

VoicePod

Failing to be heard

Technology company Altec Lansing learned the importance of marketing with its failed VoicePod digital recorder. As the leading maker of computer speakers, Altec was sure it had a hit on its hands with its innovative recorder that attached audio messages to e-mail.

PC World magazine said the VoicePod looked like ‘a mouse on steroids – a lot of steroids – and promised to make your voice dramatically more helpful as a tool for the PC.’ Gone, said Altec, are the days of unnecessary typing and fumbling for multimedia controls as its device offered the benefits of simple installation and use. VoicePod let users record and attach voice files to documents and e-mail messages with a few simple pushes of a button. There was another handy feature of the VoicePod: personal to-do lists. Users could dictate a short message to themselves and then save it. The design was also technologically advanced as it exploited the company’s ‘signal processing technologies’ that used noise removal filters and other technology to allow for minimum background noise and clear recording. ‘With these features, the VoicePod could be a sound investment,’ reckoned *PC World*. Not enough computer users agreed. The trouble was, poor marketing had led to a lack of interest and awareness. The company was so confident that consumers would snatch the product off the shelves that it spent little money and effort on promotion. As a result sales were so poor that the company pulled the VoicePod from the market after just one month.

Lesson from Voice Pod

Don’t ignore marketing. ‘Next time,’ Altec president and CEO Mark Lucas told *Business 2.0* magazine at the time of the failure, ‘we’re making a huge marketing push.’