

# Making the case for digital dictation: One Florida legal team turns to Philips SpeechExec Enterprise to improve workflow efficiency

Like so many law offices, the firm of Thompson Goodis Thompson Groseclose Richardson Miller, P.A., had become quite used to analog dictation technology. Over the years, the attorneys grew accustomed to the manual processes necessary to dictate and transcribe cassette tapes. But as the recorders began to wear out, the firm began to find it increasingly difficult - and costly - to find vendors who would repair analog dictation units.

Thompson Goodis realized it was time to search for a better, more efficient solution. Seizing the opportunity to step into benefits of digital technology, it quickly transitioned to the Philips SpeechExec Enterprise digital dictation solution. The firm now enjoys more universal access to dictation files, ease of use, and a workflow that is smoother, more productive, and more efficient.

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everyone is going."

James Thompson, Jr., Managing Partner

## Wanted: Peak efficiency in dictation workflow

An efficient workflow is essential to any busy legal firm, and Thompson Goodis Thompson Groseclose Richardson Miller, P.A., is no exception. With a dozen civil and criminal defense lawyers working from two separate locations in St. Petersburg and Lakewood Ranch, it has served Florida communities for more than 15 years. But its reputation for integrity, efficiency and thoroughness was being hampered by the inadequacies inherent in a primarily analog dictation and transcription system.

For years, most Thompson Goodis attorneys dictated their letters, depositions, summaries, and other critical information onto mini-cassette tapes using handheld recorders. While generally functional, the analog system made it difficult to ensure peak workflow efficiency in instances when, for example, a dictation assistant was ill or on vacation. The sound quality on the tapes was not optimal, and the need to transport cassettes manually from one person to the next was prone to mishap.

Furthermore, the recorders were wearing out, and were becoming increasingly costly to repair. "We were having a difficult time even finding vendors who would still service the old tape recorders," says managing partner James Thompson, Jr. "Digital is the way everyone is going."

In fact, a couple of the attorneys at Thompson Goodis adopted an early digital dictation solution nearly 10 years ago. But it, too, was facing its share of complications. Batteries weren't charging properly and memory chips were being corrupted.

Most importantly, however, only three or four employees were licensed to use it, which severely limited its workflow benefits.

The firm knew it was time to find a complete digital dictation solution that would enhance, rather than hinder, its operational effectiveness.

## Building a digital solution

Practice Administrator Karen Beasley, together with Thompson, began a careful search and selection process. After examining several digital dictation and transcription options, they eventually decided to try a "trial run" of the [Philips SpeechExec Enterprise solution](#) based on the [strength](#) of its:

- compatibility potential with voice recognition software;
- robust networking component;
- ease of use; and
- concurrent licensing structure.

The ability to obtain a dedicated number of licenses to be used by any staff member - in contrast to the computer-specific, staff-specific licenses from its earlier vendor - appealed greatly to the firm. "From a workflow standpoint, that was a huge selling point," says Beasley.

# PHILIPS

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"It was a big factor," agrees Thompson. "It is more cost effective, and it also worked better for workflow because we don't always know who will be transcribing on a given day. With Philips, we don't need to worry about who we've licensed, just how many licenses we've purchased."

Through acquaintances at a local Association of Legal Administrators (ALA) group, Beasley was introduced to Voice Systems, Inc. (VSI); their local Philips dealer in Tampa, Florida. VSI assisted Thompson, Beasley, and legal assistant Tami Swearingen with a one-month trial of the SpeechExec system. Then, once the ultimate purchase decision was made, the Voice Systems support team came in to provide complete installation and training services.

Two weeks prior to staff training sessions, VSI installed the SpeechExec Enterprise solution on the firm's server and each workstation. A group training meeting with all staff and attorneys was then followed by individualized, one-on-one sessions with each employee.

Overall, implementation went smoothly; staff had very few questions, Thompson reports. In fact, the decision to move forward with Philips SpeechExec Enterprise rested partly on the system's ease of use.

"For years I tried to get my dad, a founding partner now in his 60s, to use digital dictation. He even had an old digital recorder sitting around, but he didn't really like it. When I was sure he would be comfortable and would easily

transition to this system, that was a critical aspect of the decision for me," Thompson explains.

#### Achieving a smooth new dictation workflow

Today, an efficient transcription "network" at Thompson Goodis replaces cassette tapes and sticky notes. (In the past, without actually listening to a tape, a transcriptionist would only know what was on it if the attorney attached a note to it.) "Digital dictation is so much easier than tapes. There is no reason not to go in this direction; it's a no-brainer," says Thompson.

From an attorney's perspective, it's easy to switch back-and-forth among the various files, Thompson says. The hand-held recorders are intuitive and slip easily into a docking station once dictation is complete. From there, files automatically download to the appropriate folder on the server, where transcriptionists can view and prioritize them.

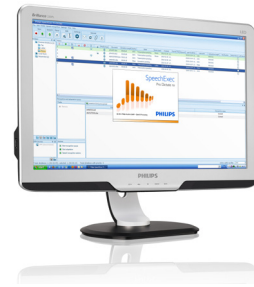
From an administrator's perspective, the fact that multiple transcriptionists can access all the recordings means that those with lighter workloads can pitch in to help complete any unfinished tasks, says Beasley. It's also easier to prioritize workflow because the system tells users how many minutes are recorded on each file. In addition, work no longer accumulates whenever a staff member is out of the office; if necessary, work can even be forwarded via email attachments.

"It's a wonderful system," agrees Swearingen, who sometimes works remotely from California

for as long as a month or two at a time. "Before, the firm was hesitant about mailing tapes to me because of the risk that they would be lost or ruined. But now, I can work remotely without that risk."

And without a foot pedal too, if necessary. When working remotely, she sometimes slows files to the speed she likes - as well as starts and stops files - simply by touching the screen. She notes that the digital sound quality is much improved over that she typically experienced with analog cassettes, and she no longer spends time unproductively rewinding tapes to replay difficult-to-understand passages.

Looking back now, says Swearingen, it's clear that the former analog system was antiquated. "Tapes are just old. Information gets lost or is hard to understand. It was time for our firm to go digital."



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