

Global interest in NZ accounting software able to be used by the blind

In what is believed to be a world first, a New Zealand software company, Accomplish Ltd, today unveiled accounting software specially modified to enable efficient use by the blind and visually impaired.

“We’re told this is the first accounting software in the world that has stood up in user tests by blind people,” said the company’s general manager, Grant Hewson, at today’s launch of the 2009 edition of its CashManager software.

“Obviously, this is attracting a lot of interest from organizations serving the blind and visually impaired, not only in New Zealand, but also in Australia, the United Kingdom and the USA.

“It’s really an example of kiwi ingenuity helping to solve a global problem in terms of providing good access to the benefits of modern technology for blind people, as well for the movement impaired.”

The accessibility of the product is endorsed by Neil Jarvis, Executive Director, Access, Innovation and Enterprise for the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind, who comments: “We welcome any move which improves accessibility and equality for blind and partially sighted people,”

Neil adds: “In December last year, we undertook a software audit of CashManager 2009, examining a series of tasks by sighted and blind testers who don't usually use financial software. It worked well with adaptive technology software and, in terms of accessibility, we're happy to recommend the product to blind or partially sighted people for managing their small business finances.”

Neil explains that blind people use screen reading software which verbalizes letters or numerals as they are typed, and verbalizes the position of the cursor in pull-down menus or in dialogue or command boxes. Screenreaders and magnifiers are also used by people who are partially sighted, along with font, colour and contrast enhancements. .

Originally founded in Australia almost 20 years ago, Accomplish today is headquartered in Auckland and serves some 25,000 small to medium business enterprises with accounting software designed specifically for New Zealand, Australian and United Kingdom needs.

Grant says that, from the outset, its CashManager software was designed to be as user-friendly as possible, so it is easily used by laymen like small business owners with no accounting or IT experience. Yet it is also powerful, robust software, packed with features which allow business owners instant access to financial reports, budget updates and forward forecasts, which help them manage finances as well as help guide everyday business decisions. “It unlocks the power of accurate information, putting that readily at your fingertips,” he comments.

“It’s that ease of use and simplicity of operation which distinguishes our software from all the other accounting packages, which are generally much harder to learn and much more complicated to use. That also seems to be why these other packages don’t actually work well with adaptive technology -- they’re just too complicated to work efficiently.”

Grant says Accomplish is working with the Foundation of the Blind on further enhancements to its software. He has also met with the UK's Royal National Institute of the Blind, and the company has received interest from the USA and other countries. "We are in the process of seeking ISO accreditation for use by the blind, visually impaired and even movement impaired, and this will certainly expand our global market."

He adds: "Easy use by the blind is only one of many new features and improvements in the Accomplish CashManager 2009 edition. We've incorporated a whole host of enhancements requested by different users, many of them quite significant in helping all users to save time and money in the everyday handling of their accounting and financial management needs."

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Background information on Accomplish, and a copy of the full RNZFB audit test report, can be found in the Resources section of the company's website, www.accomplishglobal.com

For further information on Accomplish and CashManager, please contact:

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