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## **The ConnectAbility Challenge: Design Challenge for Digital Tech**

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**Introduction/Rationale:** Funded by AT&T, challenge sought development of software and other technologies to improve the lives of people with disabilities. Using four exemplars, developers were able to address real problems of real people with a participatory approach.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this challenge were to 1) encourage creativity in the development of assistive technology, 2) bring ideas for apps and other technologies to the public, and 3) to expose people without disabilities to the needs of people with participation limitations as a result of socially-constructed barriers.

**Approach:** Working with four exemplars, people with four different types of disabilities, and with funding for prizes by AT&T, the NYU Ability Project developed design guidelines and expectations that fostered participatory development with regard to universal design. The interdisciplinary planning group was central to developing this comprehensive approach.

**Practice Implications:** This challenge provides a model for crowd sourcing solutions to problems our clients have. It provides an example of the benefit of using a client-centered approach in technology development. All OTs can use the model in working with their clients, acknowledging the important role of people with disabilities in the design of their own devices and of treatment.

**Conclusion:** The role of the exemplars was crucial in the development of the challenge and the success of the judging of the entries. Since that time, a number of other challenges using a similar format have been noted, reinforcing the success of this model.