

# LAFAYETTE

## Ryan Sysko '97 Partners with AT&T to Launch WellDoc's Mobile Diabetes Management System

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By Kevin Gray

During a family vacation in Florida in 2004, Ryan Sysko '97 and his sister, Dr. Suzanne Clough, who at the time was a physician at the Joslin Center for Diabetes, University of Maryland, were discussing ways that technology might be used to help her patients manage diabetes.

"Her patients were struggling," says Sysko, of Wilmington, Del. "She asked if I could help her integrate cellular technology into her patients' lives and her practice, and help them improve their diabetes outcomes."

The result, a year later, was the creation of [WellDoc, Inc.](#), based in Baltimore, Md., with Sysko as CEO and Clough as chief medical officer. They "cobbled" together some money to build a prototype of a cell phone application that would coach diabetes patients in real time and support them in the management of their disease. In addition, the system could analyze patient data and submit it to the patients' health care providers in a format that allowed providers to quickly identify their patients' issues and optimize their care.



This prototype became the company's flagship system, DiabetesManager®, which will become available via a mobile application in early 2011 as the result of a strategic partnership between WellDoc and AT&T.

Now boasting 85 employees and having support systems in cardiovascular, oncology, respiratory, mental health, and wellness areas under development, WellDoc has garnered a great deal of attention and acclaim.

In the fall, *BusinessWeek* listed DiabetesManager® System among 15 new mobile health solutions to watch. In October, the company won the 2010 Mobile Health Expo Award for outstanding contribution to the growth and success of disease management using mobile health technology and, in November, was named global winner of the 2010 World Summit Award for best mobile environment and health solution.

In addition, AT&T announced in October that it plans to offer WellDoc's diabetes management solution to a select group of employees sometime in 2011. AT&T's benefits program covers some 1.2 million employees, retirees, and dependents.

"We were fortunate when we developed the initial prototype because a wealthy patient of my sister's who really struggled to manage his diabetes said he would like to try it," Sysko says. "They had worked together for more than three years, and he would tell you that he was a non-compliant patient who really earned his numbers."

Within 60 days of being on WellDoc's prototype system, the patient's numbers were at the American Diabetes Association's recommended target levels. "As a 70-year-old who wasn't technology savvy and was non-compliant, he said if this system can work for him, it could work for anybody," Sysko says. In an ultimate testimonial, the patient made the initial investment in the company.

Sysko notes that diabetes management is complicated, and requires about two hours a day for most patients. Many factors affect the regulation of blood sugar levels such as diet, medications, exercise, and management of stress levels, moods, and sleep patterns.

In August, the system received FDA clearance for use by adults with type 2 diabetes in conjunction with their health care providers. The system is meant to help patients follow proper diet and lifestyle between visits to the doctor. It captures and transmits blood glucose data and other diabetes self-management information, which is analyzed by the company's proprietary Automated Expert Analytics System™.

Sysko, who received a B.A. in economics and business, said three aspects of his Lafayette experience prepared him for success in his career: a multidisciplinary approach to education, small class sizes, and close interaction with faculty.

"I don't think of myself as a specialist," he says. "I really am a generalist. Because of this, I have been able to drop into various areas of our business as needed to give support."

Sysko was previously vice president and director of marketing and business development for The Credo Group, a direct-to-consumer web marketer of life and health insurance products. Prior to Credo, he was CEO and founder of Assurance Marketing Group, Wilmington, Del. He also served in management positions at Chase, Bank of America, and Conseco.

"When I first started out in banking, I found myself drawing on some of the lessons I learned from my time at Lafayette," he says. "The fact that I was never in a class of more than 15 or 20 students was key since it provided the opportunity for close interaction with other students and some amazing professors — Susan Averett, James DeVault, and Ed Seifried."