

Dragon Helps Build Skills Among **Dyslexic Trainees.**

Challenge

- Identify a tool that can make learning easier for dyslexic trainees

Solution

- Dragon

Results

- Assisted dyslexic trainees to learn
- Helped trainees build skills
- Helped trainees complete their training

New Zealand's Primary Industry Training Organisation is passionate about fulfilling its mission to grow the skills and expertise of people pursuing careers in primary industry. As part of this goal, the organisation is equally committed to helping individuals with an impairment also develop their skills by providing tailored programs and putting them in touch with assistive technologies that can make learning easier.

“As an educational organisation and as an educator, to be able to put our dyslexic learners in touch with a concrete tool such as Dragon is great. It not only helps us help our students build their skills and knowledge base, and complete their training, it also has a positive impact on their lives which is most satisfying to see.”

Mike Styles, National Specialist, Literacy and Numeracy
Primary Industry Training Organisation

The organisation provides a range of workshops, short courses, and certificate and diploma programs for people employed in the primary sector. It concentrates on building knowledge in some 30 different industries including agriculture, dairy processing, equine, seafood, horticulture, meat processing and apiculture.

‘We provide workplace training for everybody in the primary sector and have about 20,000 trainees across New Zealand. Among them are also individuals who have difficulty with literacy and numeracy, and we offer a number of programs that help them improve their skills and complete their qualifications,’ explained Mike Styles, National Specialist, Literacy and Numeracy, Primary Industry Training Organisation.

According to Mike about 15% of trainees have difficulty with literacy and numeracy, and one of the recurring reasons why is dyslexia. Dyslexic individuals have difficulty with words and experience trouble with reading, spelling and writing.

‘Many of the trainees who have learning difficulties are unaware that they may have dyslexia. And most will have

laboured through life believing that they are just slow learners. However, once confirmed, they are often relieved because they now have a reason as to why they have struggled for so long, and knowing why is empowering,’ explained Mike.

To help them learn, the Primary Industry Training Organisation runs a program that supports dyslexic trainees, and it also manages similar programs through four other tertiary institutions that provide training. In addition, the organisation trains tertiary educators throughout New Zealand as to how they can assist learners with dyslexia.

‘We also put our dyslexic trainees in touch with assistive technologies that can help them with the learning process. There are some wonderful and inexpensive technologies available including smart pens, mind mapping software and voice recognition software.

‘One assistive technology that has made a huge difference for many of our dyslexic trainees is Nuance’s Dragon voice recognition software. Many learners in our projects have had their lives turned around by using Dragon,’ says Mike.

Nuance Dragon brings voice recognition to the PC or Mac and lets individuals simply talk to create content and command a computer. It reduces the need for typing and delivers up to 99 percent recognition accuracy straight out of the box. By using Dragon's powerful voice recognition software people can also cruise through email, surf the Web, and create reports and notes just by speaking.

'Our learners use Dragon to "write" up their assessments and projects. Just by speaking the words appear on their screens and they don't have to worry about typing and spelling. They can just concentrate on the content.

'It's also a marvelous tool because it helps our learners save time. It's a well-known fact that dyslexia robs people of time. But Dragon works to help eliminate this and the frustration that people experience because they have problems spelling or typing,' says Mike.

Apart from helping dyslexic learners complete their training, Mike explains that many are also using Dragon in the work place. 'The software helps them write correspondence, send invoices, draft incident

reports and create other documents at work. Dragon makes writing things so much easier and faster, so it's understandable that they'd be using it in the work environment.'

Designed with the user in mind, Dragon is friendly, intuitive and easy to load and use. Simple and informative tutorials provide the user with the know-how they need to navigate the software and to also tailor it to suit their requirements.

'Dragon is a very powerful tool that's easy to use. Most of our learners have no problem loading the software and putting it to work. Eventually, Dragon simply becomes a part of their daily life because it works and is so unobtrusive,' explains Mike.

'As an educational organisation and as an educator, to be able to put our dyslexic learners in touch with a concrete tool such as Dragon is great. It not only helps us help our students build their skills and knowledge base, and complete their training, it also has a positive impact on their lives which is most satisfying to see,' he adds.

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