



# Assistive Technology News

Edition 1 – Spring 2008

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## Possum's New Brand Identity

Since our foundation in 1961, Possum has been committed to providing Electronic Assistive Technology (EAT) products and services to assist disabled and elderly people with independent living. The EAT solutions we provide encompass a diverse and comprehensive range of equipment including Environmental Control Systems (ECS), communication aids, telecare solutions and LifeSkills packages. We pride ourselves on the fact that all our EAT solutions are supported by the professional services provided by our dedicated customer support team and field service engineers.

Possum is proud to supply and support products from SRS Technology and GEWA,

whilst also working in partnerships with leading charities, statutory agencies and other organisations.

Under our historic name of 'Possum', Latin for 'I Can', we recently launched our new brand identity which reflects all of our merged divisions and activities.

The new logo symbolises our commitment to our customers and our understanding of their requirements – the butterfly reflects the emergence of freedom, empowerment and independence which our EAT solutions provide. I hope you like it!"

*Philip Robinson  
Managing Director*

We would like to thank the following people for their participation in the re-brand:

Judy Hughes, Robert Darrell  
Kenny & Jenny Dykes, Sarah Ezekiel,  
Simon Wilson, Gareth Wamer.



## Possum-ISAAC Opportunity Award

# isaac

International Society for  
Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Possum is delighted to announce the prestigious 'Possum-ISAAC Opportunity Award'. The award has been created to enable a person who uses Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to expand their future opportunities.

Possum and ISAAC aim to enhance chances in life through provision of opportunity, so this award can be used to help with further education, training for employment, career progression or independent living.

Philip Robinson, MD of Possum, said of the award, "My expectation is that with Possum providing this exciting new award, in conjunction with ISAAC, we are able to help people realise their dreams and ambitions. This award aims to be the inspiration for everyone with a communication need, and wherever they are in the world, to meet their goals in life".



# Communication Aids and MND



*"MND made me feel very isolated but I no longer feel that way with other people within easy access."*

## Case Study

I was diagnosed with MND in April 2000, while seven months pregnant with my second child Eric. My daughter, Aviva, was three. The diagnosis was so shocking that I convinced myself that my neurologist was wrong.

However, the disease progressed rapidly once my son was born. Within a year I lost the use of my arms and my speech deteriorated. My marriage fell apart. I am now divorced, live with my children and have 24-hour care.

Losing the use of my arms was devastating. First I missed hugging the children. Then I started to miss practical things like using my computer, reading books, writing letters and everything else that we all take for granted.

When I told my Association Visitor about my predicament she came up with a great solution.

She arranged for Possum to demonstrate a laptop in my home. And the rest, as they say, is history!

*With the help of the MND Association and other charities, I was able to purchase a laptop and a chin switch from Possum. They installed a program called EZ Keys, which enables me to navigate around my computer with ease. It also talks for me in a feminine American accent! I can email people, write my own correspondence (including this article) using Microsoft Word and use the Internet. MND made me feel very isolated but I no longer feel that way with other people within easy access. These days I can listen to the radio and my favourite songs through my laptop. But best of all, I can READ again. The computer stores e-books so I can see the words and turn my own pages! I also read the news online, check TV listings and catch all the gossip. As the laptop is so portable I can sit and read in the garden and take it everywhere with me.*

The award will be presented at the ISAAC 2008 Biennial Conference in Montreal, Canada, in August. The award winner will receive US \$7,500 and full ISAAC delegate status.

Applications for the ISAAC Opportunity Award are now being accepted please contact:

**Mr Neil Hansen**  
**Tel: +44 1296 461002**  
**Email: nhansen@possum.co.uk**

*"I can certainly recommend the equipment to anyone with MND. It has made my life much easier and fun again!"*

Sarah Ezekiel

# TATE: Through Assistive Technology to Employment



Possum is working in conjunction with HFT (The Home Farm Trust) the charitable organisation leading the European-funded TATE project in the UK, and leading Telecare provider, Tunstall, to enhance the employability of people with learning disabilities and their family carers. With Assistive Technology currently installed in over 30 homes in the UK, this is the first example of the integration of innovative Environmental Control Systems (ECS) and Telecare to prepare adults with learning disabilities to live independently. The combination of Assistive Technology and Telecare (AT&T) systems is helping to manage the risks associated with independent living providing relatives and carers with reassurance that vulnerable people are equipped to cope at home.



## Hospices' ROWAN Rooms (Room Operated Without Asking Nurses)

When carers or families need a break, hospices are ideal environments for many people with a physical disability to receive respite care. The Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice in Farnham, Surrey, was the first to recognise that environmental control systems can greatly enhance the experience. Those who already use Possum equipment at home can feel as 'in control' of their environment in the hospice as when they are at home. Some people try them out for the first time and are empowered to ask for what they really want when the NHS provides their own system at home.



The rooms are called ROWAN Rooms (Room Operated Without Asking Nurses) or Possum Rooms. HRH The Princes Royal, who is Patron of the College of Occupational Therapists, opened the first ROWAN Room at the hospice in 2005. The room contains Possum equipment that enables patients to spend time alone and to control their environment. The technology allows someone to contact family via the infrared telephone, operate the curtains, control the television, call the nurse via the nursecall system or control their own position in the bed. Specialist computer equipment was also supplied allowing patients to send e-mails, surf the internet and communicate.

Since then, the Duchess of York has also opened a Possum Room at the Earl Mountbatten Hospice on the Isle of Wight.

# John Bercow MP Visits Possum Client

John Bercow, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Buckingham, is leading the government review on Speech, Language and Communication needs for the Department of Children, Schools and Families. During a visit to Stuart Cresswell (a Possum assistive technology user), Mr Bercow was able to look, first hand, at the technology used by people with speech and physical disabilities. Mr Bercow also visited Possum in Aylesbury to discuss many of the issues associated with the provision of devices. The visit was the first by Mr Bercow to a manufacturer of AAC devices (Augmentative and Alternative Communication).



Hector Minto, Director of Sales Development, said "As a British manufacturer we are delighted that Mr Bercow was able to commit such a long time to visit both our facilities in Aylesbury and Stuart at home. He was extremely keen to debate some of the issues around the provision of AAC devices and really took the time to understand their use. We will be maintaining a dialogue with Mr Bercow during his review and hope he leads us to some successful outcomes".

## Possum and Leonard Cheshire Disability Partnership



Philip Robinson, Possum Managing Director and Rosanne Lyddon, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Communication Project Facilitator.

Possum is working in partnership with Leonard Cheshire Disability to inform disabled people of the benefits electronic assistive technology can bring in increasing their independence.

In a 3-year promotion agreement, the Leonard Cheshire Disability organisation will work with Possum to spread the word about the benefits of assistive technology to its 20,000 or more clients.

From last autumn Leonard Cheshire has been known as Leonard Cheshire Disability – retaining the name of its founder while immediately telling people what it does.

The new name and 'look' are being implemented as a part of Leonard Cheshire Disability's 60th anniversary celebrations in 2008.

**Leonard  
Cheshire  
Disability**

*60th Anniversary*

## Exhibitions 2008

Possum will be exhibiting at many events including:



Communication Matters  
Road Shows 2008



MNDA Regional Spring  
Conferences 2008



Naidex, NEC Birmingham,  
29th April – 1st May 2008



College of Occupational Therapists  
Conference, Harrogate,  
10th – 13th June 2008

For further information on the events listed, please contact us:  
T 01296 461000  
E [events@possum.co.uk](mailto:events@possum.co.uk)  
W [www.possum.co.uk](http://www.possum.co.uk)

Possum welcomes any comments or questions you may have with regards to the content of this newsletter.

Please contact the editor on:  
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