don't know what that might be, you take Netflix, everybody knows the [inaudible 00:23:43] that happens with Netflix.



Dave Fabry: AT&T [inaudible 00:23:46] or CBS, and you can do it in as little... I mean, it's always interesting to see when you're training up that acoustic icon or sonic signature, that you start with the sound, which is often melodic, pair it with a voice. But after a while, it's been proven time and time again you can take the voice away and you can identify those sonic signatures in as little as like name that tune. Two, three notes, and a sonic signature can convey everything about that brand if you've done it well.

Michael Tease: Right. Isn't it ironic too that we're in the hearing business, and no one has a sonic signature?

Dave Fabry: Yeah.

Michael Tease: So we thought, hey, that's a pretty obvious thing to do. We've done it. And I would encourage folks that want to hear it to go to yourhearingcheck.com.

Dave Fabry: Yourhearingcheck.com.

Michael Tease: Yourhearingcheck.com and you can look at some of our latest TV commercials, and each one of them will begin with the sonic signature, and it will end with the sonic Signature.

Dave Fabry: I think beyond that familiarity of understanding when you hear a commercial on the radio, on TV, on a podcast that you'll recognize and it'll associate in the brain, there is also, I think for a lot of our listeners, in your professional and in your personal life, you can become house blind to your surroundings. And many folks I think have a comfort level if they've been in their practice for a long time, and realize that it looks dated in the same way that things around the house, or there's clutter.

And I think it's been really impressive seeing what you've done at cleaning up the space, making it more efficient and effective, with the use of the accessories and the things that you've integrated into those test facilities now and with the intent of bringing them out. But I think the other element is the standardization.

If I go to see an office in Minneapolis, and then I winter in Florida, and there's an office near me, can I go to that office as well?

Michael Tease: Yes.

Dave Fabry: Yes. So that familiarity of being able to walk in and feel like you're home a little bit, that you recognize the look and feel is important too.

Michael Tease: And we've got a long way to go there. We're slowly turning over our stores to have that same look and feel. Most importantly, we wanted to modernize. If you sit in your waiting room and it looks like your grandmother's living room,



the tech-savvy boomers that are becoming our clients now, they're looking at care differently than in the past. And when they walk into a waiting room, a lobby, which we call the second moment of truth, it's the first time they experience who you are, what you're about. And we want to make sure that we set forth the right conditions to put the patient at ease, number one. And then secondly, alert them with the lobby displays that there all kinds of products in here that can help them on their hearing loss journey. And then thirdly, put them at ease.

And I think we're doing a good job. We've modernized the colors, streamlined, as you said, the furniture, given it a more high-tech feel. And we're pleased with that direction.

Dave Fabry: You talked about the generational impact. We're in the middle not only of a digital transformation, and you've already talked a little bit about ways you're doing that, but also a generational transformation from the greatest generation, those born before World War II, to the baby boomers like myself.

How are you reaching out to them differently? You mentioned that they have different expectations. Is there anything you can share that you're already seeing the impact of what it is that us baby boomers want that's different than our parents?

Michael Tease: I have to say social media is a great way to reach that group. Our marketing mix is very heavily digital now, whereas it wasn't in the past. We find it to be a more efficient way.

All of our interactions in the clinic now, we will contact our patient by text if that's what they prefer. We'll send them notifications three days in advance of their appointment, one day in advance. We'll send them the directions if they're a new patient.

It's a tech-savvy group, and you have to meet them where they are. And we learn through the process when they come in and they onboard with us what communication they like best. And that's the way we continue to communicate with them.

Dave Fabry: Again, meeting them where they are for communication. So important, just hitting those reminders and helpful hints as they're acclimating to the device. All of that communication is essential to that high Net Promoter Score, building and establishing that trust that hopefully now your son is doing with your wife.

Michael Tease: Exactly.

Dave Fabry: Otherwise you'll hear about it doubly on either side of the equation.



Michael Tease: Exactly.

Dave Fabry: But what a great focus group to come home to and be able to have these discussions.

Michael Tease: It really is the way that I learn the most about how patients interact with our hearing aids is watching my family, and it's really eye-opening at times.

Dave Fabry: And for me, the one thing that I see... I still see patients now. Not at a level that I can apply for work yet, that you would say I don't have quite enough recent experience, but I'm seeing patients on a daily basis.

And one of the things I see is that... And it's not exclusive to the younger patient because I think covid changed everything in terms of telehealth and expectations for that. But the stigma piece.

As somebody that's been in this field for 40 years, I've always recognized stigma is the big barrier. But I'm even starting to see that some people have less stigma my age, but have higher expectations for what hearing aids can do for them in the way that they're connected to their phone and everything else. Are you seeing that?

Michael Tease: We are. I find it interesting. My daughter, my oldest daughter will share the story to this day that she regrets refusing to wear hearing aids in high school. And she would sit on the front chair. She became an excellent lip-reader. But she will talk now, painfully really, about relationships that didn't go like she'd wanted in high school because people thought that she was ignoring them when she actually couldn't hear them.

And I'll never forget the first day I put hearing aids on her, she did one of these, and she said, "Do you hear that?" I said, "I don't know. What do you hear?" And she said, "Well, I hear mom walking down the hallway." Now I was back in private practice in law and we had tile on the floor. And she heard that. And I said, "Yeah, I hear that." And then she said, "Do you hear that too?" And I said, "What do you hear?" She said, "I hear papers rustling." I said, "Yeah, that's in the office next door." And she started crying, just profusely. And of course, I did too.

Dave Fabry: It's your daughter.

Michael Tease: Yeah. It's a magical moment.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. And it's probably, we talk about, it seems cliché, but when you can find what you're good at with what you love to do, and if it makes an impact, it's like the perfect storm. And so it sounds as though you've established this culture in the new retail in Audibel. You're growing like mad. As I said, I'll put the plug in



for people that want to join an organization that is committed to those three C's that you mentioned.

Michael Tease: Absolutely.

Dave Fabry: To me, it just sounds like an ideal place to grow where you're planted, and to continue to make an impact in people's lives. And it sounds like you've seen that on a personal basis with your wife, your daughters, your son, who now is also in the seat where he's getting to change lives by delivering care and service in an environment where you're really forward-thinking of the ways that the patient population is changing.

Michael Tease: Yeah, and you're absolutely right. And to your earlier point, when I look at the difference between how my wife's parents interact with their hearing aids and how my wife does, they're less app savvy by far and have lots of questions for my son when they come, because he helped fit one of them as well.

My wife though, boy, she is app savvy. And she comes home, I cannot tell you every night saying edge mode is incredible. She's a judicial assistant. And she said when she's in court, at times the hearing aids are focused too much on the lawyers, because the lawyers are getting too loud. But she has to converse with the judge. She said she hits edge mode, and it's a miracle the way she can focus on what she needs to hear. And so teaching her parents that is still something she's trying to do, how to use the app to actually control and create a better hearing experience for themselves.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. I mean, you have a multi-generational focus group in your larger household, if you will. With your wife's parents, your wife, and your daughters. And I think one of the things that's really special about Genesis and the related other product names, this latest technology with edge mode or with the 80 million computations that can be made every hour, the best technologies are the ones that for, let's say your wife's parents, just simply disappear. They put them in, set them and forget them. Your wife is capable of using edge mode. And I have patients that are older and younger that swear by edge mode instead of even a manual program. And then I'm sure your daughter is finding novel ways that she can teach us too about how to use this technology in a way.

But the thing I love is the same technology through the hands of a capable, caring, compassionate professional can deliver that same technology to meet the needs of the individual in all of those ways. Automatic, edge mode, or manual programs galore and for streaming.

Michael Tease: And that's why they're pivotal to the journey. And that's why we see our patients four times a year.

Dave Fabry: Four times a year.



Michael Tease: Yeah. We want to make sure that they're getting the most out of not only the treatment plan that we provided, but the devices themselves, make sure that they're learning more about how to use the app when they find themselves in difficult situations so that they can feel more empowered when the professional's not there.

Dave Fabry: Last question, because I see the time as I knew it would, it's just flown by. But we know that earlier in July of 2023, the initial findings from the ACHIEVE Study were presented that were the first to look at longitudinal study of people wearing hearing aids versus not wearing them in the aging population. And it found a strong link between those individuals who had cardiovascular risk factors and were aging, 70 to 84 years of age on preservation of cognition compared with the control group.

Have you seen any patients yet coming in asking about cognitive decline, or cognition, or staying mentally sharp? And if so, are you starting to see that that resonates with multi-generation patients? I mean, does your wife see her parents... And at some point we all have to deal, I'm dealing with now, my mind isn't nearly as sharp as it was, and I know in the future it's going to get more so. But the moment that I need hearing aids, I will wear them.

Michael Tease: Not yet. I don't think it's getting enough publicity. Of course, we talk about that in the clinics, because oftentimes you have patients who are so comfortable in the silence that they've grown accustomed to. When you turn life on, so to speak, they get very uncomfortable. And we remind them that, "Your brain has gotten comfortable in the silence. But it's important that you engage mentally and start to hear," and we'll cite the study and explain why it's important that they get back into life.

And I think there's got to be a way that that study gets more marketing notoriety. Right now, it's not. We're trying to figure out how we incorporate it into our marketing.

Dave Fabry: Yeah. I think, and even your daughter's experience, I think fundamentally, even the people in that ACHIEVE Study that didn't see changes in cognitive function over time, there were no adverse events. No one dies from trying a hearing aid. And your daughter's experience touches my heart in the sense that you begin to realize what you're missing. And really anything that we can do to address that five to seven year delay from the time we think we have a hearing loss to action the way your daughter did, at any age of life, whether it's younger or older. Like I said, you have this multi-generational focus group, and I think what a wonderful opportunity to change lives and to also learn how they can help guide you in the ways that you and your team are changing other people's lives.

So I'll stay tuned for how we see. I've been longing for the day that we move away from 30 wanted into how it is that we move from hearing loss to hearing gain.



Michael Tease: Right. That's really well put. I have to say that my time here with this group of professionals has been really the highlight of my career. I love this organization. Audibel, Starkey, it's really committed to the right values and takes the right approach. And I couldn't be happier. I would say to anyone who's looking for an organization to join, which is one of the reasons we're changing our name to Audibel nationwide is we want to make sure that people who want to go to work for a really good organization that's grounded in good values, that they know who we are. And so I would encourage anyone who's looking for work in this field to give us a call, because we always have openings.

Dave Fabry: Excellent. Well, that is a good place to stop. And Michael, I thank you very much for your time today, sharing your expertise, sharing some of the stories about your family, and also your personal experience. I'll take your excuse this year for your fantasy football carnage.

Michael Tease: Thank you.

Dave Fabry: But next year, I'm expecting bigger things and we'll schedule the draft better.

Michael Tease: Awesome.

Dave Fabry: To our listeners, thank you for listening to this episode of Starkey Sound Bites. If you enjoyed this conversation, easy for you to say, please rate and review us, share it with your friends. If you're looking for work, we've already talked about that a couple times. If you have ideas for future topics that we have on the podcast, send us a note at soundbites@starkey.com, and we will gladly take your input as to topics or people that we should have on the podcast. And so with that, I'm going to sign off for today. And thank you again, Michael, for joining us.

Michael Tease: Thank you for having me.

Dave Fabry: My pleasure.