Sturgill, Turner, Barker & Moloney

Lexington, KY

Philips SpeechExec Enterprise provides Web-based, remote file transfer that supports a Kentucky law firm’s growth by enabling telecommuting, flexible hours, and workflow management.

The law firm of Sturgill, Turner, Barker & Moloney discovered that growth exposes exciting opportunities and stimulating challenges: How to accommodate an expanding workforce? How to adjust internal processes and workflow patterns? How to sustain the level of energy and commitment that led to growth in the first place?

Philip Moloney, forward-thinking managing partner, recognized that two keys to ongoing success are innovation and flexibility. He concluded that modifying the firm’s corporate culture and introducing technology to better support his staff would optimize resources, maximize productivity and set the stage for continued growth.

To support the increasingly mobile phalanx of attorneys, the firm’s leadership explored Web-based capabilities to incorporate efficient, secure and user-friendly workflow management systems. Vital to helping STB&M achieve these goals was a strategic upgrade to the Philips SpeechExec Enterprise digital dictation workflow system.

During 2005 and 2006, the Lexington, Kentucky firm enjoyed rapid growth that boosted the roster of attorneys to 22 and precipitated relocation to larger office space.

Anticipating that STB&M once again would be bursting at the seams in the not-too-distant future, Moloney sought other solutions to the firm’s expansion “problem.” According to Office Administrator Lana McGinnis, these included implementing a pilot program for a compressed four-day work week, encouraging telecommuting when appropriate, and designing common offices that on-the-move attorneys could use and share when on site.

To accommodate these changes and prevent any dips in productivity, leadership recognized that it needed to upgrade the technology it used to support all areas of the practice. Top on the list was replacing the analog dictation/transcription system STB&M had relied upon for decades.

Turning to its trusted business systems partner, BEC Legal Systems (www.beclegal.com; Cincinnati, OH), STB&M began to compare and contrast state-of-the-art digital dictation technology. BEC President Mike Brookbank provided demonstrations of two specific products, including the Philips SpeechExec Enterprise system. “I immediately liked the Philips recorders and software,” McGinnis says.

Dictation transferred via the Web

Most appealing to the firm was the Philips Enterprise functionality. This innovative, system-wide platform, enhanced by the SpeechExec Web Director module, allows attorneys to transfer voice files, encrypted dictation files and attached documents to the firm’s network via the Web — from any computer from any location, either by email or FTP server. Dictation is automatically routed to assigned secretaries who are notified of the incoming work by a “new job” alert and are able to access files from any computer, whether they choose to work at the office or from home.

This expedites dictation and transcription at both ends since attorneys can send files when they are on the road managing a case — or even if they are on vacation half a world away and need to respond to case-related events. Back at the office, the Enterprise system’s Workflow Manager module effortlessly streamlines transcription.
By mid-2007, McGinnis rolled out an Enterprise pilot program with a test group of four attorneys and their two secretaries. “They adapted quickly and began to talk to their colleagues about how easy the Philips system is to use.” Soon other attorneys and secretaries were clamoring to be brought into the Web-based workflow management software, and the firm as a whole quickly made the transition to the Philips technology. In fact, McGinnis says they had a hard time keeping up with demand. “As soon as a group was finished training, a new group was eager to get started,” she says.

Adds IT manager Richard Hudson, who was brought on board to manage the firm’s increasing reliance on technology, “Once our attorneys realized they could be anywhere in the world and send dictation, they were all for it.” Training for this global access was straightforward, he says. “The primary training was as simple as drawing up the instructions about how to get onto the Website and which buttons to push to upload the file.”

Initially, Hudson says, attorneys worried that their files could be lost in cyberspace. “We were able to dispel this concern by assuring them that uploading from a remote location was virtually failsafe – but that, in addition, the transfer did not automatically delete files from the recorders. They could manually delete files later, only after they had checked the Website to ensure all their files were downloaded.”

Secretaries likewise benefit from remote capabilities since they can access their workload from home or other locations, too. This promotes telecommuting, and allows valuable employees to balance their professional and family lives. “Some of them dislike coming into work with a load of dictation waiting for them,” McGinnis adds. “These individuals wanted to do some of their work from home in the evenings. Now we can set them up for that.”

The Workflow Manager component of SpeechExec Enterprise offers another invaluable benefit by allowing STB&M to proactively prepare for any secretary’s absence. Rules are set up within the system to direct dictation to each attorney’s primary secretary. Additionally, back-up secretaries are identified so that, when one unexpectedly calls in sick, system rules allow the work to be automatically redirected, eliminating any lag time or transcription delays. When secretaries take vacation or other time off, system triggers are adjusted in advance to reroute the workload automatically.

Functional handheld recorders complete the picture

The attorneys found the Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9600 handheld recorders chosen to complement the software just as functional and easy to use.

“The recorders have clean lines and distinct buttons,” says McGinnis. That was important from the start, because “we didn’t want to put intimidating equipment into the attorneys’ hands. We wanted the switch from analog to digital to be as seamless as possible.”

McGinnis says she was specifically attracted to the recorders’ “smart buttons” that offer simple, one-touch scrolling and selection from menu options displayed on a large, easy-to-view screen. “The design of the recorder was very ergonomic and allowed at-a-glance view of the central menu.”

As McGinnis hoped, attorneys also made the transition to the new Philips 9600 recorders easily. Users were impressed with the added functionality. For instance, they were able to go into a recorded dictation file and insert new text without overwriting existing content – or having to tack changes on to the end of a tape. This feature increased attorney confidence that all additional notes or amendments would be included in the right spot, and saved secretaries from having to hunt and rewind through long tapes to place the material in the correct position within the transcribed document.

"Once our attorneys realized they could be anywhere in the world and send dictation, they were all for it.”

IT manager Richard Hudson

PHILIPS
Centralized tools simplify configuration

Enterprise is an intuitive Windows-based interface with centralized configuration tools, allowing recorder maintenance, programming and upgrades to be delivered centrally to each user. This also increases productivity within the firm because it eliminates the need for IT staff to configure each individual unit. Several functions – like keywords – can be selected globally. Conversely, units can also be customized to meet the needs or preferences of an individual user. All of the Philips recorders, for instance, had been programmed for voice activation. One attorney found this feature problematic, however, because he worked from home – and his children’s voices often would inadvertently trigger the recording function. Hudson was able to turn this attorney’s voice activation off, but leave the feature in place for others.

As expected back in 2006, STB&M continues to expand. However, because of its leadership team’s foresight, the firm has not experienced any further growing pains – at least when it comes to dictation and transcription. The Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9600 and SpeechExec Enterprise software allows the firm to streamline workflow and increase productivity – while supporting innovative corporate policies like telecommuting, office sharing and compressed work schedules.

Adopting the Philips “future-proof” SpeechExec Enterprise system was among the best technology decisions STB&M has made, Hudson notes. “When we saw what it could do and how it could support our attorneys and secretaries during a period of high growth, it was a no-brainer.”

As the expertise of using the system grows, Hudson and McGinnis will introduce the Enterprise statistics module that allows the compilation of per-client billable hours, among other analyses and reports. This function is designed to aid in measuring administration productivity and the impact of dictation and transcription on investment returns.

Some [secretaries] dislike coming into work with a load of dictation. These individuals wanted to do some of their work from home in the evenings. Now we can set them up for that.”

Office Administrator Lana McGinnis

For more information, please visit www.philips.com/dictation

or call:
Philips Speech Processing
Vickie Hanson
Marketing Services Manager
Phone: (888) 260-6261