

TECH TRADER

Digital dictation devices have a wide appeal and present an extensive upgrade opportunity for resellers

Security features can dictate a deal

KEY POINTS

- Digital dictation machines enable easy storage and sharing of voice data
- Large memory capacity and data encryption will tempt users of analogue to upgrade
- Philips DPM9600 or Olympus DS-5000 could be just what your customers need

A digital dictation machine might be an essential part of working life for lawyers and doctors, but after using one you will quickly find that it can become an important bit of kit for anyone.

The ability to record thoughts, conversations and, with a bit of add-on equipment, phone calls in a digital format is incredibly useful. It means voice data that otherwise might be captured on a proprietary system or tape can be stored and shared easily.

So having established a requirement for digital dictation, the next question is what sort of product to choose. In a bid to get a flavour of the market, we cast an eye over two of the main players in the market – Philips and Olympus.

Tech Trader received a Philips DPM9600 and an Olympus DS-5000 to try out. On the face of it both products do the same thing, but there are differences, which are important enough to sway users in one direction or the other.

Must-have features

On the shopping list for a good digital dictation machine, there are a few boxes that should be ticked.

The first is the screen size – the bigger the better.

The second is the ability to encrypt the dictation. This is certain to be a big attraction for the legal profession, as well as a growing number of others as data security becomes a high priority.

The third tick concerns ease of use and ergonomics.

Tick four, and the most important, is the quality of recording.

Tick five is around the ability to personalise the configuration of the recorder.

Top performer

Against that checklist, the Philips product seems to be a more solid performer. It provides greater flexibility, allowing the user to customise the slider bar settings. It also has a larger screen and a wizard tool offers a simple set-up.

The Olympus and Philips products have a lot of features in common, but

Philips DPM9600: flexibility and good looks are only part of the attraction of this digital dictation machine



Olympus DS-5000: comes with 1GB SD card and 512MB MicroSD card

in terms of design, screen size and the general user experience, the DPM9600 has the edge.

Strong security sell

Many customers will pay close attention to the look and feel of these products, but the encryption capability – we all know how easy it is for people to lose their bags and mislay recorders – is the area where most users will be focusing their attention.

Most of the installed base is still using analogue devices, so there is a big upgrade opportunity out there for resellers. Plus, the ability of these products to store days' worth of conversations on 2GB of memory means the limitations of the old products are being cast into the history books.

Developer opportunity

There are also moves by some vendors to work with systems integrators that allow them to get access to the dictation market using developer kits.

For those that have never considered the digital dictation arena before, it is worth taking a closer look at a market that has undergone dramatic changes as a result of technology improvements and already has a large installed base. ●

Philips
www.philips.com/dictation

Olympus
www.olympus.com