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The Good, The Bad And The Reality of Speech Recognition Software  
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Welcome to the world of continuous speech recognition software! Now in addition to continuous dictation,, most continuous speech programs (at least their Professional Editions) allow some command and control of not only word processing software such as Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect, but also the Windows desktop and other Windows applications like Excel or PowerPoint a.

Natural Language Commands allow a user to use common commands that make sense, such as "insert a table with five columns and three rows" and the software inserts that table for you. You can then format the table using commands such as "put a border around the table"-- magically, a border will appear around your table.

#### THE GOOD

Certainly hands free operation of a PC is one of the major benefits of speech recognition software. This type of software can potentially reduce chances of repetitive stress injury (RSI), or give relief to someone already suffering from RSI. Speech recognition can be used to return people to their usual computer duties with minimal interruption at maximum productivity. The best time to implement speech recognition is before injuries happen. However, many people already suffer from various RSI problems and now loss prevention becomes important. If someone is just starting to feel problems in their hands or arms, immediately providing them with speech recognition can help prevent further damage to the tissues and allow the individual to stay on the job.

For those who do not suffer from RSI, an increase in productivity is possible due to the formatting, editing and navigation controls available. For those who don't know how to type or type slowly, the continuous speech assists in more productive and accurate typing. In fact, people are achieving 100+ words per minute within the first few hours of using the software. Many people have discovered the benefits of speech recognition and are now sharing their experiences with other professionals and friends.

With the advent of mobile dictation devices that digitally recorded our voices and allow us to download our dictation, significant savings and reduction of turnaround time on transcription is possible. Mobile dictation can be performed in your office, or in your car or just about anywhere. People are enjoying reasonable recognition rates using the mobile devices. Even transcriptionists can benefit from this technology! Speech recognition can be a highly cost effective tool for the busy professional who has to create documents or email.

Finally, speech recognition allows access to jobs previously denied the disabled, because they can now use their voice to operate a computer. Some of that continuous speech products (again

the Professional Editions) contain a verbal mouse, allowing you to drive the mouse by voice. This is particularly handy while using the Internet.

### THE BAD

Speech recognition can cause frustration when learning to use it. Sometimes, it is not intuitive what to say or do. One of the benefits of being trained by a certified, professional trainer of speech recognition software is that a trained professional can quickly assist an individual in achieving excellent recognition and comprehensive vocabulary. Also, the experienced trainer can help the individual to create dictation shortcuts, personal command macros, and complex scripts for increasing their productivity and freeing their hands from using the mouse or keyboard.

Unfortunately, none of the software packages are 100% accurate. Most people do experience accuracy rates above 90 to 95%. Occasionally individuals can achieve accuracy rates of 99%, dictating words in excess of 120 words per minute.

All of the software packages available require you to perform an enrollment function. This allows the software to begin adapting to how you speak personally. Enrollment usually takes from 30 to 60 minutes to complete and involves reading a story. Then the computer must calculate your voice profile and this can take an additional 15 to 45 minutes depending on the speed of your computer. You will not be able to use your computer while enrollment calculations are going on.

After completing the enrollment and the processing, you must now build your vocabulary. Each software package contains a utility program that analyzes your documents and present you with a list of words that it does not know how to pronounce. You then must train these words so that your recognition will be very accurate.

However, while it is time-consuming initially to begin a profile and achieve excellent recognition in speed and accuracy, the payoffs are immense in terms of time savings and reduced risk of developing RSI.

Voice strain is a potential problem when using speech recognition and the user should pay close attention to any irritation of the throat. Drink plenty of water! If your throat begins to get sore, stop dictating! Colds and allergies can increase misrecognitions and cause additional frustration. The profile can adapt to these changes, and will, over a short period of time.

Finally there are computer problems that can crop up from time to time and laptop computers can be difficult to utilize with speech recognition software. You must be careful to select an approved laptop for the type of software that you are purchasing.

### THE REALITY

The reality of the situation is that speech recognition will be a part of the Windows operating system very soon. It has become more robust and useful for not only the disabled, but for every professional who utilizes a computer to do email, word processing or just about anything on the computer.

If you're willing to put in the time, the rewards are great! You'll never go back to typing and you will wonder how you got along without speech recognition software all these years.

This technology can be used to help return injured workers to their computer jobs, potentially reduce the risk of RSI, allow access to a computer for the disabled or technology displaced individual and increase productivity for the non injured worker.

Speech recognition is not just for the disabled anymore! Properly implementing the technology on a wide scale basis can reduce costs involved in the prevention of repetitive stress related injuries and increased personal productivity.

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