

Providing a **cost-effective, hassle-free note-taking accommodation** for Madison Area Technical College



Sonocent case study

Madison Area Technical College in Wisconsin offers a range of note-taking accommodations to support their students with disabilities, the most common of which are paid peer note-takers.

However, the college is always on the lookout for affordable accommodations that create independence for their students and raise academic achievement. It's essential that these accommodations be simple to implement and manage, offer value and be adopted on a wide scale.

For these reasons, the college decided to invest in Sonocent Audio Notetaker - award-winning accessibility software designed to support students with disabilities who struggle to take written notes in class.

What follows is an interview conducted with Dave Medearis, the Senior Disability Resource Liaison at Madison College, in November 2014, 15 months after implementing Sonocent as a note-taking accommodation.



"When I produced my annual report on note-taking spending, my boss thought that I had missed a zero from the end! There was a drop of 50% and a big part of that was due to students using Sonocent Audio Notetaker in class rather than paid peer note-takers."

The Interview

Sonocent: *Could you describe what Audio Notetaker does for anyone who is unfamiliar with the software?*

Dave Medearis: *"It's like a word processor for audio. It allows students to capture lectures and discussion in class and work with that lecture material after class, manipulating the audio in a way that enables them to study more effectively."*

S: *How did you first come across Sonocent?*

DM: *"I first heard about Sonocent in May 2013 when I took over from my predecessor. He had just implemented the software that year after discovering it at a national disability conference the summer before."*

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S: *What were your initial impressions of the software?*

DM: *"I was pleasantly surprised. The ease of use is really important for the population of students that I work with, because, in its simplest format, it really is 'click' and 'record', 'click' and 'play back'. I think that most of the controls for recording and editing text are pretty intuitive and work well for most of our students."*



S: *How have your impressions changed now that you have been using the software for a while?*

DM: “Initially, I thought it would be for our students who have difficulties with the writing process or physical difficulties with writing.”

“But we have found a wide application for students who have ADHD and find it difficult to process content during lectures if they are focussed on the note-taking process. And it has been a useful application for our students with anxiety disorder or PTSD. Often those students will sit towards the back of the classroom close to an exit in case they feel uncomfortable or the anxiety becomes overwhelming. With Audio Notetaker, those students can take a short break from the classroom and when they return they’ll still have captured all the notes from the lecture. The software has definitely had a wider application than I initially envisaged.”



“Furthermore, the provision of Audio Notetaker is far easier than co-ordinating a paid peer note-taker. For these note-takers we have to issue an employee-ID and get all kinds of documentation together, and that is an ongoing process throughout the semester.”

“Whereas, with Audio Notetaker, we just set the student up with the software once and check-in a week or two later with them to see if they have questions about how it is working. So it is certainly a time-saver that way.”

“Plus there is the simplicity of installation and the ease of loaning out the software to students. I can give licences to students and then manage those licences through the software’s control panel. We install other software products for student use as accommodations and Audio Notetaker is probably the most trouble-free in terms of installation and licence-management.”

S: *How does Audio Notetaker stack up against other note-taking accommodations?*

DM: “From my perspective, Audio Notetaker is less time-intensive in terms of management and administration. The students love it and even their friends are asking for the software.”

“We have found a wide application for students who have ADHD and find it difficult to process content during lectures if they are focussed on the note-taking process.”



S: *Do your students use the software in other ways than for pure note-taking?*

DM: “Yes, I also have students who use the software to brainstorm ideas as part of the pre-writing process.”

“For instance, if they have a topic for an end-of-year report, often they will use the software’s audio panel to brainstorm what they would like to be in their paper and use that as an outline for the writing process.”

S: *What difference has Audio Notetaker made to the way you offer note-taking accommodations?*

DM: “It has reduced the number of paid peer note-takers that we require and it has given another option to students who benefit from audio. In essence, it has added a valuable note-taking tool to our toolbox.”

“I have had lots of complaints from students who have had paid peer note-takers in class. They will say that the paid note-taker is not there every day or that they leave early or that they do not give them good notes or that they forget to give them the notes from class. I certainly don’t have any of those issues with Audio Notetaker as it is much easier to manage. Plus, when a student takes their own notes they benefit from independence and will probably learn better too.”

“In the past, we have given students Smartpens but I got the impression students weren’t using them. So far, I have not had any student say that they have not started using Audio Notetaker or that they aren’t going to continue to use it.”

S: *Which of your students could benefit from using Audio Notetaker?*

DM: “Certainly, our students with learning difficulties who struggle with reading and writing.”



"Also, our students who have attention deficit or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. For a lot of them, taking notes makes it impossible to focus on the content of the lecture or the instruction. These are our two primary groups.

"In addition, we have a small group of students with physical disabilities who the software helps and another small group of students with visual impairments for whom we have set Audio Notetaker up."

S: *Has the software saved your college money?*

DM: "When I produced my annual report on note-taking spending, my boss thought that I had missed a zero from the end! There was a drop of 50% and a big part of that was due to students using Audio Notetaker in class rather than paid peer note-takers."

S: *How much training do you provide to students who will be using Audio Notetaker?*

DM: "Whenever I install Audio Notetaker for a student, I conduct 30-minutes of training and have them go through the software's interactive tutorial on their own. I then get back together with them about a week later to see if they have any questions, which they rarely do. It really is very easy to use."

S: *Any final words?*

DM: "We are just starting to see students use the new mobile app [Sonocent Recorder] in class rather than recording straight into a laptop. This may remove the need for even more paid note-takers as now the students can take photos straight from the app, which will be good for STEM subjects.

"Sonocent is a great solution that is really cost effective. We love it and students love it. There's not much more to say."

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Implementing Sonocent Audio Notetaker: a four-point value proposition

By implementing Audio Notetaker, Madison Area Technical College hoped to gain in four key areas:

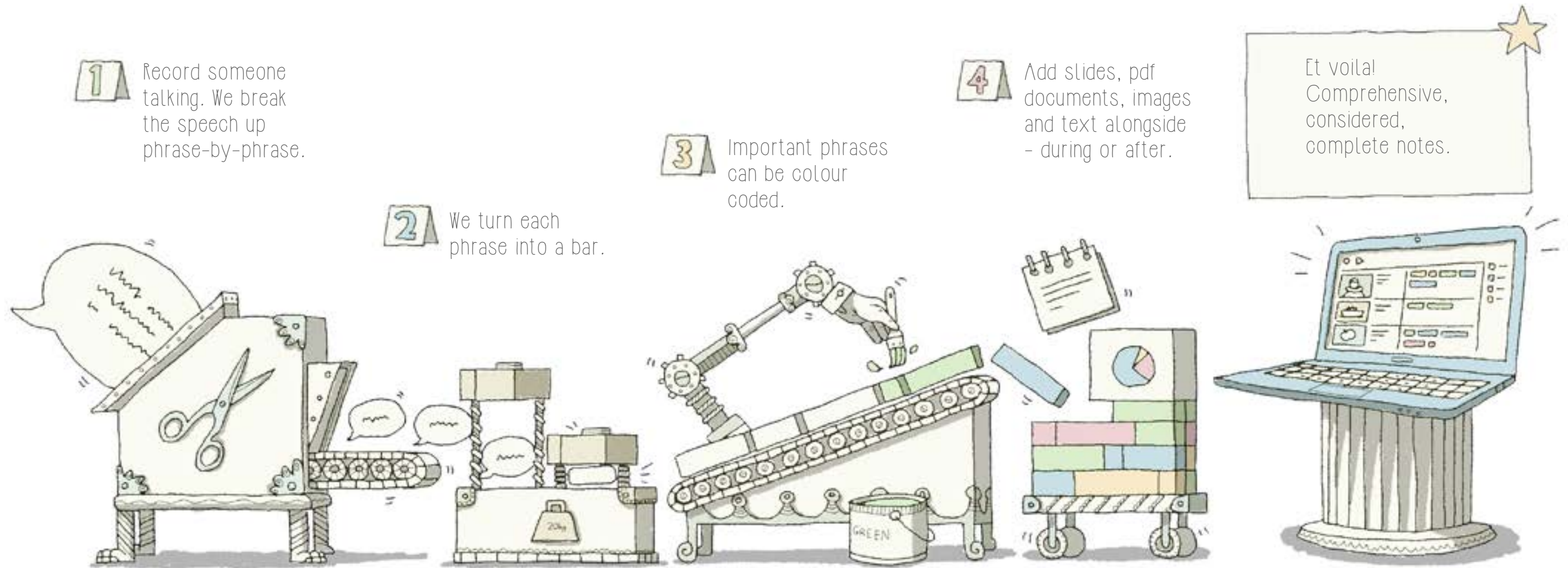
- Increase in adoption of note-taking technology
- Increase in independence and confidence of students with learning disabilities
- Reduction in funding spent on paid peer note-takers
- Reduction in the administrative burden placed on disability support administrators

"Audio Notetaker is a really good option for a lot of students. It's pretty simple to implement, and it's easy for students to start out using it right away without a lot of training."

Dave Medearis
Senior Disability Resource Liaison



How does Sonocent Audio Notetaker work?



Licensing options

Sonocent offer various licensing options designed to meet the needs of colleges and universities.

The most popular option is the flexible 'Loan Licence'. With a Loan Licence, you can lend out multiple copies of the software to students using a single code. When the student activates the software on their own personal computer, you have complete control over how long they can access Sonocent Audio Notetaker. Lend out licences to students for just one semester or for the entire year.

About Sonocent Audio Notetaker

Since 2007, nearly 70,000 students with disabilities have used Sonocent Audio Notetaker to take exceptional notes, independently.

For more information about Sonocent Audio Notetaker, email sales@sonocent.com or visit our website.

www.sonocent.com

