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Voice Banking Issues

If you wish to record your voice for the future in case it deteriorates, it is advisable to do this as early as possible. There are 7 issues to consider first.

1. Message banking or Voice banking?

In Message banking, you record messages that you want to use in future should your voice deteriorate. This is cheap and easy to do, but you will only have available the messages that you recorded. In Voice banking, a digital synthetic version of your voice is created for you to download. You can type into a computer anything you want say and your digital voice can then speak it for you.

2. Which computer for your voice?

Most companies produce voices that run on all Windows computers, using Windows software that lets you input text and speaks it for you. Many of these voices can be used on an Android phone or tablet, and possibly on Apple Mac computers, but there is less software choice. However voices for iPads and iPhones are more limited. So if you want to use your voice with an iPad, be careful where you choose to bank your voice.

3. Voices and alternative access

If your condition progresses, you may lose the ability to use your hands to operate a mouse, keyboard, or touchscreen tablet. In this case, you may need to use switches or a head pointer mouse or eyegaze to communicate with your computer. These devices almost all

run on Windows computers. With an AMAneo adapter (£260), iPads can now be operated with any headmouse, but not by eyegaze.

4. Your own voice or a strengthened voice?

Most companies record and recreate a synthetic version of your own voice, without any additions. The better the quality of your voice, the better the quality of the digital voice that is created. One company is building a bank of male and female regional voices of all ages, which they will use to strengthen a voice that has already deteriorated. However, this technology is not yet commercially available.

5. Cost ?

Sometimes it is free to bank your voice, but it costs when you download it for use. Costs range from about £80 to £2000+

6. How long is the recording process?

The recording process can vary from 100 to 1600 sentences, but 400 is about normal. You may be able to convert old taped recordings made years ago to digital format to re-create your voice, but it depends on the quality of the recording. You would have to ask the company.

7. Can you record at home?

Yes, most services allow you to record over the internet, but you need to read each company's requirements carefully to see what you may need.

MND Scotland is the only charity funding research and providing care and information for those affected by MND in Scotland.

Voice Bank Providers

5 organisations listed below are involved in voice banking. There may be others.

1. Cereproc (www.cereproc.com), is based in Edinburgh, Their product is called CereVoice Me, and will record your voice over the internet and build a digital version. It costs £499 (with a 10% reduction available for people with MND). The resultant voice can be used on a Windows computer, a Mac laptop or desktop or an Android tablet. However Cereproc voices cannot be used with an iPad.

2. Model Talker (www.modeltalker.org) is a US company that builds digital voices for individuals. It is free to record and store your voice over the internet, but it costs \$100 (about £80), when you want to download your voice. Voices are compatible with Windows computers, Mac laptops and desktops, and Android. Model Talker also creates a voice for use on an iPad, but only for one of two apps – Predictable (approx. £160) or ChatAble (£110).

3. Speak Unique (www.speakunique.org) is a research project based in Edinburgh. Samples of Scottish regional voices have been recorded to use as a base to blend and strengthen individuals' voices when they degenerate. It has also recorded the voices of some people with MND on a trial basis, and built digital voices for them. At present, they can only be used with Speak Unique's own app, on an iPad. The trial is now closed while they analyse their results.

4. My-own-voice (www.acapela-group.com) Acapela has produced voices for MND patients. You can record 800 (or preferably 1600) sentences. It has specific demands about the recording

environment and equipment needed for recording. Its voices operate on Windows, Android, MacOS, and also on iPad, but only with the Predictable app (£160) or Proloquo4text (£120). The MND Association website states it is free to record your own voice, but the cost to download the synthesized version is around €2400 (about £2150).

5. VocaliD (<http://www.vocalid.com>) (not com!!!) offers 2 services. Bespoke Voice captures a very brief set of the person's own vocalisations (verbal or not, minimum 3 seconds) and blends them with voices from its own bank that most closely match. Vocal Legacy lets you preserve your voice by recording several hours of speech for creating a synthetic voice. Voices can be created for use with Windows PCs, MacOS, Android, and for iOS using the MyvocaliD app (free on the App Store). It costs \$1499 (around £1200) to record and create your voice,

Further Information

<https://www.mndassociation.org/forprofessionals/aac-for-mnd/voice-banking/voice-banking-equipment-and-services/>

<http://blog.patientslikeme.com/2018/01/17/communicating-with-als-from-devices-to-voice-banking>

<http://praacticalaac.org/tag/voice-banking/>

<http://www.callscotland.org.uk/blog/what-voice-banking-options-are-currently-available/>

<http://amyandpals.com/message-voice-banking/>

<http://www.zytec.com.au/blog/message-banking-and-voice-banking-where-to-start>

The information in this leaflet is believed to be accurate at the time of production, MND Scotland cannot give detailed medical advice, this leaflet should be regarded only as general background information.