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INNOVATION A look at innovative organizations, concepts, products and people

Social 'Solutioning' Site Is About Beating Addiction

TECHNOLOGY: Apps Provide Support, Tools For Addicts, Caregivers

By KELLY QUIGLEY

A Solana Beach company founded by a former venture capitalist who almost died from drugs and alcohol has raised \$7 million in funding and landed major managed care clients including **Aetna Inc.** for its social networking platform designed for recovering addicts.

OneRecovery Inc., founded in 2008, has developed an online community that provides 24-hour support to people who want to overcome an addiction to narcotics, alcohol and nicotine. The company also has online groups for those with eating disorders, depression and other conditions.

"This company started because I was lucky enough to live when I should have died," said founder and CEO **David Metzler**, 35, who learned about the interactive gaming industry while working at the technology-focused **Mission Ventures** in San Diego.

Prior to Mission Ventures, Metzler worked as an investment banker for **CIBC World Markets** in New York and served in the U.S. Navy as an air traffic controller. But after his struggles with drugs and alcohol — and having friends who overdosed or committed suicide in drug-related incidents — Metzler refocused his career on what he said had become his new passion in life: helping other people reach their recovery goals.

"I didn't want to see any more of my friends die," he said.

Metzler brought together a team of people from the health care, technology and interactive gaming industries to create a so-called "social solutioning" website with mobile apps that can help addicts get through tough times.

Members are typically invited to join the network by their treatment center or insurance company. They get a profile page that looks similar to Facebook, but has extras such as a motivating recovery clock that ticks away every minute a member has gone without drugs or alcohol, and daily prompts to express their feelings by clicking on an emoticon.

Warning Signs

If a member selects an emoticon that represents a high-risk feeling such as "craving," a notification will alert that person's OneRecovery friends and support should come rolling in. OneRecovery has patents pending for its use of emoticons and many other elements of its program.

Members can also earn badges for doing positive activities such as journaling and growing their network of friends in recovery.

"People can be as anonymous as they want to be," Metzler said. "They have the ability to gate every piece of information on the site."

That could mean using a pseudonym, a generic profile photo, or choosing not to share information with recovery professionals from their treatment center.

Whether the member's real name is

ONERECOVERY INC.

Founder and CEO: David Metzler.

Financial data: Raised \$7 million in venture capital funding; would not disclose revenues.

No. of local employees: 30.

Investors: Lehmi Ventures.

Headquarters: Solana Beach.

Year founded: 2008.

What makes the company innovative: Applies principles from social networking and online gaming to help people find support when recovering from addiction or depression.

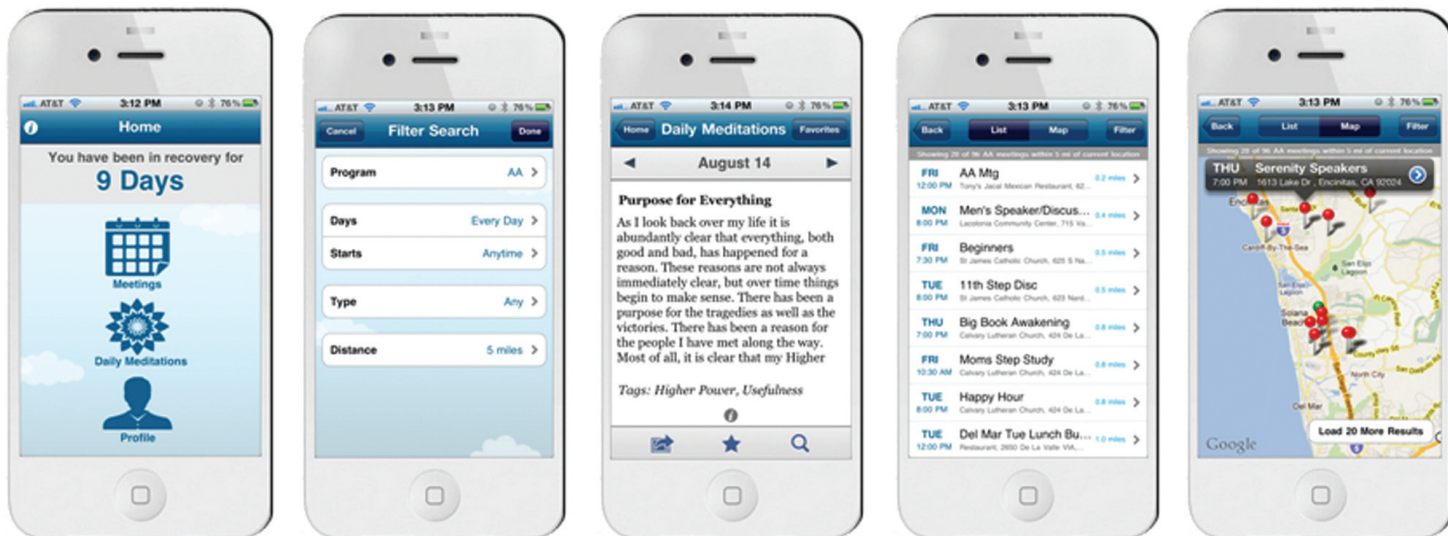
Key factors for success: The company uses clinically sound recovery principles to guide the development of its website and mobile apps.



David Metzler



Image courtesy of OneRecovery Inc. **OneRecovery Inc. is creating a platform to support addicts in recovery as well as people suffering from other conditions such as depression.**



Images courtesy of OneRecovery Inc.

OneRecovery provides mobile apps as part of its addiction recovery support. Emoticons are used to express a person's state of mind at a particular time.

used or not, the goal is to share authentic information and build a support network. That's because forging friendships, sharing stories and holding each other accountable are all clinically proven recovery principles, said OneRecovery Chief Marketing Officer **Drew Paxton**. An 18-month pilot program with **Aetna Behavioral Health**, based in Hartford, Conn., has shown that the principles do in fact carry over to the Web, he said.

Aetna, which signed on with OneRecovery in 2010, studied the clinical outcomes of members who had recently completed detox or addiction treatment. The findings: The program reduced readmissions by 67 percent with members who were out of treatment for more than 270 days.

"We know that social networking has the power to connect people like never before," **Louise Murphy**, head of Aetna Behavioral Health, said in a statement.

OneRecovery is working with three other undisclosed managed health companies who pay a fee per member to access the online network. The company also licenses its software to more than 30 treatment centers in the U.S., including **CRC Health Group** in Cupertino.

Reducing Health Care Costs

While OneRecovery's stated company



goal is to save lives, there's a compelling business argument to be made for social networking software that can lower the health care burden of addiction, Metzler said.

Some 155.6 million Americans deal with addiction, obesity, nicotine and depression, at a total treatment cost of \$515 billion per year, according to OneRecovery's market research based on data from the Centers for Disease Control and Seattle-based consulting company **Milliman Inc.**

In addition, chronic conditions such as diabetes and cancer are more expensive to treat in people who have addictions, Metzler notes. Another business benefit: It helps treatment centers prioritize their call

lists, focusing on people who have shown signs online that they're nearing relapse.

OneRecovery in late October launched a free location-based mobile app called **OneRecovery OnTheGo** that allows people to find a 12-step meeting within a mile or more of where they are. The app also includes a recovery clock and daily meditations.

"Social media and mobile applications have completely changed the way people access information and participate in all types of activities," Metzler said.