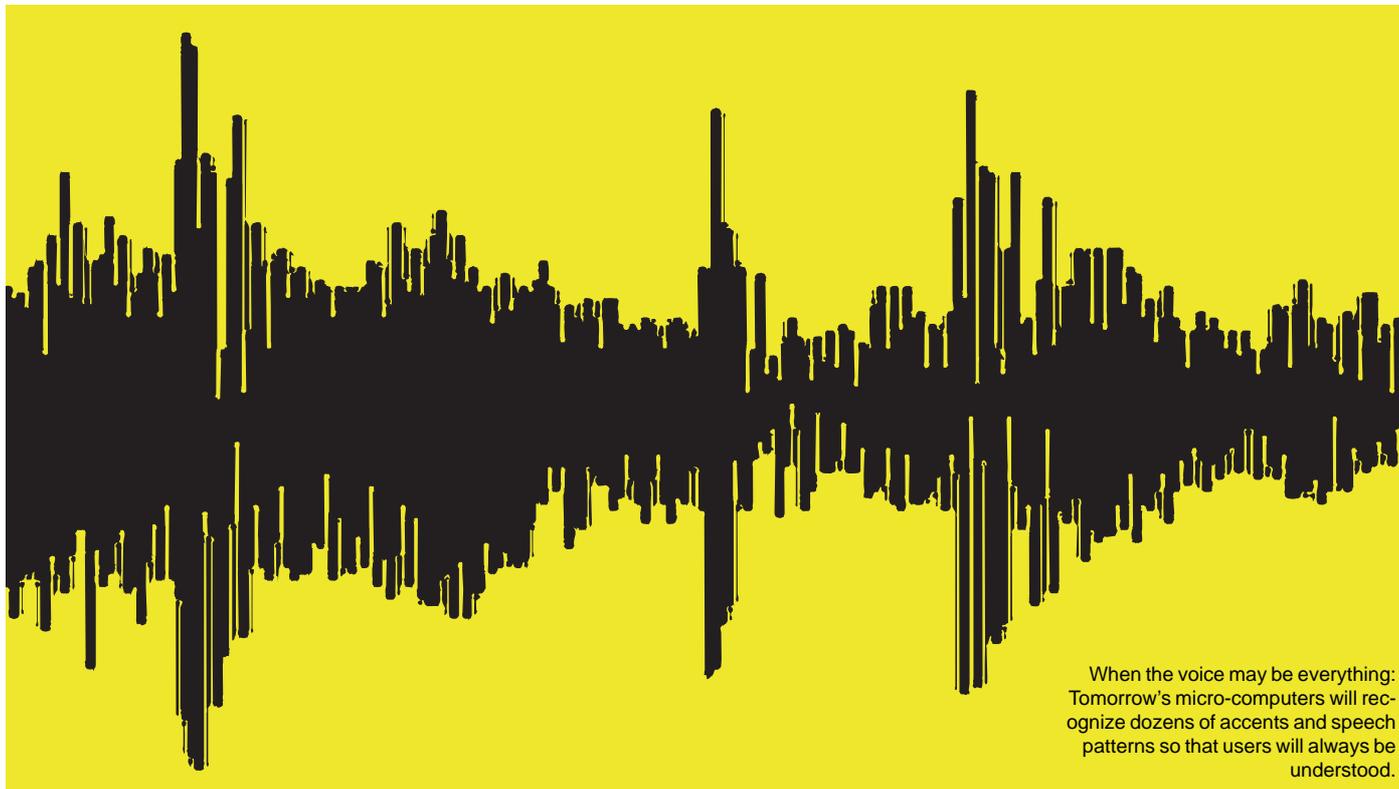# The voice of the future

Swedish Voxi shaping tomorrow's communication

When the voice may be everything: Tomorrow's micro-computers will recognize dozens of accents and speech patterns so that users will always be understood.

In the 25th century, the captain of Star Trek's USS Enterprise speaks in complete sentences to the ship's computer. You may not have to wait 500 years.

While maintaining a certain flair for the world of science fiction, the original work in the field of speech recognition began as an effort to open up the world of communication for people with disabilities.

Sweden has long been a world leader in providing a social welfare network to help make sure that all its citizens have equal opportunities. This ideology has also helped pave the way to new technologies designed to make all of our lives just a bit easier.

One company following in this tradition, the Swedish based Voxi, has developed a general purpose platform for speech recognition interfaces which can be used in a wide variety of applications.

Founded in 1999 by Mårten Stenius, Erland Lewin and Daniel Adler, Voxi used their various backgrounds in speech recognition and computer programming to create a new platform that can be used not only to develop tools for people with disabilities but also to create new products that can be used by anyone.

"The most natural way to communicate for most of us is simply to speak," says Chief Financial Officer, Erland Lewin. "However, most of the speech recognition devices currently available require the users to communicate by using very controlled dialogs that are completely unnatural. Our concept is to create solutions so that people can communicate with computers or other devices in a more natural, human way."

Speaker dependence
Today's speech recognition devices are usually "speaker dependent" in that they respond to only one specific voice, this obviously places severe limitations on how the application can be used.

"One focus of our work," says Lewin, "is to put the same speaker independent technology that is today limited to powerful computers onto a chip so that it can be used in everyday consumer devices like home stereos, video recorders and personal digital assistants."

In the world of personal computers, using speech recognition tools today requires a solid grasp of the way computers function, and the particular words and phrases that trigger specific actions within the computer's operating system.

Although the number of "computer literate" people is steadily increasing, Lewin points out that people should be able to use complete sentences, speak in everyday language and allow the computer to sort out the correct meaning of what is being said.

Having your daily agenda read to you while you're stuck in a morning traffic jam, writing reports, making phone calls and checking your e-mail, all without lifting a finger? This may sound like the technology from a science fiction novel, but as companies like Voxi begin to bring their ideas onto the market, our lives may soon be changing in ways we had previously only dreamed of.