

Speech recognition case study...

Chris Wood releases his business drive with Dragon

Profile:

- Chris Wood
- Former rally co-driver
- Injured in fall from a bike in 2012

Challenge:

- After suffering multiple injuries he was left tetraplegic
- How to get back into work and pick up as much of career as possible

Results:

- Dragon enabled Chris to communicate with colleagues and peers and resume his career
- Plays an active role in the creation and proof-reading of proposals and training programmes
- Dragon key enabler in his return to work, use of Skype and Outlook

Background

One cycle ride was all it took to transform the life of former professional rally co-driver and automotive consultant, Chris Wood.

Having dashed through the world's most famous rally courses with some of the world's most respected rally teams and co-piloted drivers - including Alister McRae – Chris' life changed in December 2012. During a cycle ride a few days before Christmas, he struck a kerb and was thrown from his bike. The seemingly innocuous fall, however, had serious consequences. Two damaged vertebrae at the top of Chris' spinal cord rendered him tetraplegic. This left Chris with little to no movement below the neck.

Following the crash, Chris was in hospital for ten months. Three months after his crash - and while reflecting on what his condition would mean for his current career as an automotive consultant - Chris was introduced to Nuance Communications' award-winning Dragon NaturallySpeaking by Pinderfields Hospital in west Yorkshire.

Opening doors with speech recognition

Dragon NaturallySpeaking is the world's best-selling speech recognition software. It turns talk into text and can make virtually any computer task easier and faster, from capturing ideas and creating documents, to email and searching the web, to using simple voice commands to control many of the popular programs you use every day at home or work.



Speech recognition - the key to keeping in touch

Chris immediately saw the potential in the software – which enables dictation of up to 160 words per minutes with 99% recognition accuracy rate - and the role it could play every day in his future. Interested to learn more about what Dragon was capable of and how it could help him in the future, Pinderfields Hospital subsequently invited authorised Nuance reseller partner, VoicePower - which offers a Dragon training programme as one of the services it offers, as well as consultancy and support – to officially approach Chris with a view to tailoring a training course to his needs.

Training for the future

Realising he was going to be dependent on Dragon, Chris thought that the training course would be a wise investment. After a discussion with VoicePower, initial training took place while Chris was an inpatient at the hospital, with VoicePower teaching him how to select and delete text, various formatting options, mouse grid-to-click capabilities, how to use Dragon's vocabulary editor and how to create commands, simply by speaking. Chris said: "The training was very good. VoicePower was very helpful and provides on-going technical support and is there to answer any of my questions."

Today, Chris is using Dragon on his laptop almost all day, every day at his home in Huddersfield, with additional support provided by VoicePower when needed. Dragon has enabled him to realise his professional ambition to pick up his former role as an automotive consultant, working with globally recognised car brands to plan and prepare technology training days. Thanks to Dragon and VoicePower, by day, Chris remains involved with the automotive industry, co-writing and checking proposals and training programmes. He states that Dragon enables him to conduct these tasks faster and more efficiently than before his fall. Chris also uses Dragon for communicating via Skype with peers and colleagues, while Dragon's seamless integration with Microsoft Outlook makes dictating, sending and receiving emails effortless. By night, Chris uses Dragon for catching up with the latest news and emailing friends.

Dragon – a flexible friend

To give him more flexibility, Chris is using a Microsoft wireless Bluetooth headset. He explains the benefits: "Now, when I'm in the kitchen for instance, I can still answer a call or dictate an email." This compelling performance is all the more impressive given that Chris' version of Dragon is out-of-the-box; no special modifications had to be made to accommodate Chris' needs, thanks to its tight integration with Microsoft Office applications. To ensure Dragon meets Chris' needs as closely as possible, VoicePower created a few easy-to-use short cuts so any stock phrases or terminology could be selected quickly.

Chris stated: "Dragon integrates really well into the other applications that I use daily. Therefore, I've not had to learn or adopt any workarounds."

Despite the extensive training to help Chris make the most of Dragon, he states: "Although I am very proficient with Dragon now, I keep learning or discovering more things about it, particularly with respect to the command and control functions." One thing Chris has learnt about is Dragon's accuracy.

"I would describe the accuracy as excellent. I prefer to watch the text appear as I dictate so, should I need to, I can make any amendments on the fly rather than at the end of dictating passages or document."

When asked what impressed him the most about Dragon, Chris points to its speed, ease of web browsing and accuracy. He adds another, less easy to measure, but perhaps the most significant benefits of all. **"Without Dragon, my attempt to return back to work would have been hindered, 100%. It has given me back an element of my personal and professional independence."** Does that mean then that one day Chris might use Dragon to create a book that tells the tales of his rally co-driving day's exploits and thrills? "That's not the first time I've been asked," he replied promisingly.

Contact Chris on Twitter at @chriswood2b