

McKeag & Co Solicitors: Dragon – the right tool for right now for legal professionals.

Profile

- Busy, long-establish and respected solicitors
- Legal advisors supported by secretarial team

Challenge

- Alternative resource needed for two secretaries on maternity leave
- Maintaining quality of service despite a smaller secretarial team

Results

- No need to invest in expensive maternity cover, or replace headcount lost through natural wastage
- Productivity driven by Dragon ideal for new fix-fee legal billing model

Established over 80 years ago in Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne, McKeag & Co Solicitors has built up a reputation for making the quality of the client experience an integral and rewarding part of the extensive legal services it offers. Its team of 55 staff offer advice and representation on matters ranging from accident claims, criminal law, family law, property law and wills and probate. Apart from the natural desire to ensure its clients' matters are resolved in a friendly and effective manner, the company actively encourages the introduction of technology in order to further optimise the efficiency of the service it provides.

Doing the job of two people

With that in mind, the company recently managed a staggered deployment of Dragon, Nuance Communication's best-selling desktop speech recognition software. Dragon turns talk into text easily and can make virtually any computing task easier and faster, from capturing ideas and creating documents, to emailing and searching the web, to using simple voice commands to control many of the popular programs people use every day at work or at home. With its 99% accuracy recognition rate and ability to transcribe up to 160 words a minute, Dragon enables even the busiest legal professional to power through their workload, while creating highly accurate documents very quickly.

Its deployment was largely driven by a pending personnel change at McKeag & Co Solicitors; with two experienced secretaries due to take maternity leave, the company decided that rather than pay for costly staff cover in the interim, it would trial speech recognition to automate the creation of case notes, putting less transcription pressures on the remaining secretarial team, so as not to compromise the quality of the service it delivers.

Typically, the company's case workers would dictate their reports using digital voice recorders. The saved files would then be downloaded by the secretaries for transcription, checked and signed off by the case worker and then despatched to the relevant recipient or client, or saved to the company's case management system. However, the duplication in this process meant it could take up to two days for a document to be turned around and occasionally there were further delays that resulted in backlog build ups.

Trained for success

After a discussion with authorised Nuance reseller partner VoicePower, the reseller initially invested one day training a case worker. Thanks to the comprehensive training provided, the user got to grips with Dragon quickly and enjoyed a very straightforward enrolment process, enabling them to be up and running and achieving high levels of accuracy within minutes.

Describing VoicePower as 'excellent, responsive and very supportive' and providing 'detailed, easy to read 'How to guides', it's no wonder that the user became an enthusiastic internal Dragon champion, as Joanne Williams, I.T. Manager at McKeag & Co Solicitors, explains: "Initially, we were confident that the productivity gains realised by Dragon would help us offset the resource loss of our two experienced secretaries. What then really wowed us all was Dragon's ease of use, its accuracy and how much progress has been made compared to much earlier speech recognition solutions. This, combined with a keen Dragon user now singing its praises internally, led us to wonder how much more the business could benefit if we offered Dragon to more members of the team."

Having done so, the overwhelmingly positive response of the team and ongoing advice and support provided by VoicePower, has seen the company extend deployment to a further nine case workers. Joanne added, "Productivity has really improved and case notes are now completed within a day, and they tend to be a bit more detailed." Once saved, the completed transcriptions - which include any documents that relate to court proceedings - are either posted out or stored easily in the company's case management system.

The reassurance of reliable, dependable speech recognition technology

Joanne observed that the case workers who use Dragon find it reassuring that the words appear on the screen almost as they say them, leaving them feeling confident that everything has been both transcribed accurately and as they intended, and they can easily make any amendments or changes in real-time. Furthermore, as Dragon learns each user's voice profile and style of dictating, it gets even more accurate each time it is used, further reducing the need to make corrections.

Joanne adds to this, reporting that, "I've not had any complaints about the accuracy, but a lot of great feedback about it being intuitive, easy to use and how it helps to get work done much faster. Once they get used to using Dragon, they simply love it."

"It is a modern tool that's really relevant for a modern way of billing. Therefore, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend Dragon to other legal professionals."

Joanne Williams, I.T. Manager at McKeag & Co Solicitors

Talking their way to even better service

From a further personnel perspective, Dragon proved its worth when a secretary retired. “Given the time that front end speech recognition is saving the case file workers, we estimated that we could probably save on a headcount replacement in the event of this natural wastage. In addition to this considerable cost saving, Dragon has helped evolve the roles of the two returning secretaries, post their maternity leave. Now their transcription roles have been reduced, they are able to spend more time supporting the case workers and also, more time speaking with clients either on the phone or within the practice. “This really helps strengthen and build a great rapport with our clients, because there’s more time to care for each client and show a more personal, tailored service,” Joanne added.

An investment that pays off today

Perhaps most importantly, the deployment of Dragon presented another surprising benefit. Joanne stated that, “In the context of the fix-fee billing model, Dragon helps our legal practitioners to complete up to three files in the same time that it used to take them to do one. It is a modern tool that’s really relevant for a modern way of billing. Therefore, I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend Dragon to other legal professionals.”

About Nuance Communications, Inc.

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