

Bob Craig, "Talking to Software," **Lake County Post-Tribune** (July 4, 2002, pp. E1, E2)

Crown Point firm's products are closing this communication gap.

In the modern world of computers and technology, speech recognition software offers the promise of hands-free computing use and a glimpse into the future.

That glimpse has been blurry, though, because of the difficulty in training software to accurately recognize user voice patterns and create error-free text from the spoken word.

Custom Speech USA, a Crown Point software firm, is creating products that bridge the gaps in off-the-shelf speech recognition software and, in the process, revolutionizing application of the technology.

The firm's software products are designed as add-ons to popular speech-recognition software such as Dragon NaturallySpeaking and IBM ViaVoice.

Marketing the products to medical and legal professionals who dictate recorded notes on a regular basis, the firm has already landed the Los Angeles coroner's office as a client.

"We've finally come up with a product that allows a busy professional to use speech recognition software the same way they use transcription," said Ted Rosdil, Custom Speech USA's business manager.

The products now available from Custom Speech USA are the result of the efforts of a Northwest Indiana radiologist who saw the potential in speech recognition software and set out to create a product that would make it user-friendly.

The off-the-shelf products are designed for real-time dictation into a personal computer. As the user speaks, the software transcribes – with the results appearing on the monitor. In the medical and legal fields, the dictation is often done on a hand-held recorder, then transcribed by a transcription professional later. On Custom Speech USA's sever-based products, the computer transcribes the information, whether it has heard your voice before or not.

SpeechMax, one of Custom Speech USA's products, works like a word processor, using both the Dragon and IBM programs to cross-reference words that are not recognized by the programs, allowing for easy corrections and for the programs to "learn" from the corrections.

According to marketing material, with each correction the software's vocabulary grows and less and less time is needed for corrections as the software is used.

The complete line of voice recognition software includes SpeechMax, the mutiwindow text processor with audio playback of selected text; SpeechScape, with specialized vocabulary for speech recognition with Dragon only; SpeechServers, for centralized transcription of speech recognition and automated speech recognition training; and SpeechUsers, for management of speech user files.

"It's a revolutionary kind of software," Rosdil said. "It's inexpensive, simple to implement and it uses off-the-shelf software. We're not reinventing the wheel here."

Custom Speech USA products are being marketed through a network of licensed distributors and their acceptance is expected to lead to expansion locally. The firm is located in downtown Crown Point, with a training facility for its distributors on site, with future plans for expansion as the products increase in popularity.

"The software is quite powerful and requires a certain amount of training, and the person who installs it really needs to understand it," Rosdil said. "We have 40 resellers and inquiries daily from new people. The growth has been phenomenal."