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Service turns voicemail into e-mail

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LAS VEGAS

Blackberry or Treo addicts who don't take calls while talking to someone but who have no qualms about nodding absentmindedly to companions while checking e-mail, rejoice.

You no longer have to excuse yourself to check voicemail. A New York startup, SimulScribe Inc., uses software to transcribe voice into text and sends you your message by e-mail within a minute of receiving it.

The service is unique in the U.S. market but has a competitor, SpinVox, in Britain. It costs \$9.95 for the first 40 voicemails per month and 25 cents for each message afterward.

The company, which demonstrated its wares Monday at the International Consumer Electronics Show, has nearly 1,000 customers after launching last year.

"They're people that are busy people that are constantly in areas or events or places in their daily life where they're not able to answer their phone or to get on their phone to check voicemail," said founder James Siminoff.

"I just got a voicemail and I can even read that voicemail without having to disturb a conversation," he said.

The service also works by sending text messages to mobile phones, although the length of the voicemail transcription is capped. Just in case the program gets the message wrong, a digital copy is kept on the user's account on the company's Web site.

On the Net:

SimulScribe Inc.: <http://www.simulscribe.com>