



Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9600
and SpeechExec Enterprise Software

Blaney McMurtry

Toronto, Ontario

Toronto law firm streamlines dictation processes and increases productivity with Philips enterprise digital dictation system

Several years ago, Toronto-based law firm Blaney McMurtry LLP faced a challenge: The practice was using an analog dictation and transcription system that had become increasingly prone to breakdowns and required frequent maintenance. At the same time, the firm had decided to implement work sharing – a method used for reducing operating costs – and required a more efficient way to manage the dictation process.

This challenge presented Blaney McMurtry with an opportunity to work smarter without sacrificing its relationship with employees or compromising client service. So when the firm's equipment supplier suggested that it take a look at the Philips SpeechExec digital dictation system, leadership quickly decided to make the move to digital technology.

While Blaney McMurtry initially implemented a standalone version of the system, it later upgraded to the Philips SpeechExec Enterprise system in an effort to accommodate its continued growth. Since then, the firm has realized a host of benefits, including increased staff productivity, streamlined dictation processes and improved document workflow.

The Challenge

A large firm specializing in business and litigation law that employs more than 100 lawyers, Blaney McMurtry had been using a tape-based dictation system for years. However, the system was no longer able to adequately meet the firm's needs. For example, workflow was frequently interrupted when units broke down and had to be sent out for repairs. In addition, there wasn't a convenient way to reassign dictation if a lawyer's assistant was out of the office due to illness or vacation.

Blaney McMurtry had made plans to implement work sharing to help reduce overhead costs and minimize the need for temporary help. To ensure a successful transition, however, the practice needed a more efficient way to manage the dictation process—one that would not only streamline workflow for lawyers but also increase productivity for assistants.

"Work sharing enables more employees to work outside the office, so we needed a method for easily and securely transferring files remotely among lawyers and administrative staff," says Roula Vessio, Information Services Supervisor at Blaney McMurtry. "It was also important that the system provide transparency across all dictation."

The Solution

To address these concerns, Blaney McMurtry contacted its equipment supplier, Dye & Durham, to learn about available options. Dye & Durham suggested that the firm consider the Philips SpeechExec digital dictation system. After careful evaluation of the system to ensure it could meet

the practice's near-term and longer range goals, Blaney McMurtry decided to implement the standalone version—SpeechExec Pro. Philips support staff worked closely with the firm to customize the system so dictation files could be transferred to the firm's network, which would allow assistants to work from shared network folders.

While the standalone system served its needs for several years, Blaney McMurtry's IT department faced some maintenance and support challenges since lawyers and their assistants were using multiple versions of the recorders and software. It was also somewhat challenging to keep up with the various software upgrades. So, in 2007, firm leadership decided it was time to move to the Philips SpeechExec Enterprise system.

Blaney McMurtry commenced a pilot on the system in December 2007. In an effort to minimize disruption of workflow, the firm included just five employees in the pilot.

"By rolling out the new system to only a few employees, we were able to resolve any potential issues before deploying the technology on a larger scale," says Vessio.

The Results

Lawyers and their assistants immediately benefited from the transition to the enterprise system. For example, lawyers had previously depended on outdated rewind and fast forward features to review dictation. They had to insert additional case information or notes at the end of the tape

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and then rely on their assistants to place that information in the proper location during transcription. This process was time-consuming and prone to errors.

In contrast, the digital system's intuitive smart button menus enable lawyers to easily access specific sections of a document, hit the “insert” button and add new text.

“The insert feature has been invaluable,” says Vessio. “Lawyers don't have to worry about the accidental overwriting of previous dictation, and assistants are more efficient since they no longer have to cut and paste dictation into the middle of a document.”

Likewise, the enhanced audio clarity of the digital recorders means assistants spend less time rewinding and reviewing the dictation to ensure they captured the information correctly—resulting in more accurate transcription and increased productivity.

“While the new handheld units required a slight learning curve, our employees quickly adjusted to the new technology and really appreciate the smaller, sleeker design and improved voice quality,” says Vessio.

Transcription turnaround time has also improved. When setting up the system, Blaney McMurtry's IT department programmed

the recorders to automatically direct each lawyer's dictation into a folder located on the firm's file server. This ensures that once dictation has been uploaded, a lawyer's assistant is immediately notified of incoming work—significantly reducing dictation lag time. In addition, before uploading files, a lawyer can mark selected items as urgent. When pending dictation appear on the assistant's screen, files requiring immediate attention are indicated by a red flag so the assistant can quickly identify priorities and make necessary workflow adjustments.

The Philips SpeechExec Enterprise system's online capabilities make it easy for assistants to share workloads and route overflow dictation to their colleagues as priorities shift throughout the day or week. Lawyers like the fact that they can check the status of dictation files and review drafts from any location—a feature that is especially valuable to those lawyers who frequently travel or work outside of the office. Both assistants and lawyers also appreciate the system's voicemail transcription capability, which enables voicemail messages from a lawyer or client to be exported to a WAV file and then placed in a dictation directory where they can be quickly accessed for transcription.

In addition, the IT department has experienced a number of advantages since implementing the

enterprise version of the Philips system.

IT support requirements have been reduced and system manageability has improved dramatically. Also, workflow has been streamlined because the firm can set up new users, and handle maintenance and support functions directly from the network rather than having to go to the individual desktop.

In the future, Blaney McMurtry plans to implement additional system features, including a Web module that allows lawyers to upload dictation from any location securely via the Internet, and a phone feature that allows them to transfer dictation files from the handheld dictation device by dialing a designated phone number.

“Since implementing the Philips SpeechExec Enterprise system, we have been able to simplify dictation processes and improve operational efficiencies,” says Vessio. “Because everyone is now using the same system, work sharing has increased and employees are more empowered, more productive and more satisfied than ever before—a winning situation for all.”



For more information:

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