

## Expanding 'digital lifestyle'

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 Comments (No comments posted.)

WOODSTOCK — When Newer Technology Inc. executives head to the Macworld Conference & Expo in San Francisco next week, they'll be armed with six new accessories for Apple's iPhone and iPod Touch.

The Woodstock-based maker of Apple product accessories has had strong success with lithium-ion batteries for Mac computers and iPods. Its iPhone accessories follow on the heels of others, but the company is unique for the completeness of its line as well as for its lower price point, said Grant Dahlke, Newer Technology marketing manager.

"NewerTech is not known as a me-too maker," Dahlke said.

Newer Technology is releasing an iPhone speaker dock with a freestanding microphone, a hands-free microphone and earbud, an extender cable for the microphone, bass response earbuds, a headphone jack adaptor, and a car charger for the iPhone and iPod.

The company, which shares ownership with Woodstock-based Other World Computing, is one of many manufacturers of Apple product accessories vying for a piece of an estimated \$1 billion market.

Accessory makers share a mostly harmonious relationship with the cutting edge personal technology company. They ride the company's highs and boost the usability and appeal of its products.

Other World Computing, which distributes Newer Technology products and shares its staff, was listed on Inc. Magazine's 2007 Inc. 5,000 list of the country's fastest-growing companies.

OWC expects more than \$54 million in 2007 sales, nearly 30 percent more than a year earlier, in part thanks to Apple's booming popularity.

Accessories are of increasing importance, not just to Apple product users, but to any consumers immersed in what Dahlke calls "the digital lifestyle."

Dahlke said a major challenge for accessory makers was to obtain an early product sample from the manufacturer.

"Because you really want to be on the cusp," he said.

Apple is reportedly tight-lipped with accessory makers. Although plenty of iPhone accessories hit the market before the iPhone itself was available, Apple was reluctant to release exact product specifications, and very few samples.

Some accessory makers made their own approximate iPhone samples, monitored Web rumors, and even sent accessory prototypes to Apple for approval of size and fit.

"It's a labor of love," Dahlke said.

A spokeswoman for Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple said the company did not typically discuss its partnerships or policies for dealing with accessory makers.

Newer Technology waited until the product was released and in their hands before designers began brainstorming accessories.

"We started looking at it and saying, how can we we improve on it," he said.

Not only do product specifications have to be accurate, but companies such as Newer Technology have to pay attention to trademarks, packaging, and the accessory's consistency with the overall Apple experience, Dahlke said.

Newer Technology was planning to announce its iPhone accessories at the Macworld expo but moved up the announcement because it has "other" products to introduce at the convention, he said.

Just like Apple's chief executive officer Steve Jobs, Dahlke is being tight-lipped about the unveiling.