

## Next generation 3G solutions gets accessible for all

### Multimedia Telephony standard includes real-time text

Major telecommunications companies pick up technology originally developed for deaf people's communication.

Telecommunication features of essential value for deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind and speech-impaired people have been incorporated in a recently approved mainstream standard for 3G and Next Generation Networks.

This is a big step towards the goal to make mainstream telecommunications useable for all, says Gunnar Hellström, CEO at the accessible information technology company Omnitor, and original author of the standard for real-time text communication now picked up as one medium in the 3G Multimedia Telephony specification approved by the international 3G standardisation organisation 3GPP.

The new 3G standard includes real-time communication in both video, real-time text and voice, and is a great promise for disabled people, who often experience that mainstream communication leaves the features they need behind. Good smooth video for sign language and real-time text with immediate flow as typed are features of great importance for all telecom users who have limited or no use of voice telephony. I am sure that these media will prove to be popular among all users, says Gunnar. Already Instant Messaging with its slower sentence-wise communication style has become popular, so that is a good indication when text services now can be enhanced by using real-time text with more lively flow of the conversation. Usability evaluations show that it matches the modern style of immediate communication required by the young generation.

The standard now included in mainstream Multimedia Telephony is called "RTP Payload for Text Conversation". It is already referenced and recommended in connection with accessibility, e.g. in the Swedish Handicap Ombudsman accessibility guidelines and the European Commission INCOM accessibility report from 2004. The uptake in a mainstream state-of-the art multimedia standard is yet another step towards the goals of Omnitor to contribute to a communication society for all.

The approval of this standard is a step towards fulfillment of many society communication goals. Omnitor has involvement in European actions towards accessible mainstream telecommunication services as well, where the now approved 3G standard has a place as an answer from mainstream industry on the strongly expressed need from European disability organisations to be provided with fully functional telecommunication services suiting their needs, including emergency services.

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Omnitor is using the standard "RTP Payload for Text Conversation" in its wide spread broadband Total Conversation service Allan eC that eases communication for a large number of deaf and deaf-blind people in Sweden and other countries, and in open source software created together with Trace Centre as a means to encourage accessibility and interoperability in modern communication.

Omnitor staff consists to a large extent of deaf and hard-of-hearing communication experts, working hard to fulfill communication needs of people with communication related disabilities. In that work, Omnitor integrates advanced communication components from other sources and adds its own expertise to create optimised accessible services. One component for smooth distribution of Omnitor's communication services is the firewall and router traversal technology RealTunnel from Paradial in Norway.

Omnitor is a privately held, high technology company that specializes in information technology for people with disabilities. Omnitor shows possibilities and solves problems with new technology by creating systems that are accessible to all. More than 800 people are using the Omnitor SIP based broadband terminal Allan eC, which today gives deaf, deaf blind and hearing impaired persons a possibility to communicate with the combination of text, speech and sign language that best suits the individual's own capabilities. Through dedicated work in the area of international standardization of telecommunications, and with a specialization in accessibility, Omnitor aims at reaching the vision: Information technology and telecommunication shall be accessible to all nationally and internationally.