



## Marshall Dennehey Team Bonding Project Reduces Costs, Cuts Unnecessary Administration and Leads to Happy Employees

By Liz Brown, Director of Information Technology, Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin

Today, our firm, Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin can report a 300% improvement in document turnaround times and a forecasted saving in administrative expenses of \$1500 per attorney per year, through use of BigHand Digital Dictation software. When you add the increased mobility for attorneys, and overall popularity with employees, the BigHand project is certainly one of the most successful IT projects of the last 12 months.

### The Business Driver

Like many law firms across the United States, our firm still had many employees relying on old analog tape dictation machines. This was a concern because most tape manufacturers have already discontinued the production of tape equipment and those who have not, soon will.

We were also having increasing difficulty in recruiting quality support staff, especially at some of the smaller regional offices in our 17 office network. This led to occasional document turnaround times averaging 7 to 10 days. We knew we needed to take action to not only increase efficiency in this area, but to provide a workflow that would simplify our employees' ability to proactively and efficiently dictate and transcribe.

Increased mobility for attorneys is also an area we knew we had to address in order to remain competitive and offer top notch legal services. Clients now expect law firms to be mobile and productive 24/7.

### Why BigHand?

When we began looking for a digital dictation workflow solution, we discovered most products seemed to be designed for the medical industry. BigHand stood out as being the only global vendor whose product was designed specifically for attorneys.

Technically, the back-end of BigHand3 was also very important. It allows us to manage all our employees across all 17 offices and also has proven multi-site redundancy (they have over 500 law firms using the system worldwide). This is important as for many attorneys dictation is mission critical in terms of getting documents out the door, and it facilitates our plan to provide secretarial support to remote offices.

Sandy Caiazzo, Regional Manager at Marshall, Dennehey described: "We really liked the user friendly interface, and that the workflow possibilities were suited to legal practice, as it was important that the product be easy to train. The results certainly

### QUICK STAT SHEET:

**FIRM:** Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin

**SOFTWARE:** BigHand Digital Dictation Software

**DATE STARTED:** March 2007

**No. OF USERS:** 100+ users going firm-wide to 980+ in 2008

**LOCATIONS:** Pittsburgh, Akron, King of Prussia, Cherry Hill, Roseland (going to remaining 12 offices in 2008)

**DOC TURNAROUND TIMES:** Most 24hrs, average 2-3 days (7-10 days prior to BigHand software)

**RETURN ON INVESTMENT:** Minimum of \$1500 per attorney per year

**RATIOS:** As the firm grows it now recruits fewer secretaries to number of lawyers recruited.

**ADDED BENEFITS:** Team working culture has been boosted among secretaries, across offices. Mobility has improved for attorneys

**SOON TO GET ADD-ONS:** Citrix Remote Dictation

supported that decision. There was no question that we posed that didn't have a simple answer.”

### **The Bottom line**

The impact on document turnaround times has been dramatic. The way the system creates distinct, separate dictations and makes them available across the firm means secretaries can transcribe more efficiently and share the workload easily. In our Akron office there were times when document turnaround lagged 7-10 days. That is now barely 2-3 days and the majority of work goes out within 24 hrs. We are experiencing similar results in our King of Prussia office. So we've gained almost a business week in productivity.

Overtime costs have gone down too. We saved \$3500 per 5 attorneys in Akron – so when you roll that out across the firm it does add up.

The firm was also spending \$18,000 per year just sending tapes from office to office, a cost we have been able to completely eliminate since rolling out BigHand.

Also, it was not uncommon to incur travel expenses because it was necessary to send support staff to other offices to cover for a shortage of personnel. For example, in a 3-month period for a single office, travel expenses for support staff were \$1,006. With BigHand, Marshall Dennehey will be able to eliminate travel costs since a secretary can transcribe dictations originating in any of our 17 offices without leaving his or her desk.

### **The Intangible Benefits**

Less tangible than dollars returned - as we don't have confirmed stats – is BigHand has helped reduce our recruitment requirements by improving our secretary / attorney ratio.

In terms of stress levels the office is now a more efficient and organized place because the attorneys have access to anything they would want to know about their dictations and the status of them; secretaries can clearly see what his or her workload is and office managers can distribute the work more easily and from anywhere.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION:**

The BigHand Digital Dictation implementation at Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin also involved local partner **Graffen Business Systems, Inc** whose experience, implementation expertise and long standing relationship with Marshall Dennehey was a highly beneficial factor contributing to the success of the project.

We have also found an increase in the number of people who may work on a matter – sometimes three secretaries may pitch-in during a short amount of time in order to help get a 'high priority' piece of work out the door. Sandy Caiazzo describes: “It has turned into a bonding exercise and increased our sense of working for one firm. Support staff from different offices interact with each other more, and the staff at the smaller offices benefit as they can be recognized as key players by helping out at crucial times. Things like absence and maternity leave can have a real impact at remote offices so the support and saving that BigHand offers is crucial now too.”

In terms of mobility, we have one attorney using the BigHand Telephony/cell phone dictation module which has meant that he has no outstanding dictations when he returns to the office as compared to the days when he used to return and deposit 10 tapes with his secretary. It would take days to turn around.

### **The Employee Experience**

John Gonzales, Shareholder in the King of Prussia office commented: “BigHand benefits my daily work by allowing my secretary to work more efficiently throughout the day. By breaking down my dictation into separate and discreet assignments, my secretary does not have to complete entire tapes, before

moving on to the next assignment. This is especially helpful when I have a rush that must be completed immediately. Before BigHand, she would have to stop working on a tape, put the tape aside and then complete the rush. This created the possibility of error and was rather clumsy. With BigHand, however, my secretary can simply stop what she is doing and start working immediately on the rush and complete it quickly with a minimum of disruption to her regular work flow.”

“BigHand saves me time by allowing me to simply send an assignment electronically, instead of physically dictating on a tape, taking the tape to my secretary and then waiting for the tape to be returned. There is never a situation where I have to look for a blank tape and my work is completed faster and more accurately.”

“My secretary and I have had an ongoing "contest" to see who can complete more work. Since moving to BigHand there hasn't been a day that goes by, no matter how much I dictate that my secretary can't complete all of the assignments that I leave her within a 24 hour cycle. There is never a backlog of tapes to be completed. Instead, my assignments are completed quickly, accurately, and within hours if not minutes of my dictating them. This has saved 1 - 2 days from the old system of tapes and analog recorders.”

Secretary Lumi Rodriguez also comments: “I really prefer BigHand Digital Dictation to tapes, no doubt about it! The dictation sounds very clear and I also like how I can pick and choose dictations on the basis of urgency. I am definitely able to get documents back to the attorneys more quickly than with tapes - I am able to finish my work twice as fast.”

“I am also in a position to help others, since sometimes I may only have a limited amount of time to help out; I can do a few dictations unlike with tapes when you're not sure how long it is going to take, with digital dictation you always know how long each dictation is. I can honestly say I would not want to go back to tapes.”

Sandy Caiazza, added: “One of the most amazing things was that many of the employees actually started using the system before the official employee training started. It was so easy-to-use and says a lot about the quality design of the software.”

### **What's next?**

We are rolling out to all offices in the first half of 2008 and with remote Citrix access on the agenda for us, we are also going to be utilizing BigHand's 100% compatibility with thin client systems.

### **About the author**



Liz Brown is Director of Information Technology at Marshall, Dennehey, Warner, Coleman & Goggin. The leading defense litigation firm provides legal services from 17 offices throughout Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Ohio and Florida.  
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