

Firm Gives Digital Dictation a BigHand

NICOLE CANTIN

Special to Law.com

August 4, 2009

Becker & Poliakoff is a diversified commercial law firm based in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., with more than 130 attorneys in 13 Florida offices, New York City, New Jersey, the Bahamas, Czech Republic and affiliated offices in France and Israel. Founded in South Florida in 1973, the firm provides its clients with a full range of legal services in areas such as homeowner and community association law; commercial litigation; construction law; real estate law; bankruptcy and financial restructuring; customs and trade law; entertainment, sports and gaming law; government law and lobbying; land use, planning and zoning; technology and telecommunications law; intellectual property; corporate and securities law; tax, offshore asset protection and estate planning; and collections and foreclosure.

The firm's primary objective is to solve problems and make things happen for its clients by providing superior client service. Having the ability to leverage technology to assist in this endeavor has always been paramount, and a key factor in the evaluation, selection and rollout of a firmwide digital dictation system.

Becker & Poliakoff, which prior to 2006, was using tape-based dictation equipment, first dabbled with digital alternatives in late 2006, by purchasing a handful of Olympus dictation devices for the firm's "power dictators" on a case-by-case basis. Unfortunately for the IT rollout team, led by IT Director Avi Solomon and myself, stand-alone device configuration and setup was extremely manual and time consuming. From an end-user perspective, it also proved to be lacking – a counterintuitive user interface led to a less than satisfying and productive initial digital rollout. Realizing that a different approach was warranted, the IT department led the search for a firmwide, digital dictation workflow

technology designed to meet all current and future production workflow needs.

After a product evaluation process, the firm selected Winscribe's digital dictation solution and agreed on an initial 12-license pilot program. While the underlying technology



Stockbyte, Getty Images

seemed to function well, the Becker & Poliakoff IT department quickly ran into difficulties with Winscribe's software support and lack of project management expertise. This was exacerbated by the fact that the software company relied on a series of value-added resellers to handle technical support and troubleshooting. Responsiveness was lacking, as was the VAR's ability to provide answers to specific workflow and dictation setup questions. In addition, the firm also witnessed a lack of VAR experience and knowledge in dealing with legal-specific workflows – the VAR did not fully understand the intricacies of the administrator-assistant-attorney relationship (especially as it related to document production and workflows). The bottom line after months of piloting: no one within the firm was actively using the new solution.

'IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED ... '

Becker & Poliakoff's mission to provide cutting-edge digital workflow technologies did not end there. The quest continued. And, based on heightened awareness to find a partner with strong support and project management expertise in legal digital dictation, the firm selected BigHand. BigHand worked with the firm's IT department on an initial pilot in the West Palm Beach office. Paramount to a successful pilot program and the subsequent officewide rollout (achieved within

30 days), was the immediate project management, technical support and training provided by the BigHand team.

Accessibility to BigHand resources was, and remains, critical to the firm. Any time you are planning and executing a large-scale technology rollout, it really helps when you can speak directly to the team that programs a particular component of the software, and you do not have to rely on a third party to communicate problems and receive proposed solutions. BigHand guided us every step of the way and gave us full, easy access to any technical and training resource we needed. Not only were we able to establish a protocol and set methodology to setting up our various offices, we managed to train support staff, attorneys and trainers to embrace and use BigHand. Now, office managers and IT liaisons can maintain dictations for their respective offices without needing to call our help desk. They feel empowered to handle BigHand on their own.

The entire BigHand team, from sales to tech support to project management was able to meet every challenge presented by the firm, providing very efficient and clever solutions to problems. Becker & Poliakoff takes great pride in how the firm has embraced BigHand as its next-generation technology and workflow platform.

SUCCESS BREEDS BUSINESS BENEFITS

Since dictating with BigHand, the firm has greatly increased user adoption: "I fully utilize BigHand's mobile tools and have my BlackBerry with me and can dictate from home, in the car or while I am traveling without taking a separate dictation device along. I also love the fact that dictation files are sent to my staff via the telephone network from anywhere at the push of a button," said Becker & Poliakoff shareholder Allen Levine.

Here's a sampling of various benefits Becker & Poliakoff has achieved to date with BigHand:

- share work across multiple support staff: BigHand's intuitive workflow enables Becker support staff to easily pass through work when necessary and if need be, collaborate on bigger document production tasks;
- more active teamwork across the office network:

The nature of being able to dictate remotely and use the firmwide Citrix system removes barriers to sharing work. Previously, each office was "siloeed" and was technologically unable to work with other offices;

- workflow autonomy: With BigHand, Becker's support staff can individually assign document production tasks themselves or jump in and work on a colleague's dictation queue if needed. Overall, there is a lot more autonomy and ability to get work done as it arrives;
- mobility: Attorneys and assistants can work remotely, either via BlackBerry smartphone devices or Citrix, without sacrificing dictation quality or the speed at which tasks are executed; and
- peace-of-mind: Based on BigHand's ability and willingness to provide the firm with technical support, training and troubleshooting expertise, users and administrators can be certain there is no interruption in document production.

FUTURE USES

Becker & Poliakoff, which has now been live with BigHand for the better part of seven months, is very enthusiastic about the future use of the workflow technology. This is also true, in particular, for the use of the BigHand Mobile solution for its remote workforce. With the increase of firm mobility comes the opportunity to use BigHand's quickly expanding footprint of smartphone dictation options, including BlackBerry and Windows Mobile devices.

Nicole Cantin is Becker & Poliakoff's applications administrator.

BigHand is based out of Chicago, London, Sydney and Toronto and is a Microsoft Gold Partner and BlackBerry ISV Partner. For more details about their voice technology visit <http://www.bighand.com>, email inquiry@bighand.com or call 312-893-5906