



Enoch Evans Leaves Cassette Based Dictation Behind

In 2002, Keith Goldsworthy, practice manager of the solicitors firm Enoch Evans, was looking into technologies that could make their office procedures more efficient. Specifically, he targeted dictation and transcription, an essential component of daily operations. This firm, which is based in Walsall, West Midlands has relied upon standard cassette dictation for many years and Mr. Goldsworthy was interested in the benefits that newer technologies could offer.

BACKGROUND

Enoch Evans employs approximately 100 people, including 31 fee earners and 35 secretaries, and relies heavily on its analogue dictation system to minimise time spent in composing letters and documents. The analogue transcription process was however, cumbersome. Recording to tape made it difficult for secretaries to manage transcription priorities because several dictation items were often recorded on the same tape, in no particular order. Furthermore, the system made it difficult for secretaries to share the overall transcription workload.

PROBLEM

With the rapid expansion of the firm, Enoch Evans needed to review its document production procedures. If Enoch Evans could improve the way dictation and transcription were handled, it would improve document turnaround times, which in turn would improve the firm's service to clients. After looking into speech recognition technology, which failed to impress, Mr. Goldsworthy researched a number of digital dictation solutions. Some of the solutions were comprehensive document management systems, but they didn't integrate easily into the firm's processes. Other solutions were just too complicated. Mr. Goldsworthy then arranged for a demonstration of Philips' digital dictation technology.

"I had to keep in mind our established processes which work well for us," Mr. Goldsworthy says. "With dictation, I was looking for a solution that would become second nature to a fee-earner, while improving our secretarial performance. Once I saw the simplicity and reliability of the Philips system, the decision to buy was immediate."

The first phase of the new technology was rolled out two years ago and the final deployment was completed six months later. According to Mr. Goldsworthy, all installations went smoothly.

KEY ISSUES

- How to improve document turnaround times
- Need for a simple, easy to use system for all employees
- Need for a system compatible with existing work habits
- How to improve workload balance



SOLUTION

Today, all of Enoch Evans' departments are using Philips digital dictation and transcription. The firm is currently using 31 SpeechMike Executive Dictation 6275 units, two Digital Pocket Memo 9350 units, and 35 Executive Transcription 6277. The system runs on the firm's Windows XP-based computers and a Windows NT-based network server, which is soon to be upgraded.

"The installation process was very smooth. It was deployed quickly, without any reluctance from the staff," Mr. Goldsworthy says. "Its success is the fact that we managed to increase productivity whilst retaining similar staff levels"

RESULTS

Simple workflow integrates with established office procedures

Marketing Partner, Mrs. Delacroix-Humphreys explains, "To implement the new dictation system, the staff developed a hard-copy tracking document for fee-earners which is attached to the associated client file after each dictation is sent for transcription. Once the files are transcribed, the electronic documents are placed in the network folder belonging to the author."

Digital dictation benefits authors.

Because the SpeechMike is compact and uses a USB device, fee-earners can dictate at home or anywhere they use their laptop. In fact, this is a facility often used by several fee-earners including 2 of the

partners. Mrs. Delacroix-Humphreys explained how fee-earners could also edit their dictation files, which creates a cleaner, more complete spoken document for secretaries to transcribe.

"The Philips system is much more flexible than our old analogue tape recorders," says David Evans, IT partner and great grandson of Enoch Evans, the firm's founder "The hardware is a good, comfortable shape and because the files are digital, authors can easily locate and reprioritise files in the transcription queue."

Digital transcription benefits secretaries

For secretaries, the benefits are even more apparent. Since implementing the new technology, staff have benefited from a workflow that is easier to manage. Secretaries can identify priority work easily, and share work when one secretary is overloaded with urgent profiles or out of the office. The superior sound quality reduces time wasted in frequent rewinding to play back a poor recording, a common problem with magnetic tape. Similarly, there are no more jarring "clicks" on the recording from authors stopping and starting their recording. Secretaries also appreciate the ergonomic hardware. Louise Garbett, secretary to Mrs. Delacroix-Humphreys, was pleased with the new equipment. "The foot pedal is a huge improvement on the analogue foot pedal. The three function pads are well spaced. My output has increased by 30 to 40 percent since using digital transcription."

Additional benefits

"An unforeseen benefit of the system is that it provides better protection and management of recorded documents – eliminating the danger of lost or damaged tapes," commented Mr. Evans.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the Philips system the firm also uses case management extensively. "The most important consideration for any new technology is whether it supports the firm by making us more efficient and improving our ability to serve our clients, which digital dictation does," summarised Mr. Evans.

CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Transcription output increased by up to 40%
- Increased security of recording and associated files
- Authors now able to work remotely and electronically transfer recordings
- Simplified workload sharing between secretaries

