

Businessinfo

THE WORKPLACE & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE FOR SMES

WWW.BINFO.CO.UK ISSUE105

Olympus Directrec Range Wins Editor's Choice Award



For the record



At the recent launch of the Olympus Directrec range of dictation microphones (see right), *Business Info* quizzed Christian Salza, Head of Business Unit Audio, about the challenges and opportunities in today's dictation market.

Although the industry remains dependent on its traditional customer base in the legal, medical and property/surveyor markets, Salza says he is confident of continued growth for Olympus Professional Dictation Systems.

"If you look at GfK figures, the digital dictation market in Western Europe is growing at a unit rate of almost 10%. There's still a lot of analogue devices in the market: we believe more than 50% of users are still using analogue and my estimate is that 75% of units out there are analogue, so there is still growth potential in the switch from analogue to digital," he said.

"The other reason why digital dictation has a future is speech recognition, which enables users to save time and be more efficient. If employees with big salaries – lawyers, for example – can have their dictation transcribed by software, their productivity increases tremendously."

In addition to these general market trends, Salza said that Olympus would continue to strengthen its offering in specific sectors, e.g. dictation microphones, which would enable it to increase its market share at the expense of competitors.

"Olympus is leading the consumer market in Europe, with a market share of 45-50% by unit. Our professional dictation market share is lower because you have to differentiate between portables where we have a 35-40% share and USB mikes like the new Directrec, where our market share is much lower but where we believe we can make big inroads because the new product is really strong."

Olympus Christian Salza is confident of continued growth in the digital dictation market as more people switch from analogue to digital devices.

One cloud on the horizon is the threat posed by smartphones, which can be used to record and submit dictation while on the move. With a Dragon NaturallySpeaking app, it is also possible to convert speech into documents, email and text messages on the smartphone itself. A new Dragon Remote Mic app even lets users of Dragon NaturallySpeaking 11.5 Premium use an iPhone, iPod touch or iPad as a wireless microphone for dictating to or controlling a PC over a Wi-Fi connection. Salza concedes that digital dictation devices are in competition with smartphones, but argues that the latter don't have the sorts of features demanded by professional users.

"For example, there isn't a slide switch on a smartphone: that's a differentiator," he said. "Another is the microphone technology. On a smartphone, this has to make the voice clear and transport it in a very compressed way, whereas we can optimise the microphone for automatic voice recognition, not cellphones. Our new generation of microphones are designed in such a way that they are optimised both for transcription by a human and electronic voice recognition."

Over and above this specific threat, Salza points to the need to extend dictation's appeal. "The challenge we have is that people are not used to dictating any more. We have to get people to learn how to dictate. Dictation feels very old school, but really it's about speed, efficiency and cost savings," he said.

And in that context, digital dictation has arguably never been more relevant to the needs of business than it is today.

Straight talking

The new Olympus Directrec dictation microphones combine improved ergonomics and a robust design, making them the devices of choice for professional users who regularly record dictation at a PC or Mac.

There are four models in the range, the DR-1200, DR-2100, DR-2200 and DR-2300.

All have an integrated USB cable, which ensures that the microphone and cable don't become separated in shared-use environments. Historically the junction of the cable and microphone has been a major weakness of dictation microphones, but Olympus' new models have been specially designed to withstand the rigours of day-to-day use.

In addition to one-handed operation of dictation functions by slide switch or push button (on the DR-1200), all models bar the DR-2100, feature a large stainless steel trackball and click buttons for one-thumb PC navigation and control.

The microphones have a symmetrical design making them suitable for right- or left-handed use and boast a number of ergonomic features to make operation easier. These include multi-colour LEDs, built-in volume control (plus built-in speakers) and five programmable buttons giving short-cuts to user preferences.

Recording quality is optimised with a directional microphone that cuts out background noise and voice processing technology optimised for both human and software-based transcription.

A software developers kit (SDK) for Olympus Directrec devices allows them to be integrated with third party applications. In addition, the DR-2300 can be used with an add-on barcode scanner that allows automatic allocation of voice files to client/case/patient records.

www.olympus.co.uk



DR-2200



Certificate



BusinessInfo
EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD

OLYMPUS
Directrec
Range

Businessinfo