

Augmyntia:

An interview with CEO-Founder Arnie Cochran



This year I was privileged to interview Arnie Cochran, the eccentric, controversial founder and multibillionaire CEO of Augmyntia. The interview was conducted at Orchard A/V Studios in New York. What follows is the complete (unedited) transcript of the interview. – Scott (SP)

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SP: Mr. Cochran, it is a pleasure to meet you.

COCHRAN: Likewise, Scott, please call me Arnie.

SP: Please have a seat. So, Mr. Cochran – Arnie – let me start by congratulating you on a spectacular, indeed, massive, unequivocal success with Augmyntia.

COCHRAN: You're very kind, thank you.

SP: Let me just read this quote from Harold Willum's article published recently in the *Wall Street Journal*.

COCHRAN: That's fine, but just be aware that not everything he says is true.

SP: I understand, but please allow me:

"Yesterday, Arnie Cochran and Augmyntia rewrote IPO history by opening with a market valuation of \$123 billion. This valuation is so shocking that it is almost scary. Not only has this made Cochran one of the richest people on the planet overnight, but according to his 'Citizens' as he calls them, he is 'the King'."

Arnie Cochran, what do you have to say to that?

COCHRAN: Well, he's saying a lot of things there, and I'm certainly no King. But the dollars are real – that I can't dispute!

SP: Maybe we should start from the beginning. Whatever led you down this path?

COCHRAN: What allowed me to go down this path was about \$650 million in venture capital. I remember the day as clear as a bell when I made my pitch to the venture capitalists and I was sure they thought I was crazy. As it has turned out, I've made them all crazy rich!

So here's the Augmyntia story in a nutshell.

Years ago my father lost his job as a welder in Indiana working for an air-conditioning manufacturer that shall go nameless, that roboticized all the welding stations on the assembly line. This singular event effectively killed him. I was in high school at the time and I watched my father spiral down and down and down. He never found another job, he drank heavily all day, stayed away from home days at a time and we never knew where he went, and then we got a call from the police that he was found dead inside a sleeping bag under some bushes by the railroad tracks.

SP: I'm very sorry to hear that, Arnie, I had no idea.

COCHRAN: No need to apologize. It's been many years and I've come to terms with it. But for a long while I was not so good myself. I did my share of drinking because I was really pissed off that the American Dream just passed my father by,

stomped on his head and left him for dead. Essentially my dad lost his job to a hunk of metal with a fast processor and a lot of software.

SP: Sign of the times, I fear.

COCHRAN: Is it? Because you see, I turned that anger into a passion that has been driving me since the day my dad died of a broken spirit. I saw where this was all going. It starts with one man like my dad who loses his job, then 10 lose their jobs, then 100, 1,000, 10,000, 1,000,000, and it keeps going to put unemployed zombies on the street that can't find a job to do with their backs and their hands. I saw clearly what my mission was for the rest of my life. I was going to save those lost souls from the fate my dad suffered. In fact, I was going to do better than just save them. I was going to turn the tables to make these men and women kicked to the curb without a job, even better than the jerks that fired them.

SP: That sounds like revenge, Arnie.



COCHRAN: Of course it's revenge! What's wrong with revenge, especially when it's for your dad? My dad was a great guy. He was big, strong, great with his hands, could fix anything, and he was the best welder they had in the plant. But when I saw him dead in the bushes I was devastated, then very drunk, then very pissed. But I'm better now having channeled that anger into something positive for society.

Hey, I'm a billionaire!

SP: Not just one billion, Arnie, but quite a few!

COCHRAN: Yes, I guess so. The people, or should I say the market, have spoken.

SP: So tell us how you transformed that angry vision into Augmyntia.

COCHRAN: A pleasure. So we all know about robotics by now and the growing displacement of jobs. There was all this talk -- mostly by politicians who are useless when it comes to getting anything done -- about retraining. I thought, there is no way you're going to retrain these people to become software programmers or handle any other math-heavy technical positions. Ain't gonna happen. And then one day the old phrase just popped into my head: "If you can't beat them, join 'em."

SP: Are you saying, join the robots?

COCHRAN: Yes, of course! I knew then that there is no way in hell a man or woman can compete against a robot doing those tasks that robots can displace, which in time will be just about everything. Humans, unaided, cannot beat AI-enabled robots, unless of course, we flip the paradigm. The current paradigm is to make robots as humanlike as possible, both intellectually and physically. Why not reverse that paradigm and help humans become as robot-enabled as possible in terms of performance?

SP: I can think of hundreds of reasons why not. It's a creepy notion, Arnie, like so many sci-fi movies I've seen.

COCHRAN: Scott, nobody wants to look like C-3PO. We humans are quite happy with how we look. We just want to perform like a robot, maybe even better so we can compete against them for the jobs they will take from us if we don't do something.

SP: Is that possible?

COCHRAN: Yes! The results we are achieving are even better than we dreamed. We have trained and embedded over 200,000 Citizens worldwide in every type of job you can think of from manufacturing assemblers to world-class researchers, and everything in between. Our Citizens are performing fantastically at the companies and locations where they are embedded.

SP: Arnie, may I stop you there? You use the word "embedded." That is one of the biggest criticisms of Augmyntia and a very controversial one at that. As I understand it, a Citizen signs a lifetime nondisclosure agreement to not reveal anything they learn, view, read, you name it, while at Augmyntia. But most important of all, they are bound to never reveal their identity as an Augmyntia Citizen. Doesn't that make them like some type of secret operative? There have been some very high-profile disclosures that shocked everybody, but these outed Citizens deny any association to Augmyntia. Is that necessary? You've made yourself a fortune, so why not be more transparent?

COCHRAN: Scott, it is not as bad as you make it out to be. Put yourself in our shoes. First of all, there's nothing wrong with protecting your intellectual property. Everybody does that.

SP: Yes, but for a lifetime?

COCHRAN: We haven't had a problem getting anybody to sign up to be a Citizen. Second, our Citizens are pretty impressive people. To many, they may even be a little intimidating. Let's face it, it is a competitive world and no unaided-human can compete against our Citizens. We've researched this and long-term on-the-job performance data supports this.

If a Citizen were to just walk in and say, "Hello, I'm here," that just wouldn't work. We need to embed our Citizens quietly, under the radar, and show employers that our Citizens can be high performers, team players, and not upset the apple cart. We've done that. Our Citizens are doing a good job. There's no cause for concern, Scott.

SP: Well if you say so, but you do have your critics and they fear some unintended consequences as to where this is all heading. We can come back to that. But for all of us non-Citizens, we're fascinated to know how this all works. So if I were an average person on the street making application to become a Citizen, walk me through the process from that first day until I'm ready to be "embedded" in a new job, at a new company, in a new location.

COCHRAN: Scott, there are some things I can tell you and many things I cannot and I know you appreciate that. But the performance speaks for itself. It's been well-documented about the amazing level of intellectual and physical capabilities and performance in the field and on the job that each Citizen possesses. How we

get them to that point is obviously a trade secret. But what I can give you are some high-level concepts that underpin the Augmyntia method.

Getting started is really quite simple. All you do is fill out an application just like you do for any other job. You can do that online and then in a few weeks you will receive an email from us giving you the time, date, and place for an orientation meeting you must attend. At the orientation meeting we have an experienced Citizen give you an overview presentation about Augmyntia. The Citizen will explain what a potential candidate must do, what Augmyntia will do for them, what they can expect about the training, and what they can expect when they are embedded in a company. And of course, they will explain how each Citizen is paid and what the earning potential is for the candidate.

SP: I have heard rumors from people that have attended these meetings but decided not to go forward, that these meetings are always in a nondescript conference room on a college campus, and then the Citizen leaves the room first and "disappears". There always seems to be some mystery and secrecy around Augmyntia, as if you have something to hide.

COCHRAN: We do try to maintain a low profile at these initial meetings. There's nothing earthshaking about it, we are just very careful to protect what we have worked so hard to create. And, we want to protect the privacy of our Citizens.

SP: What if I decide to sign up? Do you take everybody? Or do you accept only certain people?

COCHRAN: This is the power of the Augmyntia system, Scott. We take everybody! There is no such thing as a *loser*. Every Citizen starts at their natural capability level and we take them to the next level, then the next level, the next, and on and on. The transformation is astounding. Full disclosure, though, that in the beginning when we needed to show exciting early results to the VCs, we were selective. Over time we realized that even more spectacular transformative results came from Citizens starting at lower entry levels. For example, instead of a very smart engineering student with a young body and an invincible attitude, we start with someone like my dad: blue-collar, can fix anything mechanical, but the body and spirit are a little weathered and not as confident. We can achieve amazing levels of transformation with a person like this.

This was my dream. Since the day my dad died, this dream of transforming every displaced worker into a super worker has been my mission.

SP: I guess I'd have to see this to believe it, Arnie. But how? How do you do this?

COCHRAN: I don't want to get too technical on you, Scott. There is, quite frankly, a lot of very sophisticated technology that makes Augmyntia work: hardware and software at the most advanced levels; globally-distributed supercomputers; sensors; wireless communications; personal drones; implants; self-learning artificial intelligence; advance predictive analytics; and so much more. And it is all at the disposal of each Citizen, each and every moment of each and every day.

SP: I understand you have all this technology, but I don't understand what it's doing and how it is helping each Citizen. You've got to open the door a little wider for us, Arnie, so we can get a clearer view inside Augmyntia.

COCHRAN: I can only take you so far, Scott. If you truly want to "walk through the Augmyntia door," I can give you an application for Citizenship right now!

SP: Thanks, but no thanks, Arnie. I'm happy enough with my life as it is. And honestly, Augmyntia scares me a little bit. I think it scares a lot of people.

COCHRAN: Life is full of risk, Scott. And the road to extreme success is paved with risk, no getting around it. Which is another thing we have discovered. The Citizen with nothing to lose – or put another way, the most desperate -- is the boldest, most fanatic adopter of the Augmyntia path. No question, every time.

I'll tell you this. The essence of Augmyntia is built around one word, and the word is..... *Decisions*.

SP: Decisions? That's not what I expected you to say. I was expecting something like software, or supercomputing, or artificial intelligence, but not decisions.

COCHRAN: Technology is just the means to an end. A good decision, the best decision, from an infinite number of choices is quite simply the most important determinant of a successful life. The flow of day-to-day living breaks down into a series of streaming decisions/actions: turn left, look up, step forward, think, speak, listen, yes, no, door number one or door number two, and on and on it goes, never ending. And each decision that a person chooses, no matter how small and seemingly insignificant, starts a chain reaction of decision/response/outcome, decision/response/outcome, etc., that takes a person down a unique path to a unique destination out of an infinite number of options. When you think about the

randomness of life, it's amazing some of us do as well as we do, but all humans are not equipped well enough to optimize the decision-making process.

We've all known that instinctively. The phone call that you decided to answer or not answer. The person that you accidentally met that led to a job; or, the person that you chose not to meet. Every simple decision in life -- and I mean EVERY decision -- is a critical determinant at that moment to the path you take for the rest of your life. How many times have we all said, "I wonder what would've happened if only I had..." Well, you'll never know.

And here's the unfortunate truth about decisions – humans are terrible at it! It is our biggest flaw, and yet we all think we are good at it, or at least aspire to it. We read best sellers, we go to seminars, we long to be known as a “good decider.” But we routinely make very bad big decisions which change the course of our lives for the worse. You can guess the decisions we regularly screw up about smoking, drugs, college, career, marriage, divorce, kids, family, money, breaking the law, just to name an important few. What if you could go back in time and allow Augmyntia to optimize those decisions? Well, you can never go back. But, you can start on a new path today with Augmyntia.

We humans make decisions every day, every hour, every second, every split second. It is this never-ending stream of micro-decisions that we screw up. We aren't fast enough and smart enough and have enough data we can access to compute the predictive analytics necessary to optimize each and every decision at each and every moment.

Augmyntia fixes that.

This is the golden deliverable to each Citizen: the optimum decision at each moment of each day to direct you down the optimized path for a very successful life. All a Citizen has to do is EXECUTE, and that is something we humans ARE very good at: figure out what to do, not so good; execute what we're told to do, and we're pretty good. Consider that we have already been doing that for a long time in many professions. In the military and on the professional football field, the soldiers and athletes don't make the decisions. The generals and coaches make the calls and the soldiers and athletes physically execute. Augmyntia takes this process to a very advanced level for each Citizen.

SP: Arnie, are you telling me that Augmyntia makes all decisions for every Citizen? That's crazy! Making decisions is what we spend a lifetime trying to

master. It's what makes us human, gives us self-determination, independence, dignity, freedom! It seems like a monstrous corruption of free will to take control of a person's decision-making.

COCHRAN: Scott, you surprise me! I thought you would see the power and the beauty of the Augmyntia vision. Look, nobody is forcing anyone to opt-in to Augmyntia. And Citizens are free to opt-out at any time. For every successful, well-adjusted, financially comfortable person like yourself, there are thousands that are struggling to survive each day. People are great at executing and they want to perform and they want to succeed. People want to work and make money and lift themselves up, and so many are being displaced from their jobs with no direction to turn. Augmyntia can lift those people out of the mud, clean them up, wire them up, rev them up, and catapult them into society with a good job making more money than they ever dreamed of and in so doing, fulfill their true potential. We are tapping into a new generation of people obsessed with human performance. Augmyntia is their silent partner, their guardian angel, their secret weapon.

It's not science fiction, Scott. We've done it, it's real, it's working!

SP: Arnie, let me apologize for my brief rant. Clearly, with your company's explosive growth and success, the Citizens who have agreed to the terms are happy with the Augmyntia system.

COCHRAN: No need to apologize. Augmyntia's vision is radical, never been done before, and the unknown is scary and threatening to people. But if you give us a chance, get to know us and the value we are creating for humankind, I think you might develop a different opinion. Don't feel bad. I've been defending myself and Augmyntia for a long time -- I'm used to it.

SP: How do you implement the decision-making system?

COCHRAN: We essentially digitize the real-time flow of a Citizen's life down to the split second. But before we can do that, we have to fit out each Citizen with what we call a *sensor wrap*, and then each Citizen goes through a rigorous training program.

Think of the *sensor wrap* as a sheer, full-body artificial skin that you wear like a wet suit. The wrap's embedded sensors gather a complete 360-view of your world as it is happening real time: ambient temperature and humidity, external forces, speed, sounds, tastes, video, aromas, keystrokes, you name it. Everything that you

are experiencing real-time is recorded and communicated to our central server, which we call *krk*.

SP: *Krk*, as in Captain Kirk?

COCHRAN: We thought a little symbolism would be helpful to the Citizens. They seem to like it.

Next step in the fit-out is to get you synched up with your own dedicated micro-drone, which we call *md* which is smaller than a dime. *md* shadows the Citizen 24 x 7, but it cannot be seen or heard. It is truly each Citizen's *guardian angel*, following you and recording audio and video and protecting you wherever you go.



SP: Amazing! I had no idea that kind of technology existed.

COCHRAN: We have deep connections with the military and intelligence community. They've got all the advanced toys and we've exclusively licensed whatever we can get our hands on.

Once the fit-out is complete, the Citizen is ready for training and this is when the real action begins.

As I said before, it's all about decisions. Decisions are the four-way stops of life. Do I turn left, right, go straight, or back up? We make literally thousands of decisions in a given day, micro to big picture, subconscious, instinctive, fully

aware, and every decision has the potential to change the course of our lives. We optimize this process with what we call a *step list*. It's a continuous stream of instructions for you to execute. If krk has decided you should say "no," an instruction or *step* is instantly sent to you for execution.

SP: How do you do this?

COCHRAN: You are fitted with a very advanced micro-wireless receiver surgically implanted inside your ear. You receive the step list as a continuous stream of audio commands that only you can hear. As a backup, the steps are texted simultaneously to your custom watch face.

All the real-time data from your sensor wrap is continuously streamed to krk which is an AI program running on a distributed high-performance computing network that spans the globe, so response times are fast no matter where you are. Krk's algorithms run at supercomputing speeds to analyze the last step you took in order to optimize the next step you take; and, the next step; and the next; and so on. Steps can be as fast as one-second intervals.

SP: That sounds like trying to keep up with a treadmill that's going faster and faster and it won't stop! I would think that would drive people crazy.

COCHRAN: Well, it doesn't, obviously, or we wouldn't be sitting here today. You'd be surprised what a human being can do once they let go of the old way and commit to the new way. You know how it is when you watch a movie with subtitles? After a while they just melt away and you seem to translate to English without consciously reading the subtitles. This is what happens with the step list. It comes in very fast but humans are amazing in their ability to keep up with and process the instructions.

Now, a step can be a physical thing such as "jump now"; or, a visuospatial movement such as "draw a straight line from point A to point B"; or, a voice action such as "say *I can help you with that.*"

SP: So krk is essentially thinking for me and telling me what to do the entire day! What if the instructions – excuse me, steps – don't make sense to me? Why should I not trust my own logic and instincts instead of having to follow everything krk says?

COCHRAN: That is the question! When should you trust krk, and when should you trust yourself? The answer is quite simple: you trust krk at every step. The overwhelming evidence we've compiled is that sticking with krk yields the highest performance outcomes over time even though at some moments it doesn't seem intuitively correct to you. When Citizens try to divert from the step list, it doesn't work out so well but they learn that very quickly. We have a saying: *If you stray, you pay*. Sometimes it takes a little diversion incident to confirm that full adoption to krk's step list is the sure path to long-term success.

SP: I'm sorry to say this, Arnie, but I find it hard to believe that people have agreed to this. This seems, well, inhuman! I think of all the years of growing up, learning from our parents, college, reading, memorizing, maturing, working, training... what's the point of all this preparation under a system like this?

COCHRAN: The preparation is not wasted, Scott. It takes you to a certain level, but krk catapults you to levels you could never dream of achieving on your own. Scott, this is how the world is evolving. Sorry to be the one to break that you, but this train has left the station and there is no turning back. You either jump on board or you will be left behind very quickly.

You must understand that krk will very quickly learn every aspect of you: how you think, talk, walk, what you do well and not so well, your body language, your sense of humor, your facial expressions, how you handle stress, your memory recall, your ability to recognize patterns. Even though mastering YOU is to master the infinite, krk is super fast and will get 90% of YOU in a matter of weeks, and then as each week goes by, krk for all practical purposes knows you better than you.

Think about it. With krk as your partner, you will remember everything and basically know everything in the sense that you have instant access to all knowledge and current data. Scott, hundreds of thousands of people are ready for this; indeed, hungry for this because the pain of bad decision lasts a lifetime. Every decision you make with krk will, in theory, be perfectly optimized based on deep predictive analytics. Krk is truly democratizing our world. No more winners vs. losers, but optimized people achieving their full potential and finally realizing their dreams.

SP: I don't quite know what to say, Arnie. Honestly, I'm stunned! From where I sit, it seems that as a Citizen, you agree to turn your brain off, to put it bluntly.

That seems like an abomination of free will. No amount of money and success is worth that.

COCHRAN: Look, what you don't realize is how much good we have done for people on the margins of society. Life may look ok for people like you, but believe me, for the majority of people in this world, Augmyntia is a god-send.

You're not the first person that has reacted this way. Some of our most committed Citizens were very skeptical in the beginning. All great achievements down through history were controversial and carried great risk. The Augmyntia story is no different.

Have you ever thought about why we like superheroes so much? It's because we project ourselves into these characters so we can become those characters in our minds. We suspend reality for awhile so we can be strong, fast, brilliant, and invincible. Augmyntia transforms a Citizen into a superhero. The training is quite amazing. It's thrilling to watch someone who has been beaten down by life, start to come alive again in only a matter of days. They discover potential and capabilities in themselves minute by minute and you can see the exhilaration in their eyes and in their body language. They are literally reborn!

SP: I would really like to interview some Citizens.

COCHRAN: I'm sorry, but that's not possible right now because that would be a violation of their non-disclosure agreement with Augmyntia. But give us some time and I think we can arrange that.

Say, I've got time for one more question.

SP: Alright. Please tell us how compensation works. We all want to know just how much people can earn.

COCHRAN: First, we agree to pay you starting out a base salary that was the last base salary you earned, whether or not it was yesterday or three years ago or ten years ago. We have found pretty consistently that everybody has a base they can reference and validate and they're happy to restart at that base level.

Second, each Citizen is on a complete commission basis. Starting out, we take 25% of the total revenues they earn, and they keep 75%. If at the end of the year their 75% commission does not equal their base salary level, we make up the difference.

In the history of Augmyntia no Citizen has ever fallen short of their base salary; in fact, almost everybody shoots way past earning multiples of their base.

As a Citizen continues to earn more and more, Augmyntia takes a declining percentage. It is an extremely powerful financial incentive and it's amazing what most Citizens have achieved.

SP: Arnie with all due respect, people are who they are. Some people are pretty smart, some are not so smart, and the rest of us are somewhere in between. And the ones at the bottom of the rung can only do so much.

COCHRAN: That's what we used to think. But we were surprised ourselves by what happened. The basic human brain and body is an amazing organic system, and Augmyntia can take the most average person and turn them into a superstar. The only way you'll ever know is to step into the shoes of a Citizen and take the ride. We're gonna get you someday, Scott!

SP: But who is hiring these people? How do they get jobs that they were never able to qualify for before?

COCHRAN: We take care of that. We have arrangements with literally hundreds of top companies. They know what they are getting from Augmyntia. Once a Citizen has completed her or his training, we embed them in a company almost the next day and they are off and running.

Say, I appreciate the questions and discussion, but I've got to end it now. One last thing, though.

In the very beginning of our research we were able to see the evolutionary arc of what is going to happen, so we set up two research and development tracks: (1) augment a human towards being more robot-like; and (2) augment a robot to be more human-like. Since the beginning we have invested the same amount of money in both research programs, but the only program that is public right now is Augmyntia. Creating robots to be more human-like is still in stealth mode.

But we've learned enough to know what our true destiny must be for our species long-term survival. The AI-augmented person and the humanized robot will someday meet each other, and you won't be able to tell the difference. It's not the singularity we are headed for.

It is *convergence*.

SP: *Convergence*, you say. I don't think I want to be around for that.

COCHRAN: I hate to disappoint you, Scott, but you will be.

Goodbye.



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Postscript:

Following my interview with Arnie Cochran, I felt a little guilty for how I behaved at the end of the interview. My emotions got the better of me, but I should have been more open-minded considering I had been given a very unique opportunity to interview the reclusive CEO of Augmyntia.

But to my amazement, only a few months after the interview an open letter was published in the *New York Times* which outlined a massive class-action suit against Augmyntia by several hundred Citizens claiming deceptive advertising, fraud, and harassment when trying to opt-out of the program.

But the most serious and alarming charge was the claim that each and every Citizen (allegedly) experienced “serious and permanent cognitive damage,” which they described as *mental atrophy*. Citizens described that once they were finally able to leave Augmyntia, they experienced extreme depression; loss of emotion,

intuitive thinking, short-term memory; and the inability to do even the simplest of tasks. They had become completely dependent upon the artificial intelligence program called krk and in effect, they had "turned off their brains". The suit is pending.

The article also revealed that for some time, Arnie Cochran had been under investigation by the FBI. He has apparently fled the country to an unknown location.

Finally, rumors are circulating that the Augmyntia board of directors is considering filing for bankruptcy. – SP, May 11, 2024

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