

tPlay sales surge to 100 million units per year

Pierre Wellner

Friday August 28th 2015

The biggest driver of audio device sales this year is clearly tPlay.

Until recently, radios and personal audio players were primarily used for music playback. Talk was a niche market, mainly for news-related programs, and the smaller books-on-tape market.

That has obviously changed, however. Today the tPlay chips and software are installed in nearly every new cell phone and personal audio device sold, including most new car audio systems.

To better understand this phenomenal success, we asked Frank Crittin, the company's founder and CEO to explain.

"The ground was laid for tPlay's success due to several factors." Frank says:

- 1) Audio broadcasting gave way to on-demand and stored media distribution over IP (e.g. podcasting), so that audio devices were no longer limited by on-the-air broadcasts.
- 2) The merging of cell phones with other portable electronic devices led to personal audio-oriented devices becoming the dominant computing platform for most people.
- 3) The emergence of loudspeaker array technology made it possible to listen to personal audio devices privately without the need to wear anything on the ears.
- 4) European research projects initiated by partners associated with the AMI project developed a number of key technologies behind tPlay.

The result was software that makes speech (or "talk") as easy to navigate, skim, browse, search, and interact with as text. tPlay has made text and speech completely interchangeable, and has made it possible to seamlessly navigate through text and talk in very similar ways.

Near-perfect speech recognition and text-to-speech is obviously a fundamental component of tPlay's power, but this is only part of the package. tPlay's simple multimodal gesture, eye, speech, and brain controls allow full control of how we listen to speech, just as easily as we control what we read on our screens.

Thanks to tPlay, we can "surf" text and speech with our ears, control the speed at which we listen, follow hyperlinks, search for related items, skim through stories, summaries, and social networks all while driving a car or walking outside. We do it not only with text and emails, but also with live conversations and the recordings that most of us continually make of our daily lives.

Because of its translation capabilities, tPlay can also transform any audio device into a kind of multi-lingual telephone. This is the technology behind Skype's LanguageLine, and is the cause of recent growth in technical support call centers from China. Whereas off-shore call centers were once the province of Indian companies with access to English speakers, now they have out-priced themselves and the Chinese can also compete effectively in this market. tPlay language interpreting allows them to serve not only American and British customers, but also people of all languages throughout Europe.