



Ability Newsletter

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Possum Sero! Accessible phone

This phone has a range of desirable features. First, it can be controlled by ECU devices (such as the GEWA PROG and the Possum PRIMO). In other words, it can receive infrared commands. This applies to the phone and the answer phone function.

Second, it supports up to 50 user recordable phrases (each up to 60 seconds long) to allow people with partial or no voice to communicate crucial messages over the telephone. These message can also be played anytime (e.g., to speak to a person in the room).

Third, it has Secure Spoke Identity (SSI). It will speak the name of the person calling, if their details are in the phone book (which has 100 name capacity).

Finally, the Sero! functions as an emergency phone. It has a dedicated emergency dial button, or an option remote IR pendant. When activated this function will call up to 8 contacts.

The Sero! can be operated manually as well. It supports standard wired or wireless headsets. It has an auto hang-up option.

This is a great device, loaded with useful features for people with a disability. It sells in Australia for \$1400 and is available through Technical Solutions (www.tecsol.com.au).



Phones

iPhone 3GS A Step Forward for Accessibility

The latest iPhone reflects a commendable commitment by Apple to expand its accessibility features. Here is a summary of its main features:

- * **VoiceOver:** This is essentially a screen reader. You simply touch the screen to hear a description of the item under your finger.
- * **Zoom:** This lets you magnify the entire screen of any application up to 5 times the normal size.
- * **White on Black:** This gives a higher contrast.
- * **Mono Audio:** For those whose hearing is limited to one ear, this setting enables both channels to be heard in either ear.
- * **Speak Auto-Text:** This feature speaks the text corrections and suggestions iPhone makes when you're typing.
- * **Closed Captioning:** This will turn on captioning in movies you watch through the iPod application.
- * **Voice Dial:** This feature enables dialling of a contact by saying their name or a plain number by voice. You must however press a button to activate this feature.



Then there is TTY support, large phone pad option, widescreen keyboard, large font option for mail messages, voice memos and more.

The iPhone represents a shift in the centre of gravity in IT. Fortunately for people with a disability, it looks like Apple are including them at the beginning of the journey, not at the end.



Macintosh keyboard

Separated keys can be helpful



Some of our clients type with their knuckles. However it is quite a challenge to avoid hitting the adjoining keys as you type. The Macintosh keyboard has two helpful features: it has buttons rather than keys, so they require less effort to push. Second, the keys are separated rather than being closely positioned. The result is a keyboard that can be quite easily used with your knuckle.



Jing

Screen capture software for Windows and Mac

One under-utilised way of supporting people with a disability in their use of a computer is to prepare screen capture movies. On your computer you can demonstrate how to do a particular task, or demonstrate how a program or feature works, and record your steps in real time as a movie. For people with memory problems you can prepare short training movies that show them how to perform certain tasks - they can view these movies as often as they need to.

Jing is a free program from Techsmith, makers of Camtasia Studio. You can add voice narrations to your videos, and mark them with boxes, arrows, rectangles or highlights. Movies are limited to 5 minutes. A Pro version allows movies to be saved as MPEG-4.

Mac and Windows versions can be downloaded from: www.jingproject.com



Environmental Control

Indigo

Using a Mac and an iPhone for environmental control

Environmental control systems often rely on specialised devices that use infrared to control appliances and facilities in the home. They can also control X-10 modules through an intermediate device such as the IR Mini Controller. There are problems with this setup however. Line of sight is usually required (ameliorated somewhat by devices that relay IR signals to another location). Also for large systems, the available devices are cumbersome and often use old technology. Support for these specialised devices is often weak (such as when one of our clients, having problems with a German voice-controlled ECU device, received advice to "try to speak with a German accent"!).

Another approach is to use a computer as the brains of an environmental control system. With appropriate software, and a USB device such as the Marmitek CM15 Pro (which controls X-10 devices through the home power circuit) a computer can be used effectively in this role, with advantages in cost and support. **Indigo** is a good example of a powerful environmental control solution based on the Macintosh platform. A 30 days trial version of the software is available at <http://www.perceptiveautomation.com/indigo/download.html>. Other software is available for Windows.

A handy feature of Indigo is that it comes with a built-in web server. The IP address combines with the Web server port number to create a URL that can be accessed by any device (computer, PDA, phone) with a web browser. Another alternative is to use the iPhone, which connects to the base Mac via Bonjour (no IP address needed). Indigo Touch software for the iPhone links well to the Indigo software running on the Mac.

For TV/DVD/music control, a Mac can still be used, in combination with large display, a TV Tuner and various available software options for the iPhone to control the Mac.



Support

Support Miseries

Our recent experience with computer companies

Part of our service to people with a disability in their use of computers is to provide technical support. Most of the time we can find solutions to problems ourselves, but on occasions we have had to deal with the manufacturers, to activate warranty support for major hardware faults. This has been a sobering experience. Here are some "highlights":

Hewlett Packard

One of our staff purchased an HP notebook computer. Faults developed very early in the piece. Rather than replacing the computer, HP put our staff member through a process of polite but ineffective visits where various bits were replaced, all to no avail. After many weeks the device was finally declared "DOA" and replaced with another... a different model with a different operating system?!

Acer

We recently returned a client's computer to Acer for warranty repair. It was returned with screws missing and an inactive touch pad. We are still negotiating with them to have this rectified. They have had the laptop for over 2 weeks and now want to charge \$200 to fix their mistake!?

These results are consistent with Laptop magazine study of laptop technical support (<http://www.laptopmag.com/mobile-life/tech-support-showdown-2009.aspx>), which awarded Apple an A, followed by Lenovo and Sony, scoring a B+ each in joint second spot. Next was Toshiba with a B, followed by Asus and Fujitsu, each with B-, while Acer, Dell and HP all scored a C-.

The lower cost of laptops is good news... a degradation in the quality of support and warranty services is bad news. Manufacturers should stand by their products - there are some people out there who depend on these devices to have a reasonable quality of life.



Hearing

Ubi Duo

The UbiDuo is a portable, wireless, battery powered, stand-alone communication device that facilitates simultaneous, face-to-face communication by means of two displays and two keyboards. It was created by a father and son out of necessity and is now helping individuals, companies, hospitals, and government agencies. Some features are:

- * Two to four people may simultaneously engage in a face to face chat.
- * Rechargeable battery packs let you chat for up to ten hours.
- * "Instant-on" technology makes the UbiDuo ready for use within three seconds of power-on.
- * The UbiDuo's patented hinge technology enhances portability and allows the two halves to be quickly separated for use in a variety of settings.
- * Reverse video - choose your preference of dark text on a light background or light text on a dark background.
- * USB port enables connection to a computer so conversations can be saved and printed. The UbiDuo's software may also be updated via the USB port.
- * Wireless range is 500 feet. The UbiDuo has its own isolated wireless frequency that cannot be tapped by other wireless modes. The wireless is only isolated between the two UbiDuo halves.
- * Contains 1.22 MB of storage space which can hold up to 61 log files containing 20 KB each. For reference, a single 20 KB log file has approximately 350 lines in it.
- * Screen angle can be adjusted from flat to 45 degrees for easy viewing.
- * Font size is adjustable from 12 to 24 point.
- * Size specifications: 9 7/8" x 14 1/2" x 1". Weight is 6 pounds (2.7 kg).



Get more information from <http://www.scommonline.com/aboutUbiDuo>

Speech

Proloquo 2 Go

Proloquo2Go™ is a new product from AssistiveWare that provides a full-featured communication solution for people who have difficulty speaking. It brings natural sounding text-to-speech voices, up-to-date symbols, powerful automatic conjugations, a default vocabulary of over 7000 items, full expandability and extreme ease of use to the iPhone and iPod touch. Here's how it works:

- * Use the Grid or List view to quickly tap items that optionally speak as they get inserted into the Message window.
- * Hold one of the items to automatically get access to conjugations, plurals or possessives.
- * Tap the message window to speak your sentence.
- * Hit the plus button to permanently add the sentence to your vocabulary in a category of choice.
- * Select the Recents view and have Proloquo2Go speak one of the things you said an hour ago.
- * Tap the plus button if you want to add this to your vocabulary. Select a symbol for your new item in the Symbol Chooser or pick a photo from your library, or, on the iPhone, take a picture.
- * Go to the Typing view and use the iPhone keyboard to type a paragraph. Hit save and your text is auto-magically symbolized.
- * Go to the Proloquo2Go section of the iPhone/iPod Settings App and Disable images, have smaller or bigger items, change background and text colors, restrict editing and more.

See introductory videos at <http://www.proloquo2go.com/resources/article/introductory-videos>.

Speakers will be helpful, as the sound volume on the iPhone may not be adequate in many situations. One option is the iMaingo 2 speaker case. Another good option is the X-mini to which you can attach a lanyard.

Cost is currently A\$189.99 but soon to go to A\$249.99, sometime in August.



Resources

ATMac

"This website covers all Apple products with a slant towards disability. We have an interest in users with a disability, adaptive and assistive technology, and making accessible programs and content. We aim to cover all Apple products including all Mac OS X computers - the iMac, MacBook, Mac Mini, Mac Pro, and older models; the iPod range; the iPhone and iPod Touch; and other products such as the Apple TV and Apple Remote Control". So the ATMac website introduces itself.

The ATMac site was started by Ricky Buchanan, a 34 year old with a severe disability, who lives in Melbourne. It has a wealth of information, ideas and product news relating to Apple products. You can subscribe (for free) so that you will be emailed the latest articles. Highly recommended. Go to <http://atmac.org>



Ability Books

"Ability Books is a disability specific bookstore and is owned and operated by Leanne and Christian, who founded the online business in May 2009. Leanne and Christian understand the frustrations of finding appropriate disability specific reading material first hand.

Leanne has over ten years industry experience working in varied positions within Victoria and NSW including direct support, leadership and clinical roles within accommodation, respite, attendant care and day programs for both Government and non- government organisations.

The aim at Ability Books is to provide useful material to people with a disability, their families, service providers as well as any other professionals or individuals interested in gaining more knowledge.

Here at www.abilitybooks.com.au we mark our prices below the recommended retail prices, so our books are always on special."

You can find Ability Books at: www.abilitybooks.com.au [no connection with Ability Technology]



Ability Activities

New Staff

It is our pleasure to welcome **Rowena Clarke**, who joins us as an occupational therapist (part-time), along with **Ethan Rourke** and **Damon Catling**, who have joined Ability to bolster our technical support activities.

New web site

Planning is under way for a revamped Ability web site - keep an eye out for changes over the months ahead. Our newsletter format may also be changing.

Other activities

We are participating in the NDCO "Accessing the Future" forums, in Sydney and Newcastle. We made a submission to the Government's Disability Employment Services Exposure Draft

Trips Coming Up

Forthcoming trips include **Gold Coast, Merimbula, Muswellbrook** and **Canberra**. If you have clients in these vicinities then please contact us to take advantage of our presence. For other areas it is worth sending us an expression of interest, so we can notify you when a trip near your area is envisaged. Sometimes our trips need to be organised at short notice.

ARATA State Meeting

The NSW Chapter of ARATA is having its next meeting at Ability on **24 September 2009**, at 11 am. Please contact us if you are interested in attending.

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