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## Health Tech Entrepreneur Builds a Business Focusing on Improving The Lives of Tens of Thousands



Health is your greatest wealth. This is a realization for many people who have a healthy lifestyle and make it a priority to eat well and live an active lifestyle. Todd McGuire is the Chief Technology Officer and co-founder of startup incentaHEALTH and we had to the opportunity to hear from him about starting business, the future of the company and what entrepreneurship means to him.

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### WELCOME TO OUR BLOG!



Hi, my name is Gresham (Gresh) and this is a business blog that I manage with a phenomenal team. I am the Blogger in Chief for CBNation and a media consultant for Blue 16 Media. Helping out business owners with website design and digital marketing. I hope you enjoy this blog! Find me on social media @prograshion.

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### Tell us your story:

Hi, I'm Todd. I am the co-founder and CTO of the digital health care company incentaHEALTH. My company is a mash up of 3 of my deepest passions: health, technology and entrepreneurship. I discovered my first love when I was 11 and mowed enough lawns to save the money to buy my first PC: a TI-99/4A. I wrote my first app in 1981 and was immediately smitten with the limitless possibilities of the computer. I went to the University of Colorado at Boulder, looking for a major that combined business and technology. I ended up creating my own hybrid degree by doing a triple major in Information Systems, Organization Management and Human Resource Management. After college I worked for a couple of management consulting firms, working on business process reengineering and e-commerce systems for companies in the health care, financial services and manufacturing industries. Through it all, I found that I had a knack for bridging business and technology perspectives to capture market opportunities. I also found that I had an itch to build my own company from the group up, instead of just consulting to other companies. That led me build incentaHEALTH, a company focused on using visual weight loss and behavioral economics to reverse obesity.

### Tell us about your business

incentaHEALTH was formed in 2003 around the idea of rewarding people for healthy behaviors. The first goal of the company was to invent an Internet-enabled biometric monitoring device—called the HEALTHspot®— that would allow people to privately track their weight loss and blood pressure results and earn cash rewards for sustained improvements in their health. Based on the innovative combination of an Internet-connected digital scale synchronized with a full-length digital photograph of a biometric screening, incentaHEALTH received a patent on the HEALTHspot® (U.S. Patent No. 7541547) from the USPTO in 2009. Through the use of this patented health screening technology, incentaHEALTH successfully shifted the wellness industry's use of self-reported data to authenticated outcomes that could be collected inexpensively across large groups of individuals.

The second goal for incentaHEALTH was to develop a comprehensive behavior change program to help people engage in healthy eating and active living. Using a team of Registered Dietitians, Certified Personal Trainers, and Behavioral Scientists, the 12-month incentaHEALTH program was designed to include online coaching tools, objective weight assessment via the HEALTHspot® scale, daily social cognitive theory-based email and text message support, online and telephonic access to live health coaches, and financial incentives intended to increase program adoption and retention. A "gamified" incentive structure is used to deliver cash rewards every 3 months. For each 5% improvement in body weight, the member receives a \$15 reward loaded onto a Visa card. So a 5% weight loss earns \$15. 10% earns \$30. 15% earns \$45. This continues all the way up to a 30% weight improvement, which earns a \$150 reward. And to encourage long term results, these incentive payments continue if the participant continues to weigh in and demonstrate sustained weight maintenance. The daily program encourages a balanced eating plan of fruit, vegetables, lean protein, and complex carbohydrates while monitoring portion sizes. Physical activity recommendations gradually guide our members from simple walking, on to vigorous strength and cardiovascular training that helps replace excess fat with lean muscle. All of this is delivered electronically each day in the form of a daily meal plan from a dietitian and a custom workout routine from a Certified Personal Trainer. Corporate customers install our worksite-based HEALTHspot scale in their cafeterias, break rooms, HR offices, while home users can use our new wireless home scale and smartphone app to track their progress at home.

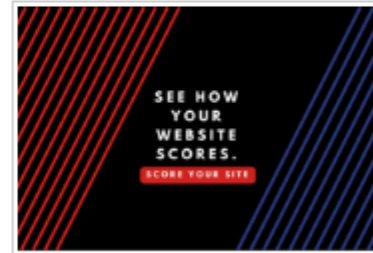
We offer our program to employers and health plans that are interested in improving the health of their populations. We also offer a home version of the program directly to consumers who like the idea of daily coaching and visually tracking their transformation via our home scale.

### What future trends do you see in the health industry?

This is a big one. There are so many disruptive innovations happening in health. Here are a half dozen to think about:

- Health Tech Entrepreneur Builds a Business Focusing on Improving The Lives of Tens of Thousands
- 16 Entrepreneurs Explain How They Use Facebook for Business
- Younger Results-Driven Leaders More Fun to Work With

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A promotional graphic for Universal Studios Hollywood. At the top is the Universal Studios Hollywood logo. Below it is a red button that says "BUY NOW &gt;". The bottom half of the graphic features a purple and blue background with a cityscape and the text "JUMP INTO ACTION SAVE UP TO \$15 PER TICKET".

**Privacy:** Every new high-visibility hack (Target, Yahoo, Sony, et al) makes the consumer more and more concerned about their personal data. And rightfully so. So many of the next generation of health innovations will rely on leveraging sensitive patient data (think genetic profiles and emerging cancer therapies that are tailored to your DNA). For this to happen, we need to do better at being custodians of this information and

**Portability:** Related to privacy, consumers are going to demand that they are the owners of their data. Right now your EMR data is siloed in each hospital, health insurer, and speciality care provider your visit. It's maddening for the consumer to navigate. And it's filled with a lot of repetitive filling out of forms and providing the same info to each entity you visit. Some innovators with integrated business models like Kaiser Permanente are making great strides in aggregating your patient data and making it accessible to you. But there's still a long distance to go until the patient can easily control their data, sharing it with the appropriate party, for the appropriate amount of time, with the ease that they can do something like checking the balance in the savings account with their bank.

**Personal Responsibility:** I see a future where the individual can really see the impact that lifestyle choices have on their health. Aligning incentives with good health is one step in that direction. Making the healthy choice the easy choice. I love how the restaurant chain Season's 52 was designed with most menu items having 475 calories or less. I think most diners would never even think about that because everything is so flavorful and the restaurant setting is beautiful. Prevention (see below) can be so powerful, and so much more attractive than the alternative of invasive surgeries, lifelong medication dependence, and life of limited activity due to debilitating disease.

**Prevention:** The percentages vary, but the general consensus is that at least 70% of chronic disease is attributed to personal lifestyle choices. Let that sink in. That means that you modify your risk by changing your behavior. Yes there are genetic components that you can't change (yet), but there is tremendous opportunity in our reach today to choose a different path. I'm a health tech nerd who deals with acronyms all day long, but my favorite one is HEAL: Healthy Eating and Active Living. Some much good can be accomplished (and so much pain avoided) with those 4 letters. I'm so inspired every time I talk to one of our customers who has taken charge of their life by learning how to feed themselves and move their body more. If you want to see what I mean, take a look at these interviews with a handful of our members.

**Social Media:** As time on Facebook, Pinterest, Instagram sadly displaces time spent face-to-face with our friends, we're going to see these social media platforms become channels to deliver care and support healthy behavior change. We launched an experimental feature on our coaching platform that allows our customers to "brag to Facebook" when they start losing weight and improving their health. To our surprise, the feature has been embraced by our members, many who choose to share their "healthy selfie" with their friends. And we look at the data around this feature, we see that these individuals tend to do even better than average, and their results tend to last longer. I think it's a form of "social contracting" where the individual is making a commitment to their friends that this change is for real and they intend to stick with it. This creates a virtuous feedback loop of encouragement, which in turn helps cement the healthy behavior as a new set of habits.

**Augmented Reality:** This one is a bit out there, but we're going to see some really neat things happen. Unlike virtual reality (VR) which is often tied to games and requires a clunky headset to immerse the viewer in a scene, AR is about adding extra information to the world as you see it. Though it can be used for gaming (see Pokemon Go), it has application in far more mundane (but practical) settings like DIY. It could be used to help deliver a wide range of health-related services to individuals in their homes.



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### What does entrepreneurship mean to you?

Entrepreneurship is problem solving. It begins from the highest level when you're thinking about some big problem that is causing major pain in an industry, and you have that inspiration moment where you think you have a better answer than what's been tried before. So your quest to build a business around that problem quickly transforms into a test of how well you can tackle the cascade of secondary problems that lie between you and that vision. How do I fund this idea? Can I build it? Is this patentable? If I do build it, will someone actually buy it? Will the product work? What kind of a team do I need to build this? This entails having the grit to creatively get through all these obstacles and stay fired up when it takes longer than you expected...because it always takes longer than you expected! What I notice in entrepreneurs is that they often get energized by figuring out answers to sticky problems that might paralyze others. When I'm hiring someone to join our team, I always ask if they can tolerate uncertainty, or if they seek out situations where the instruction book hasn't been written yet. I love finding people that are hungry to write that book, rather than just follow a well-worn instruction manual. The splendor of solving those problems and seeing our product truly helping people improve their health and changes their lives gives me a lot of satisfaction.

### Where do you see the business in the next 5 years?

Our mission is to reward 100 million people for Healthy Eating + Active Living to end obesity. To this end, we will be expanding our platform with more and more organizations that are looking to improve the health of their communities. We will also be supporting our new consumer platform to help individuals who want to take charge of their health on their own. We will also continue to add new health conditions to our coaching and incentive platform. We are launching a diabetes prevention component now, and that will be followed by other chronic health issues like smoking cessation, CHF (Congestive Heart Failure) and hypertension. There are a lot of opportunities to apply our behavioral economics model to inexpensively measure improvements and reward people for making a healthy change. We're also expanding the scope of biometric devices that we offer to track a growing list of key health metrics, like physical activity, cholesterol, blood pressure, sleep quality, etc.

### What is unique about being a Healthy CEO?

I love the perfect alignment between my personal goal of being a strong, healthy father for my family (I have twin boys and a little girl all under the age of 6) and my business goal of building a company focused on bringing health to organizations and individuals across the globe. When I go for my morning run, I am literally "walking the walk" of what my business is all about. Though I guess it's technically "running the walk!"

### Anything additional you would like to let our readers know?

True to my "health tech geek" roots, I have been awarded patents in the United States and Australia for remote biometric monitoring systems and data visualization technologies. I'm also a Certified Personal Trainer and enjoy participating in marathons and triathlons, though now I mostly chase my 3 toddlers around to stay healthy. I can be reached at [trmcquire@incentaHEALTH.com](mailto:trmcquire@incentaHEALTH.com).



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