

HP-based Cyrano offers new options for speech



“The HP iPAQ rx3715 Mobile Media Companion has everything Cyrano Communicator users require: reliability, long battery life and enough speed to actually simulate fluid speech. And our clients feel more comfortable knowing we have a strong relationship with HP.” – Ray Schmidt, Vice President, One Write Company

Although Alyson Brown, 22, does not speak and reads only a few words, she works two mornings a week at a dental office in Lexington, Kentucky. With the help of an assistive device based on the HP rx3715 iPAQ Mobile Media Companion, she may soon be able to expand her work schedule to four mornings a week.

Already, her Cyrano Communicator is helping her do her job more confidently and competently than ever before. “It’s made a lot of difference,” says Aly’s mother, Lois Reynolds. “It makes work simpler for Aly and for her coworkers.”

How does it work? Photographs of Aly doing certain tasks are displayed on the HP iPAQ Mobile Media Companion screen. Using Cyrano Communicator software, coworkers arrange the photos in the order in which the tasks need to be done. Using the imbedded HP Photosmart camera, Aly takes photos of things she wants to point out to coworkers, and she is learning to simulate speech by pressing photos attached to prerecorded phrases.

The Cyrano Communicator was developed by One Write, a church supply company that decided in 2003 to develop products to help people. “Our goal was to create a

Cyrano
Communicator™

communications device that would be easy to use and offer people with speech impairments more options,” says Ray Schmidt, vice president of One Write Company. “With HP’s support, we’ve succeeded.”

Promise for the future

The Cyrano Communicator was a natural first product for One Write. The company already employed software developers, programmers and data specialists to support its business of supplying more than 20,000 churches with customized envelopes, software and accounting forms. In addition, the company has a 40-station call center that supports the church supply operation and now doubles as a help desk for Cyrano users.

Schmidt’s interest in the device is personal. His son, Jon, is autistic. For years, Schmidt worked with Jon on an HP iPAQ Pocket PC, using existing speech technology, but substituting photographs for icons because Jon could not recognize many common icons. Toting a camera around and importing photos into existing software was cumbersome, so Schmidt suggested One Write incorporate the features Jon needed into a simple-to-use commercial product.

The resulting product means more opportunity for Aly Brown. “Aly does better when she’s around people,” says Lois Reynolds. “With the Cyrano, she can enjoy more success at work and also decrease her dependence on her work coach.”

The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation supplies the work coach and helped Aly obtain the Cyrano Communicator. “If Aly can expand her work schedule without requiring more time from her work coach, that’s good news for us,” says Diane Mohler, assistive technologist. Mohler also sees the Cyrano Communicator as a way to help put a variety of clients with speech impairments to work. “It does double duty, offering the features of a PDA and also meeting the specific needs of people with speech impairments,” she says.



Challenge

- Develop a device to help people with speech impairments communicate, with special features for persons with autism

Solution

- HP rx3715 iPAQ Mobile Media Companion (Wi-Fi, Infrared and Bluetooth)
- One Write Company's Cyrano Communicator software
- Microsoft Windows Mobile software
- Nevo home control software
- PocketTV Pro MPEG Movie Player

Results

- Greater opportunities for people with speech impairments
- Improved ability of businesses to benefit from the talents of employees with speech impairments, particularly those with autism
- More flexibility in communicating with people with speech impairments
- Expanded marketing opportunities for Cyrano Communicator because of HP support

At a glance

- **Organization:** One Write Company
- **Location:** Lancaster, Ohio
- **Employees:** 75 full time, 50 temporary during peak periods
- **Telephone:** 800.268.6070
- **URL:** www.cyranocommunicator.com
- **Primary business:** Supplies U.S. churches with offering envelopes, software, accounting forms and labels.

More options than before

With Cyrano Communicator software on the HP rx3715 iPAQ Mobile Media Companion, users easily import photos, simulate speech and cruise in and out of business-related Pocket PC programs. This last feature appeals to stroke survivors who have aphasia and are unable to speak or write. With the Cyrano, they can simulate speech and perform routine office tasks, working on documents, spreadsheets and e-mail, just like any other business professional. "Pocket PCs are a common business tool, so no stigma is attached to using it," says Schmidt.

The HP rx3715 iPAQ Mobile Media Companion has another standard feature that is particularly valuable for people with autism – the PocketTV Pro MPEG MoviePlayer. Unable to screen out extraneous noises, autistics usually find public places like restaurants unbearable. That's no longer the case for the Schmidt family. "When we want to eat out, Jon plugs his headphones into the Cyrano and watches his favorite movie clips, protected from noises that distress him," says Ray Schmidt. "It's really kept the world open to us."

Help from HP

Schmidt considers the HP rx3715 Mobile Media Companion the ideal platform for Cyrano software. "It has everything we

need: the built-in camera, reliability, speed, memory, long battery life, Pocket TV software and a remote-control program for TVs, VCRs, lights, lamps and thermostats," says Schmidt. "In addition, the HP Developer & Solution Partner Program provided valuable support as we adapted our software to run on it."

"What has impressed us most is HP's help in introducing the Cyrano Communicator to the accessibility marketplace," says Schmidt. HP displays the device in its booths at appropriate venues and recently invited One Write to share the HP booth at the International Conference on Technology and Persons with Disabilities sponsored by California State University Northridge (CSUN) Center on Disabilities. "We don't have a lot of resources to promote the Cyrano Communicator," says Schmidt. "Having HP introduce it to the market gives us a real credibility boost."

Lois Reynolds had almost given up on finding a handheld device for Aly when she discovered the Cyrano Communicator. "We simply couldn't afford earlier small units, and Aly refused to use the big ones," she recalls. "We were close to tears when we saw the Cyrano demonstration and realized this small, easy-to-program device was something we could afford."

For more information on how working with HP can benefit you, contact your local HP service representative, or visit us through the Internet at our world web address: <http://www.hp.com>

© 2005 Hewlett-Packard Development Company, L.P. The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. The only warranties for HP products and services are set forth in the express warranty statements accompanying such products and services. Nothing herein should be construed as constituting an additional warranty. HP shall not be liable for technical or editorial errors or omissions contained herein.

