

ADVOCACY GROUP FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING GIVES HIGH MARKS TO BLACKBERRY ACCESSIBILITY FEATURES

Industry

- Not-for-profit

Region

- North America

Company Size

- Small Business

Solution

- BBM™
- BlackBerry® Sound-Isolating Headset – 3.5mm
- Facebook® for BlackBerry
- Twitter® for BlackBerry
- SIPRelay® by Sorrenson Communications®
- Wireless IP-Relay by Purple®

TDI (formally known as Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc.) is a non-profit organization that provides leadership and advocacy on telecommunications, media and information technologies for deaf and hard of hearing people. TDI is recognized by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as one of the leading advocates for telecommunications access for people with hearing loss. TDI has more than 4,800 members across the US.

The Challenge

People who are deaf and hard of hearing once relied primarily on TTY (Teletype or Teletypewriter) machines in their homes to communicate over telephone lines. But mobile technologies have changed the landscape for this community, offering more options for staying in touch and much greater freedom while at work and on the move.

Because TDI is a trusted advisor, it has a discerning perspective on what makes a wireless device accessible. One of the technologies they promote to their members is the BlackBerry® solution. Many senior staff at the organization choose BlackBerry® smartphones to manage daily correspondence, reach members and advocate to government policy makers. The functionality of the device, the vibrating alerts and compatibility with hearing aids are just some of the advantages of the technology.

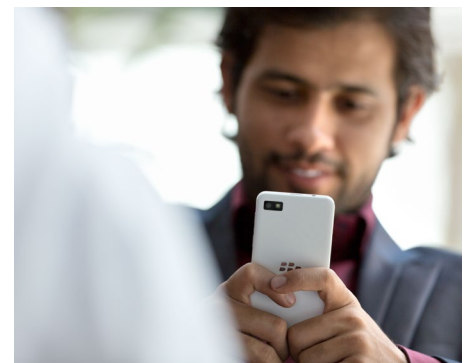
“As an organization, many of our staff at TDI choose BlackBerry smartphones because of their durability and reliability,” said Robert McConnell, Advertising and Member Services Manager at TDI. “In my opinion Research In Motion is one of a select few smartphone manufacturers that embraces its diverse user communities by making a genuine effort to ensure its products are truly accessible.”

The Solution

McConnell got his first BlackBerry device – a RIM 950 Wireless Handheld™ – when he was just 16 years old. Even then, the simple pager-like device kept him in touch by email and he used it to surf web sites using a WAP browser.

“Today’s BlackBerry smartphones have so many more accessibility features that enhance my life, my colleague’s work and the lives of our members,” said McConnell. “We specifically recommend BlackBerry smartphones with QWERTY keyboards because in our opinion they are second to none and best suited to typing long messages.”

BlackBerry smartphones are also desirable because many models enable customized vibrations (for calls, instant messages, calendar reminders, etc.), so it’s easy for someone to know what communications they’ve received without looking at the device. To respond to the needs of the hard of hearing, several BlackBerry smartphones have received certification for hearing aid compatibility requirements from the United States Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The BlackBerry Sound-Isolating Headset can be purchased as an accessory and features noise-isolating ear gels, making communication clearer on calls and better sound for music or when watching videos.



“For many of our members, having a BlackBerry smartphone is a necessity. BBM and push email is unmatched and personal and enterprise apps make it an indispensable resource.”

Robert McConnell

Advertising and Member Services Manager
TDI



The deaf and hard of hearing community has been able to conduct phone calls from their homes using TTY or text-based relay. The difference with BlackBerry smartphones is they offer the ability to access relay services while on-the-go, with apps such as SIPRelay and IP-Relay. People away from their homes can now place and receive text-based calls from their devices via a relay operator.

But the ability to seamlessly and richly communicate with the world with fewer boundaries is what sets BlackBerry solutions apart for TDI and its community. “BlackBerry® Messenger brings communication to another level because it sends acknowledgements that a message has been delivered and/or read,” said McConnell. “This helps makes the communications process more natural for those who cannot hear or speak.”

Facebook and Twitter are popular with the community because more media outlets now communicate through social channels. “Before email and Twitter on a BlackBerry smartphone, our community relied on television or postal mail to keep up on fast-moving events,” said McConnell. “In essence, Twitter is now like a form of textual radio with different feeds that keep you updated on current events throughout the day.”

TDI and Member Benefits

“TDI senior staff believe BlackBerry smartphones make policy and advocacy work much easier,” said McConnell. “In the early days, we’d communicate about important issues using trickle down methods, like newsletters that would take weeks to produce. Now we use electronic mailing lists and email as a conduit for communication among the members of our community.”

McConnell says TDI staff take advantage of BlackBerry smartphones to quickly type and distribute long and comprehensive documents that look like they’ve been typed on a desktop computer. Since many of the staff work from home and away from the office, BlackBerry smartphones give them the versatility to keep communicating wherever they are.

McConnell singles out the robust alerting features of BlackBerry smartphones as a market differentiator for members who have differing degrees of hearing loss. For example, people with mild hearing loss applaud the quality of the loudspeaker on the device. People who have more severe hearing loss, and may use assistive listening devices, rely on the ability to connect their hearing aids wirelessly or use the BlackBerry Sound-Isolating Headset. For people who are deaf, vibration settings that are customizable to different actions – such as an incoming email, BBM, Facebook update or text relay call – are indispensable.

According to McConnell, the ability to conduct calls on a BlackBerry smartphone by text relay, using apps such as SIP Relay and IP-Relay, is an excellent use of wireless technology and makes life more accessible. He also says that accessing Facebook and Twitter from a BlackBerry smartphone is essential to TDI getting important information to their constituents and to staying in touch with staff, media and members.

Thanks to the many built-in features of the BlackBerry smartphone, McConnell says TDI members are sending video messages to family and business contacts. “The ability to share such personal messages is of cultural importance,” he said. As well, updates about life, in words and pictures, can be shared as they happen.

“Our members measure their return on investment with a BlackBerry smartphone by its ease of use and functional features,” said McConnell. “Believe me, I’ve tried them all – and I always end up going back to BlackBerry smartphones for essential communication. I know my colleagues and TDI members would agree.”

Key Benefits

- Freedom to communicate on-the-go, in business and while away from technologies at home
- Advanced alerting features that respond to varying degrees of hearing loss
- More choices in how to communicate by phone, email and instant messages
- Richer communications options using social media
- Apps that enhance communication in business and life

www.blackberry.com/go/success

Results provided for informational purposes only and will vary depending on the individual customer and the specific operating circumstances. This material, including all material incorporated by reference, is provided “AS IS” and “AS AVAILABLE” and without condition, endorsement, guarantee, representation or warranty of any kind by BlackBerry and BlackBerry assumes no responsibility for any typographical, technical, or other inaccuracies, errors or omissions in this material and shall not be liable for any type of damages related to this material or its use, or performance, or non-performance of any software, hardware, service, or any references to third-party sources of information, hardware or software, products or services. © 2014 BlackBerry. All rights reserved. BlackBerry and related trademarks, names and logos are the property of BlackBerry Limited and are registered and/or used in the U.S. and countries around the world. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. BlackBerry is not responsible for any third party products or services.

