SOBERLINK® SL2 Q&A with Founder and CEO, Brad Keays

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The SOBERLINK® SL2 is a mobile, handheld breath alcohol monitoring device which measures BrAC through deep lung breath samples. SOBERLINK SL2 incorporates photo identity verification, professional grade fuel cell technology and GPS to ensure the client is accurately identified, located and tested. The device is extremely easy to use for any offender population, and allows clients to discreetly submit BrAC tests from any location. Unlike SOBERLINK, other devices are larger, more difficult to use, and simply compare test photos against a single master file photo instead of a full photo library like the SL2. The GPS point is collected during each test, delivering assurance of the individual’s location during the recommended 3-4 tests throughout the day.

Brad Keays is the Founder and CEO of SOBERLINK, Inc. With the introduction of the SL1 in mid-2011, SOBERLINK created a new category in alcohol monitoring focused around mobile handheld technology. Below, Brad answers questions about SOBERLINK and the SL2:

Q. What inspired you to want to start an alcohol monitoring company?
A. My father was in the business for years and one day I realized that there had not been any technology advances for 15 years. I had owned technology companies in the past working alongside both software and hardware engineers. I knew that a better system could be built but was not sure how to design the perfect system until 2009. In 2009 after downloading my first Smartphone APP, I realized that cellular technology was the ideal avenue for advancing breath alcohol monitoring.

Q. How does the SL2 device work?
A. During each breath test, the SL2 Breathalyzer takes a picture of the end-user to confirm their identity. The real-time photo and breath alcohol result are wirelessly transmitted on Verizon’s Private Network to SOBERLINK’s cloud-based monitoring site. Direct alerts can be set up for contacts when signs of a relapse, such as a missed or positive test, occur.

Q. How accurate are the alcohol test results?
A. The SL2 device contains a professional-grade fuel cell sensor with a detection range of 0.000% – 0.400% BrAC and an accuracy level of +/- .005 BrAC. The fuel cell that SOBERLINK uses is a globally trusted sensor used for high-end workplace and law enforcement breath alcohol instruments.

Q. How does fuel cell technology work?
A. When a breath sample containing alcohol comes in contact with the surface of the fuel cell, the alcohol is quickly absorbed. A chemical reaction occurs in the fuel cell, in which the alcohol oxidizes. This oxidation process converts alcohol to acetic acid, which releases an electric current. The higher the alcohol concentration in the breath sample, the greater the chemical reaction and the higher the BrAC. If alcohol is not present in the sample, there is no chemical reaction, no electrons are released, and the result would be .000 BrAC.

Q. How do you verify the right person is taking the test?
A. In early 2014, SOBERLINK released Adaptive Facial Recognition™, which has virtually eliminated the need for officers to review compliant participant photos. The SL2 device has an embedded high-resolution camera that takes a picture of the participant during the breath alcohol test. The software spatially analyzes each point-in-time photograph against a collective library of participant file photos. The software also recognizes and adapts to subtle appearance changes, such as facial hair.

Q. What happens if there is a positive test?
A. In the event of a positive test, the system sends out direct alerts to predetermined contacts and the client will be prompted to retest in order to confirm consumption of alcohol versus accidental exposure (i.e. mouthwash).

Q. Do clients need a cell phone to use the SL2?
A. No, the SL2 contains a cellular module and sends test results via Verizon’s wireless network. As an optional feature on the monitoring site, enrolled clients may opt to receive reminder text messages on their personal cell phone when a test is due. Although the clients receive text reminders, each client should also receive a hard copy of their testing schedule and the expected procedure for positive test results.

Q. How often does the SL2 device need to be calibrated?
A. The SL2 device has an internal test counter, and case managers receive an email alert when a calibration accuracy check is due. Fuel cell sensor accuracy may last for many years, however SOBERLINK recommends calibration checks when prompted.

Q. How does the testing schedule work?
A. The monitoring site allows for customized client testing schedules. A “Scheduled” test means that a client has a variable testing window in which to send their test, starting 15 minutes before the test time and ending after the selected variable testing time. The variable testing windows can be set for 30 minutes, 1 hour, 2 hour, 3 hour or 4 hour durations. However, clients may submit a test at any time. If the test was not scheduled through the monitoring site, it will be labeled as an “Unscheduled” test.

Q. How do client text reminders work?
A. Clients must authorize use of their personal cell numbers and accept an initial opt-in text message from the SOBERLINK monitoring portal. Officers enroll and set up client test schedules in the system. Once enrolled, clients receive the automated text reminder 15 minutes prior to each scheduled test. A separate Alert feature enables predetermined contacts to receive automatic email and/or text notification for positive test results or tests taken outside of a scheduled testing window.

Q. Who has access to test results?
A. One of the major benefits of the SOBERLINK monitoring software platform is the ability to customize access for multiple individuals within an agency. For example, officers may be authorized to receive full access or read-only access to view results at any time. SOBERLINK is the only company that has Daily, Weekly or Monthly automated reporting. These reports provide a synopsis of client activity, making caseload management easier.

Q. Has the SL2 been challenged in court?
A. Yes, SOBERLINK, Inc. and authorized SOBERLINK Service Providers have testified and successfully
defended the technology many times. The 3 years of testimony has validated the reliability and accuracy
of the SL2 device in court hearings. One example of a judges ruling was “I am satisfied that we are going
to know if she touched any alcohol. I think the device works just fine and gives the information that we
need to know and mostly keeps (defendant) honest about her consumption.”

Q. Any plans to expand your product line?
A. Yes, we are anticipating the release our newest product the SLBLUE, which is set to release in third
quarter 2014. The SLBLUE sends test data through an iPhone or iPad, therefore, there is never an excuse
not to send a test. If someone is an in area with no cell coverage they can connect to the nearest Wi-Fi
network and send their test that way.

Q. There are many similar products coming to market, what makes SOBERLINK different?
A. We take a lot of pride at SOBERLINK in designing our product to be discreet and easy to use. We realize
that the client has a life and we do our best to make it convenient for them to prove their sobriety. That
being said, we have built in many features to ensure accuracy that our competition has been unable to
duplicate. One example is our Tamper Detection technology. Our engineers worked for years to refine
algorithms to detect any type of tampering. Each week we successfully identify multiple clients trying to
beat our system.

SOBERLINK, Inc. will continue to be the leader in developing innovative mobile alcohol monitoring devices and
software to help change behavior and promote accountability for those in recovery.