



A New View Informs a New Way of Working at PGS Law LLP

Profile

- Long established legal firm
- Team of 30
- Two sites located in Tyne & Wear

Challenge

- To overhaul the firm's paper-based processes and streamline document workflow
- To introduce a case management system, Dragon speech recognition technology, and - long term - a paperless office

Results

- Productivity transformed amid secretaries and fee earners maternity cover, or replace headcount lost through natural wastage
- Document workflow processes
- Client service further improved

Room for improvement

A fresh perspective can often have a welcoming and transformative effect, which is what John Wood aimed to bring to Tyne & Wear-based legal firm PGS Law LLP when he joined as Practice Manager in 2012. Using experience gained from his career in multinational organisations, John spotted several areas where technology could be introduced to boost productivity and efficiency at the busy firm, which specialises in Property, Litigation, Personal Injury, Employment Law, Family and Probate. The 100 plus year old company's team of 30 comprises six partners, three solicitors, three paralegals and other key functions including secretarial, accounts, reception and general office management.

"I identified three changes I wanted to propose to the Partners and introduce to the business," John explained. "First, I wanted to implement a case management system. Second, I wanted to introduce speech recognition and going forward I would like PGS Law LLP to move towards a paperless office model, which I think will drive further efficiencies and lower costs."



To date, John has succeeded in introducing a case management system and speech recognition, the latter in the form of Dragon from Nuance Communications. Dragon is the world's best-selling desktop speech recognition software and at the heart of Dragon's productivity-boosting capabilities, is its ability to transcribe up to 160 words per minute with 99% recognition accuracy. Given that we talk up to three times faster than we type, its performance can impact the productivity of any user. Helping users drive further efficiencies in their day to day use of Dragon, is the speech control it offers when commanding and controlling popular applications, including email and web browsers.

On the path to the paperless office

"I thought that a case management system and speech recognition would be a stepping stone to the paperless office. As part of that process, I did a lot of research into the speech solutions available, and Dragon was widely regarded as the best and most mature desktop speech solution on the market." To progress its deployment, John appointed authorised Nuance reseller partner VoicePower, which he describes as "...an excellent company with flexible training and comprehensive support."

VoicePower provided John with a two day "Train the Trainer" course which advised John about many aspects of Dragon. The course John undertook was instrumental in allowing him to deploy Dragon and then train the end users at PGS Law LLP. Within two days, John was up to speed on installation, configuration and basic trouble shooting all the way through to end user training. Not only did this ensure that John gained a good technical understanding of Dragon, but also gave him the skills and confidence to train his fellow colleagues.

Ramping up efficiency with Dragon

Since deploying Dragon, PGS Law LLP has largely done away with its former processes for creating legal documents. In the past, fee earners would use either tape or digital recorders to dictate to. The tapes or digital files were then passed to PGS Law LLP's secretaries for transcription. The speed at which this could be done was sometimes determined by how busy the team was, peaks in workload and, of course holiday periods. As with any firm using this model, letter backlogs would occasionally build up.

Now that Dragon has been deployed, the productivity boost has been dramatic. "I would say that Dragon, in general, boosts productivity by approximately 50 to 60%. This increased efficiency is the major advantage of using Dragon. It has helped us to resolve the issue of letter backlogs that can appear in any busy legal firm." John believes that an impressive 70 to 80% of the secretaries' typing time has now been released for more important client facing or client supporting activities instead, which has a positive effect on client service.

Company-wide appreciation for Dragon

John explains that Dragon has won favour with the company's fee earners as well as the secretarial team. "They have taken to it like a duck to water. In fact, they are so impressed by how Dragon performs that I think they would physically harm me if I dared to try and take Dragon away from them." Now, dictated letters are sent directly to Liberate SE, the company's new case management solution. "Dragon integrated seamlessly with it," John noted, and a further benefit of this new set up is that the company's secretaries are better informed on cases. This means that when a client calls in to discuss progress on their case, the secretaries are able to update them more easily than before, which helps with client service. Another way Dragon benefits client service is the speed at which it enables fee earners to respond to the increasing number of emails they receive. "Thanks to Dragon, the fee earners reply to emails not just quickly, but in more detail than they may have done if they were typing. After all, we are not typists, and talking to create a response is far easier."

John estimates that when he is using Dragon for projects, reports and minutes, time-wise it saves him about 50%. Based on his and his colleagues' experiences, John wouldn't have any hesitation about sharing his enthusiasm for Dragon. "I'd recommend it to anyone, and not just legal professionals." In fact, John explained that he recently demonstrated Dragon to a bank manager, who, potentially, could be someone else that benefits from the transformative effects that can be driven by a fresh perspective.