# Blind entrepreneur helps pave the way

When blind entrepreneur Terry Bartlett, of Dunedin, decided to start his own business two years ago, one of his biggest headaches was finding accounting software he could use.

"I was taking a big risk going out on my own, and it was pretty scary, " recalls the Managing Director of Corner Enterprises Ltd. "I didn't know how I was going to be able to write quotes, or send out invoices, let alone handle money, reconcile bank accounts, keep track of GST and taxes and so on.

"I jumped on the internet and looked at all the different accounting packages, all the brands you can think of. But none seemed right to me. Then I stumbled on Accomplish CashManager, and was able to download a trial version of their accounting software which worked OK on my screen."

Terry was using Windows Eyes screen reading software, and found that CashManager was the only accounting software that was not only accessible to him, but also immediately useable. "At that stage it was not perfect – no software ever is.   But I knew I could get it to work, as I do have a good background in IT and in accessible technology."

Indeed, Terry's business is based around teaching clients touch typing, designing web pages, providing advice on IT and accessible technology, as well as assisting customers with property management and even organizing coal and firewood deliveries in the chilly southern climes with his staff which has now grown to four personnel.

Over time Terry jotted down ideas on how Accomplish could make the software even better for the blind or visually impaired user. "They responded very positively" he says. "I went to Auckland to meet with their people, not really knowing what to expect. And all of a sudden I found myself working alongside these fun people, who are only too happy to work with users in making their software better for their needs. They've got a very accessible team of people who enjoy helping and supporting their customers. Today I almost feel like I'm part of their family."

Accomplish general manager Grant Hewson says Terry certainly helped the company realize there was a new niche market for its software. "Our technical and programming people were only too pleased to make the improvements he was suggesting, many related to everyday use by someone who is blind or visually impaired.   We will be continuing to make further enhancements progressively, as we have a policy of continual improvement to ensure we meet the ever-changing needs of our clients."

"Whilst driven by the needs of blind people, the changes suggested by Terry and the Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind have resulted in enhanced usability for all keyboard users. The changes indirectly benefit those with occupational overuse syndrome, limited mobility or simply a preference for using the keyboard," adds Grant.

In terms of the product's accessibility, CashManager is recommended to blind and partially sighted people by the RNZFB. This follows a comprehensive audit of the accounting software by the Foundation in December 2008.
Whilst this is not an endorsement of the financial, tax and book-keeping aspects of the software,

which is outside the Foundat ion's area of expertise, Terry uses those aspects all the time, and comments: "I have no hesitation in recommending this software for anyone blind or vision impaired who might be contemplating any form of self employment."

He adds that CashManager works well with the three major screen-reading packages available today – Windows Eyes and JAWS from the USA, as well as HAL from the UK.

Terry concludes: "Creating your own business is quite scary, but also very exciting. I would like to encourage those of you who feel you aren't achieving as much as you would like to, to contact me. I would love to assist you in beginning something that will be highly fulfilling, wherever it may lead."