

TECHNOLOGY CASE STUDY

JAN 2007

BIGHAND DIGITAL DICTATION PROJECT
PAYS OFF FOR AKD PRINSEN VAN WIJMEN

In late 2005 AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen, one of the leading law firms in The Netherlands, found their old tape-based dictation system was proving increasingly ineffective and expensive. The tape machines were unreliable, their 'moving parts' often broke down during critical work and they were costly to maintain. It was at this point that the firm, already innovative users of technology using systems such as Hummingbird DM, decided to research a possible digital dictation solution.

AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen based their business case for the move over to digital dictation simply on the replacement of old tape equipment with digital dictation workflow software – with the aim of the new system paying for itself over 3 years. BigHand3 Digital Dictation is now used by over 300 users at the firm across the Amsterdam, Breda, Brussels, and Eindhoven offices (with the Rotterdam installation currently in progress). AKD has already found that based on early feedback from the project it is on target to successfully achieve that business case.

SYSTEM SELECTION

Cees de Vos, AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen ICT Director, led the product selection phase which initially involved assessing whether to go with a simple first generation 'standalone' digital system or a digital dictation workflow management system:

"One thing was plain immediately – standalone systems were designed for very small organizations or sole practitioners and in a heavy dictation culture, the management and transfer of voice files is a clear issue. We also had integration of the system with our other legal technologies in mind, so decided to assess the workflow systems. At that point we discovered the possibilities of Telephony and Active Directory integration and it became clear that a system such as BigHand was the only option to take the firm forwards."

Following the decision to go with a workflow management solution, the issue then became one of product selection, involving a three-way pitch between BigHand, Winscribe and Dictanet:

"Obviously it goes without saying that the correct price point is always a factor, but beyond that there were some very clear reasons why we went for BigHand3. The system was originally designed for lawyers, has integration capabilities specifically with other legal software and, most importantly, the ease-of-use for users is second to none. As we all know in a law firm this is crucial as time for a lawyer or secretary is very important. We are very confident having now implemented the software that our decision was the correct one."

IMPLEMENTATION

Sandra Janssen, System Administrator at AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen, led the project management of BigHand3, which took place over 3 months. Sandra describes:

“Compared to other legal systems we have brought in, it has a much shorter and simpler implementation cycle, made possible by the fact it is very easy to install and train. Users are up and running in 15 minutes. I would recommend introducing more sophisticated functionality, such as use of the dictation server via a mobile phone, for specific users on a case by case basis after that.”

With the BigHand HQ based in London, it was important for AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen to have quick and easy access to Technical teams for support and consultancy. Sandra continues:

“Support was also very good and if we don't get through immediately we find within one hour we always get a call back. I think because BigHand is so focused on the legal sector we get a better service than we may have done through other providers, who perhaps are more set-up for sectors such as healthcare.”

USER FEEDBACK

The system is also very popular with both lawyers and secretaries at AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen. Babet Reinders, a lawyer in the Shipping, Trade and Insurance practice group described:

“I really like the new BigHand system. We keep our dictations shorter than before and that really helps the workflow. Essentially it means our secretaries are able to work on our documents sooner. I also like the way it allows me to use offline just like when I am in the office and then automatically synchronizes when I return without me having to do anything.”

AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen secretary Alice Bremer, adds:

“Documents are returned more quickly because lawyers are getting their dictations to us instantly and in smaller chunks. Team work has improved as we are able to help each other out when there are peaks and troughs in our workloads. We can see how long each dictation is so secretaries are more willing to start dictations closer to the end of the day as you can see if they are 30 minutes or 3 minutes long. The system is also excellent for when someone is on holiday as we can then distribute dictations that may be in their inbox.”

REMOTE WORKING

AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen has not provided remote recording devices to lawyers as they have a forward-thinking ‘100% workflow’ philosophy. Lawyers can either connect in via their laptops or use the BigHand Telephony module. This way ‘instant’ send/receive is possible at all times and work sharing is maintained, thus avoid the delays that creep in if devices are misplaced or left in briefcases.

FILE MANAGEMENT

The BigHand3 system is flexible and allows users to drag n’ drop into office-wide or departmental boxes if and when they need to. Competing systems with less efficient workflow engines tend to force users to start a stipulated dictation. As a result of the open, flexible workflow AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen has no need for secretarial administrators as users are able to maintain their own workloads and take responsibility for getting work done on time themselves.

THE FUTURE

Cees de Vos, AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen ICT Director concludes:

“We may now look at integrating the system with Hummingbird DM5, which BigHand already offers, or investigate new modules for law firms such as EmailGateway. These developments were introduced to the product because other law firms like us have called for them, so this is where the BigHand legal focus kicks-in.”

For further information visit www.bighand.com
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