

Ability Newsletter

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Phone intercom

The Door Station Line Sharer allows any phone in the home to function as an intercom with the front door unit. When a visitor presses the call button on the unit at the front door, all phones ring with a distinctive ring. Answering the call allows you to converse with the visitor.

A Door Release Mechanism is also available, enabling you to open the door or gate by pressing the * key on your phone.

The Door Station and Phone cost around \$350-\$400. The lock release option is an additional \$50 (excluding the lock itself). Up to two locks controls can be included.



Door phone

Universal Wireless PDA keyboard

This Targus device works with Palm and Pocket PC PDAs as well as Palm or Power PC based phones. It folds to pocket size and expands to a full size keyboard. It weighs 12 oz. Cost is \$149.



Phones

Portable speaker phones

We have recently had a look at several models of portable phone that have speaker phone capability on both the base and the handset.

The Uniden DSS5855 includes an answer machine. The handset is heavier than the Panasonic models, but is reported to have "maxi sound" - an extra loud handset volume control. It sells for around \$380.

There are a couple of Panasonic models currently available. The TCD540 has an answer machine (like the Uniden) but also a "voice search phone book" that is supposed to work like voice dial on a mobile, but you have to hold down a button as you say the name of the person to dial. It sells for around \$480. The more basic TCD500 does not have an answer machine or voice dial, and sells for around \$250.

Users should examine these models in retail stores themselves, to see if button placement and size are suitable. We did notice that the Panasonic is lighter than the Uniden. Both retail for around \$400.



Mobile with Palm

The Kycera 7035 does not have a camera, but it does come integrated with a colour Palm organiser, has an MP3 player, voice dialling, hands-free speaker phone, wireless email capability, web browsing, optional keyboard and yes, an optional camera. A very handy device. It sells for around \$1299.

Software

New BIGGY

A new version of Biggy has been released by R.J. Cooper. New features include sound effects, more biggies with smoother motion, and new animated Big Biggies. The new version is for Windows.

Upgrades are available for existing Biggy owners (US \$49) but not for Biggy-Light owners, who must re-purchase the program. Biggy and Biggy-Light can be purchased on line at rjcooper.com

New Joystick-to-Mouse

New version 2.6 of Joystick-to-Mouse software has been released. As the name suggests, this software allows a joystick to function as a mouse.

The new version supports USB devices as well as those connecting to the games port. Commands can be assigned to up to 32 joystick buttons, including macros with up to 128 keystrokes. Many configuration options are also available. It works with Windows (3 onwards, including XP). Price is A\$100.



Powerpoint compression

POINTLess software from Impact Labs allows Powerpoint files to be compressed by up to 94% while still retaining all their native functions and extensions. This makes it much easier to email these files.

POINTLess for Windows 2000/XP costs US\$49.95 and can be purchased online at www.impactlabs.com

Hardware

Smart Displays Extending your range

These are portable monitors that connect to your desktop PC running Windows XP. They use a wireless 802.11b link. They can be used anywhere within about 100 feet of your desktop.

Viewsonic models have USB slots for a keyboard and mouse. Or you can use a stylus on the touch sensitive display, along with an on-screen keyboard. The 10" model costs around \$2300, while the 15" model costs close to \$3000.



Wireless headsets For phone, computer... or both

We have recently tested the GN 9120 wireless headset from GN Netcom. It is a wireless telephone solution, but can also work in conjunction with the Add-Com Select Switch to enable switching between telephone and voice recognition on a PC.

The product performed well, with good clarity. It weighs about 50 gms and the batteries last around 8 hours. Range is reported to be up to 100 metres. Transmission frequency is 2.4 GHz. Available from Ability.



IceCAD

This is an inexpensive USB mini graphics tablet and pen by MacAllly. The active area is 2.85" x 2.14 ", the pen battery (AAAA) estimated to last 6 months. Driver software is supplied for Mac and PC. The cost is \$106.



Ability News

ability.org.au

Ability has a new domain name. Our earlier domain names still function (www.abilitytech.com.au and www.abilitycorp.com.au) but we will gradually shift completely to the new name over the next few years.

Training Seminars

We are resuming our Ability Training Days in assistive technology in 2004. The first will be held on Wednesday 24 March 2004 and will cover home automation and computer access. The second will be held on Wednesday 21 April 2004 (in the school holidays) and will cover special software, computer access and portable note-takers. Participants will receive notes and a CD of sample software and other information. Places are strictly limited, so those interested are advised to apply early. Additional courses will be run during the year - if these dates don't suit, then please register your interest for later courses.

Les Chatwin

Les is joining the Ability team, starting in early December. He will be working two days a week and will offer telephone support and assist in our tech support areas. Les has a wide experience in help desk activities and will be a welcome addition to our great pool of talent!

Trips etc

Recent expeditions and involvements have included expos in Wollongong and Tamworth, talks with seniors groups in Sydney and Newcastle, and a trip to Canberra. A trip to the **south coast and southern highlands** is being planned for March-April 2004. Please contact the office for details.

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