

Whitfield & Eddy PLC Takes a Big Leap Forward with BigHand, Driving Cross-Office Work Sharing To Get More Done

CASE STUDY

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“[BigHand] has led to even greater team working across our 4 offices. Assistants who have capacity are now able to help out with dictations from other offices, which was not previously possible with tape-based systems or with the Olympus stand-alone software.”

When Whitfield & Eddy PLC, an Iowa-based firm with 55 attorneys across 4 offices, found it increasingly difficult to manage its existing mix of dictation systems (analog tapes and Olympus stand-alone software), the firm began to look into an alternative solution. Not only would the new system need to save them time on the back-end management of the software, but it would also need to maximize the efficiency of support staff in all their offices, increase attorney mobile productivity and ultimately help everyone get more done in less time.

IT Director of Whitfield & Eddy PLC, Shawn Brown, explains the firm’s journey from fragmented technologies to an enterprise-wide solution that became a catalyst to cross-office work sharing, made their lawyers more mobile and reduced back-end system management from hours to minutes.

The Big Challenge:

“The main problem with the Olympus standalone software was when an attorney changed assistants or had a floating assistant fill in while their main assistant was out of the office. The back-end management of the standalone software was very complex and needed to be done by IT. We had to manually go into the system and reassign access to different folders up to three times a day, which led to the time-pressured HR Manager having to wait for a busy IT person to complete this each time.”

“I saw BigHand at a trade show and had seen a demo, but it wasn’t until speaking with my account manager at CDW that I decided to take a closer look. I have used CDW for several years and have been very happy. If CDW does not have the answers, they get me in contact with the people who do. And that’s where BigHand came in.”

The Business Case:

“Streamlining processes was our biggest driver. With firmwide responsibility for all of our assistants, we wanted the HR manager to have the ability to manage the digital dictation assignments without having to involve IT and help give the lawyers immediate access to the support resource they needed.”

A Quick Win: Efficiency Gains within Two Months of Implementation

“BigHand was installed in April, 2010. The install, training and rollout process went extremely well and we were very happy.”

“The benefits of BigHand to IT and HR have led to huge increases in efficiency. A process that used to take up to 15 administrative staff hours each month has been reduced to a matter of minutes. Instead of HR waiting for our IT staff to reconfigure someone’s set up, HR can make the change themselves and ensure our lawyers have access to the support resource they need in the shortest possible time.”



"We are also able to utilize dumb terminals instead of desktop PCs, since BigHand works seamlessly in thin client environments. This saves on hardware costs as well as IT support time."

Leveraging Existing Resources

"Now, when an assistant is overloaded, they will proactively ask for help from floating support staff to help out. With BigHand's enterprise workflow solution, assistants can even be given the ability to access additional support as needed without involving IT or HR. This has led to even greater teamworking across our 4 offices. Assistants who have capacity are now able to help out with dictations from other offices, which was not previously possible with tape-based systems or with the Olympus stand-alone software."

Tracking and Prioritization

"Attorneys have mentioned that this system is a lot easier than keeping track of a tape, or accidentally recording over one. What's nice is that the BigHand software wasn't a huge change for them, which is good, as they could continue to use the same digital recording device. They also like the ability to monitor when a dictation has been completed without checking with their assistants. Finally, the assistants no longer waste a lot of time trying to find the one recording that is highest priority - dictations now get delivered one at a time."

The Future: New Practices, Smartphones and Voice to Text options

"The ease with which support staff can help each other out has meant we have begun to add more assistants to the system that normally don't do any transcribing. If we have an assistant that is overloaded with work, but someone else has capacity, we can easily assign them additional help from the floater pool in a matter of seconds."

"We currently have a couple of BlackBerry devices set up with the BigHand for BlackBerry application, so that lawyers can submit work on the move, which works extremely well. We are looking to extend that functionality to more lawyers in the near future."

"At some point I would like to explore the voice to text option in more detail - making it server based and a complementary tool to BigHand rather than a replacement technology seems like a sensible approach for a solution that we believe has enormous potential."

About Whitfield and Eddy, PLC

The law firm of Whitfield and Eddy, PLC serves its nationwide client base from four locations in Iowa. The firm is committed to meeting the diverse, challenging and changing needs of clients through a proactive problem solving approach. Shawn Brown, Director of IT, manages the IT for all 4 locations. He has 18 years of information technology experience and a MBA degree from Drake University.



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