

How my mobile phone is giving me my life back



I'M NOT ONE TO SPEND HOURS playing games on my mobile phone. No time or interest to do that. But increasingly my mobile is becoming the 'remote control' of my life. I surprise myself with how frequently I text a business contact that I'm about to meet for lunch or a meeting that I'm "on my way, be there in 10 minutes". Today, our mobiles are practically extensions of our body; our organs of personal communication.

Right now, three snappy applications have embedded themselves in my life and are part of the move of Julie from her desktop to the phone: SpinVox, Monitise and Otodio. I work with the entrepreneurs behind these firms and know them well. They are each making a massive contribution to helping me win back what would otherwise be lost moments of the day by giving me access to terrific applications that enable me to do 'core' tasks any place, or listen to key content anywhere, or – get this – see a voicemail anytime.

SpinVox lets me receive voicemails as text messages. Before I signed up, I thought, "Oh, I'll want to hear the intonation of the voice." But now I've been using SpinVox for more than four months, I'm completely addicted to it. I can't imagine having to do anything so mundane as taking out a pen to take down a phone number from a voicemail message ever again. I can be in a meeting, and see that I have a phone call that arrives silently during the meeting. Before I began using SpinVox, I wouldn't have been able to take the call or hear the message until after the meeting, now I can quickly read the text, and decide whether I need to step out or it can wait. It is totally convenient, and the accuracy is high. My name occasionally gets

converted as Tulip or Jolly, but it's interesting how 'good enough' really is good enough.

Monitise is launching its Monilink service through First Direct and HSBC in September 2006. Monilink enables me to do anything I would do on online banking or at an ATM on the street via my phone. So I can use those extra moments on the train to transfer funds between accounts or to check an account balance. You can also use it to top up your teenager's mobile. Monitise has helped banks to see it is in their interest to work together in a network to give the customer frictionless access to their accounts from their phone regardless of their bank. It's a secure, bank-grade application that saves me time and is hugely convenient and easy to use.

Otodio very simply lets me listen to publications that I used to read. Its magic is to convert text to voice, and to drop the application into the phone so that I can simply pick up my phone and listen to the article – whether that's the *Financial Times* or *Marketing* – with a synthetic, but high quality, voice. I might find myself exercising at Fitness First and navigating my way through the Wall Street Journal while I jog or at the end of a long day I might want to just relax on the train home listening to *The Sunday Times* as I didn't get through it at the weekend.

I live at a hectic pace, but SpinVox, Monitise and Otodio all are 'giving me back my life'.

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