

Dragon Empowers Individual to Realise a Dream.

Challenge

- Manage Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy (CIDP)
- Overcome challenge of writing while experiencing CIDP

Solution

- Implemented Dragon NaturallySpeaking

Results

- Easy to use to capture ideas and 'write' a novel
- Eliminated the need to type
- Conquered the challenge of writing while experiencing CIDP

At thirty-three years of age, Ramgopal (RamG) Vallath, was in the prime of his life. Active, highly motivated and happily married with children, RamG was pursuing a rewarding career and 'was on top of the world'. He had just begun a challenging role as Head of Sales and Marketing in a major telecom operation, when his world began to unravel. RamG was increasingly experiencing physical irregularities that eventually made life impossible. While in the depths of his despair, Nuance's Dragon NaturallySpeaking, allowed him to realise a long-term goal and focus his mind on a productive pursuit that ultimately led to a new and unexpected career.

“Dragon is a godsent for me. Given my physical condition at the time, it was impossible for me to write without Dragon. It empowered me and gave me the freedom to write when things were still bleak. It also let me mentally focus on something other than my condition. In a funny sort of way, Dragon was therapeutic and for this I am truly grateful.”

Ramgopal (RamG) Vallath
Author and Motivational Speaker

After visiting countless doctors, RamG was eventually diagnosed with Chronic Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyneuropathy or CIDP. The disease is caused by the body's own immune cells, which normally protect the body from foreign infection, attacking the body's nerves. Initially, RamG experienced a constant, slight trembling of his hands, but as time progressed, he physically deteriorated further. He lost his sense of balance, particularly when climbing up and down stairs, and increasingly found it difficult to complete any task requiring the use of fine-motor skills.

‘I first noticed that my hands were constantly shaking when using cutlery, but I thought nothing of it and put it down to stress. However, over time the hand shaking grew steadily worse and other physical issues started to appear. Climbing stairs became an ordeal as I was losing my sense of balance, and the strength in my fingers and legs was deteriorating. I could no longer do up the buttons on my shirts or lift a simple plate without difficulty. My muscles were waning and eventually I had to give up driving, something which I love. My entire world was falling apart,’ explained RamG.

No longer able to effectively deliver in his new position, RamG was forced to switch roles while he pursued a

diagnosis of his illness. Seven years lapsed before it was correctly identified as CIDP. A nerve biopsy confirmed the diagnosis and RamG immediately sought treatment options.

‘At the time, the standard medication for my condition was an intravenous drug called IVIG. This had a very positive effect on me initially, but after 45 days my body began to weaken. My doctor suggested a course of steroids followed by another round of IVIG. Over the next three years I took IVIG every two months, but the positive effects were waning quicker and quicker, while the dosage of steroids was increasing. I bloated up like a balloon, adding 14 kilograms to my weight. My eyesight was fading thanks to the steroids and my condition was steadily deteriorating,’ said RamG.

In spite of his worsening state, RamG remained positive and pursued a rigorous exercise program. He also kept searching the web for alternative solutions. It was while scanning the internet that RamG stumbled across a clinical trial taking place at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. As fate would have it, the doctor running the trial was scheduled to speak in India and

RamG attended the talk with his wife. After meeting and speaking with Dr Richard Burt, RamG decided to try the new treatment.

'The treatment, which is called Autologous Nonmyelobative Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant, involves harvesting your own stem cells, knocking out your existing immune system and then injecting the stem cells back into your body. The entire evaluation and treatment process took 10 weeks,' explained RamG.

While in hospital RamG decided to write a book that had been festering in his head for some time. 'The treatment gave me renewed hope and I also had ample free time, so while we awaited the results of the treatment, I was motivated to write. This was something I had always wanted to do, a dream really, but for one reason or another it had never materialised. The only problem now was that my fingers were completely useless. I could only type with my thumbs and I could not lift a pen to write,' said RamG.

A friend suggested that RamG try Dragon NaturallySpeaking. Dragon NaturallySpeaking or Dragon as it is more commonly known, brings voice recognition to the PC and allows individuals to simply talk to create content and command a computer. It eliminates the need for typing and delivers up to 99 percent recognition accuracy. By using Dragon's powerful voice recognition software people can interact with and command their PC as well as cruise through email, surf the Web and create reports and notes just by speaking.

RamG downloaded Dragon and after only a couple of hours training he was up and running. As he explained, 'Dragon comes with a very easy to use tutorial which is simple to understand. Thankfully, it required little patience, otherwise I probably would have given up. Usually I find software tutorials frustrating, but this was

not the case with Dragon. It's very user intuitive, which makes the learning experience quick and easy.'

RamG was also pleasantly surprised to discover that Dragon had absolutely no difficulty understanding his thick Indian accent. 'I have a very strong accent. I come from a region in India called Kerala and we have a very distinct accent. I was amazed that Dragon had no issues with it at all. This was very refreshing indeed and helped to make writing the book that much easier,' he said.

Initially RamG was writing about a page a day using Dragon. However, as he mastered the software and the various commands, he started writing about eight to nine pages per day. Within three months, his first novel, *Oops the Mighty Gurgle*, a wacky, nutty story, was completed.

'Dragon is a godsent for me. Given my physical condition at the time, it was impossible for me to write without Dragon. It empowered me and gave me the freedom to write when things were still bleak. It also let me mentally focus on something other than my condition. In a funny sort of way, Dragon was therapeutic and for this I am truly grateful,' said RamG.

The stem cell treatment that RamG undertook proved a success and today, he has almost completely regained most of his fine motor skills. He can button up his shirts, drive his car and can tackle stairs without any fear of falling over. His body has regained the majority of its strength. He is now pursuing a new career as an author and motivational speaker in India and although he can pick up a pen and write, he continues to prefer to use Dragon. He recently launched his second book, *From Ouch to Oops*, a light-hearted and humorous narrative about his courageous struggle. 'I am the most positive person that I have ever met in my life,' said RamG, 'and Dragon has helped me hugely in staying that way.'

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.