

TouchSpeak and TypeSpeak case review

The following are some illustrations of how this technology has enhanced the independent living experience of three of our recent users. In each of these cases, Touchspeak and TypeSpeak have restored at least some degree of confidence and independence into their users and carers lives.

Case 1

Tim is a young man in his mid-thirties who has had a total laryngectomy and glossectomy. Despite his condition Tim is a very sociable young man and prior to TypeSpeak, could only communicate via a writing drawing pad. His therapist decided to try to convert his writing into TTS text output, using TypeSpeak on a small handheld PDA. It is worth mentioning that he had absolutely no experience of computers, either at work, or at home; but adapted to TypeSpeak immediately. His crowning satisfaction was when he phoned his sister in the USA and was able to type a message on to the screen and speak it directly, albeit synthetically, down the phone's handset. This was the first time they were able to speak to one another in over two years and they both cried.

Tim's TypeSpeak was installed on a handheld Hewlett Packard rx3715 and he uses it with an external portable keyboard

Case 2

Tony is a very determined and sociable man who suffered a stroke in his early seventies. He lives in a village and is well known to everybody. Two amusing and affirming situations illustrate just how Tony has used both TouchSpeak and TypeSpeak to good effect.

Firstly, he wanted to buy a new car and arranged a meeting with his local bank manager to negotiate a loan – remember that Tony cannot speak a word, relying mostly on gestures. Apparently he returned home with both a huge beaming smile and the loan, having used TypeSpeak to close the deal to his satisfaction.

Secondly, his wife asked me if we could make the speed of the speech output even slower, because he wanted to speak to his mother-in-law who could not always understand what he had said. She has hearing problems, not surprising when you are 96 – now they talk to one another - a fine example of communication building

They travel quite often and have used it in France, with an attempt at transliterated Franglais – not always successful; but we believe that the problems lie with the French !. Both Tony and his wife are computer literate and encouraged to experiment with different configuration settings. TypeSpeak was installed on a handheld Hewlett Packard rx3715

Case 3

John is a very determined and also a very sociable person, who despite his condition enjoys a laugh. It gives him great pleasure to walk around the village, where for many years he was the village GP. He is very frustrated that he is unable to speak to all those former patients, young and old; only communicating via a writing pad.

Now that John uses TypeSpeak, on a clamshell PDA, he can communicate quickly and effectively, both in initiating a conversation and in reply. He no longer feels so isolated from his socialising habits.

They are regular church-goers and he said that the first thing he wanted to do was to ask the vicar some questions ! They live in Wales and John is delighted that the names of his local towns and villages have been intelligibly recorded for use in conversation.

They will soon use the SMS telephony function within TypeSpeak to send and receive text messaging.

They also like to travel and take TypeSpeak everywhere