

David Burdus: Going for gold with Dragon.

You would expect the 1994 winner of England's Young Business Achiever to have celebrated many professional and personal highs since being honoured with the prestigious accolade. And it is fair to state that success has characterised much of what David Burdus has accomplished in the last 21 years, particularly since establishing Burdus Communications. This venture has seen him involved in world class sports events and iconic building projects, while spearheading pioneering initiatives to promote inclusion in society, sport and in private and public sector organisations.

Change for the better

Today, Dragon from Nuance Communications is helping David change public perceptions of disability, through a mixture of behind the scenes lobbying for Access to Work reform and high profile events. These have included travelling from John O'Groats to Land's End on the world's first high performance motorcycle for wheelchair users (to promote the Department for Work and Pensions Disability Confident Campaign), to being a team member of the first ever wheelchair ascent of Ben Nevis, the UK's highest mountain and establishing the fastest wheelchair race on the planet, the 50mph+ 'Tyne Tunnel 2K International.' It is with efforts like these and many others that have made David successful in persuading and influencing private and public sector organisations across the country to provide greater accessibility and inclusion in the workplace for Disabled People, while also improving the public's perceptions of disabilities.

It is a subject David has a direct connection with. Shortly before his 21st birthday, he was involved in a motorcycle crash that resulted in a spinal cord break, leaving David paraplegic. With the zeal that has characterised his work ethic to date, David continued to work hard after the crash, until eight years ago, when he started to experience increasing discomfort at work, driven by badly adapted equipment and poor ergonomics. David was hit with RSI, affecting his shoulders, elbows, wrists and thumbs. His pain was compounded by his existing scoliosis worsening, meaning life at the workstation was becoming increasingly uncomfortable for him, as he explains: "After a day using the keyboard and mouse, my shoulders, wrists and back were in agony."

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David Burdus, Burdus Communications

Back on track with Dragon

The discomfort started to impact David's productivity, to the extent that he had to outsource some projects or even turn work down. He was even starting to worry about the long term future of his business.

Acknowledging that the problem was not going to get better, an Access to Work assessment recommended a consultation with authorised Nuance reseller, Hands Free Computing. It supplied David with Hands Free Computing's ProAccess software, which is its signature Access to Work edition, powered by Dragon, the world's best-selling desktop speech recognition software for the PC. Initially, David was sceptical about speech recognition technology. "I thought it would be Mickey Mouse, and wouldn't work that well." But with today's Dragon delivering accuracy rates of up to 99%, and after some specialist training from Hands-Free, David soon changed his mind. "I couldn't believe how accurate it was, and how quickly the words appeared on the screen. I knew immediately that this was going to be the answer to my productivity problem. Within days of using Dragon, things started to get better. The impact in the first few weeks was unbelievable. I wasn't suffering the same aches and pains as I had done before."

Just as important for David, Dragon was helping him get his work and productivity back on track, as well as his health. "I know that when I'm using Dragon for email, I am now three times faster than I was when I was using a keyboard. I love using it for Twitter too – if a thought comes to mind, I can share it with my followers immediately."

The power to perform

David believes Dragon's speed helps him deliver a better service to his clients: "The nature of my work means I have to do things at short notice. Dragon enables me to meet this challenge easily. My clients are now used to a rapid response to a request that comes

in at short notice." But a better service isn't just a faster one; it's a more detailed one, as David explains: "I have been told that my reports read really well, and that all my written communication flows much better. Because Dragon is so easy to use, I can add in more detail, enabling me to prepare faster, accurate, tailored documents. Dragon captures and conveys your mood whether you're being informal, relaxed, humorous or technical. Think it, and it's there," he added.

Another benefit Dragon brings to users, is the ability to use voice commands to open or to switch between applications, simply by talking: "Because it's so easy to switch between applications, you can spin more plates with Dragon."

Discussing what his transcription options would have been if Dragon didn't exist, David said he would have to employ a full-time, short-hand typist, although he doubts even that wouldn't have been as effective a solution as Dragon. "A typist would have to travel almost everywhere with me, sometimes at irregular hours." Nor is he convinced a typist would be as good as Dragon at capturing how he speaks, or his tone of voice. "With a typist, there would also be a delay between dictation and transcription, whereas with Dragon the response is instantaneous."

Dragon for the win

Such are the advantages delivered by Dragon, David states that of all of the assistive tools he has – ranging from a van with a lift, a powered wheelchair and a lift that travels between the two floors of his combined home office - he is adamant that Dragon has had the most profound impact on the quality of his life. For someone with such an accomplished career to date and who is constantly striving for change, it's appropriate that David concludes by stating "Dragon helps you jump higher buildings", making it possible for people's abilities to meet their ambitions.

About Nuance Communications, Inc.

Nuance Communications is reinventing the relationship between people and technology. Through its voice and language offerings, the company is creating a more human conversation with the many systems, devices, electronics, apps and services around us. Every day, millions of people and thousands of businesses experience Nuance through intelligent systems that can listen, understand, learn and adapt to your life and your work. For more information, please visit nuance.com.
