



## calfordseaden Depend on Philips for a Total Digital Solution

**As an independent construction consultancy, calfordseaden provides a wide range of services including building surveying, quantity surveying, architecture, construction engineering and health and safety - with a view to offering an all encompassing multi-disciplinary approach to construction advice. For larger projects, this enables calfordseaden to bring lots of its expertise to bear, which in turn creates a more cost effective service for its clients across local authorities, housing associations and private contractors.**

Employing 160 people across the UK, calfordseaden has its headquarters in Orpington, Kent. There are five offices, which includes a new architectural practice acquisition waiting to be integrated in South East London.

The company is always on the lookout for new opportunities and is constantly investing in new ideas and new people to keep the business growing in today's expanding, yet increasingly competitive market. This investment extends to IT, where the strategy has been to create a comprehensive, seamless digital office environment that supports its staff and maintains calfordseaden's competitive edge.

### **PROBLEM**

With dictation already prescribed as the most cost effective and efficient way for fee earners to communicate instructions to support staff and for generating documents, calfordseaden was finding that its existing equipment was reaching the end of its useful life. Increasingly in need of repair, breakdowns were not only inconvenient but also costly.

### **OBJECTIVE**

With a strategy already in motion to create an end-to-end digital system for document creation, distribution and archiving, calfordseaden's key objective was to secure a mobile dictation device that could be used to start the whole process. It was recognised that the mobile devices could offer greater flexibility both in the office and out on site.

### **KEY ISSUES**

- How to reduce running costs of dictation equipment and improve reliability?
- How to optimise existing resources?
- How to integrate with document management system?
- How to provide process for balancing work priorities?



## APPROACH

Always keen to keep abreast of the latest developments in dictation, it was believed digital dictation was the right solution and Managing Partner, David Metcalf took it upon himself to be the “guinea pig” and to test a number of available systems. Not being IT orientated David believed that if he could master digital dictation, then so could the rest of the company. Early system appraisals established the key requirements of the system, which were discussed with long-term supplier Transcribe Thames Group. Working together with calfordseaden’s six IT staff, Transcribe Thames Group identified that the Philips Digital Pocket Memo® was an ideal solution.

Work first began by upgrading existing PCs to cater for the needs of digital dictation. Initial evaluation work on the Philips system was based around SpeechMike Executive Dictation and Transcription systems. A potential benefit identified early on was the realisation that the interconnected offices could now share and balance workloads. Work could now be routed to the most appropriate place, or to where there was additional support capacity, bringing flexibility and speeding up turnaround times.

With the launch of the Philips Digital Pocket Memo, the final solution took shape. Users quickly adapted to the new device and began utilising some of the key features to prioritise work, route dictation to individual transcriptionists and work remotely. To ensure the project's ongoing success calfordseaden has made sure that instruction on using digital dictation has become an integral part of staff training, particularly in the induction of new employees.

## RESULTS

So successful was the evaluation that calfordseaden has now deployed 90 Digital Pocket Memos across the workforce, with 35 support staff using the SpeechMike Executive Transcription software.

Work can be routed from anywhere (including remote locations), to a designated author’s support resource or any other member of staff as appropriate. Authors do not lose valuable time travelling to the offices to drop off tapes. They can carry out a series of site visits and, either download recordings after each, or when they return home. This creates an extremely efficient system, which has greatly increased the turnaround of correspondence as well as balancing the workload placed on support staff, who now receive work throughout the day, rather than on bulk at the end. greatly increased the turnaround of correspondence as well as balancing the workload placed on support staff, who now receive work continuously throughout the day, rather than on bulk at the end.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Digital dictation provides superior sound quality.
- Efficiency gains through flexible prioritising and work balancing.
- Integrate dictation into staff training and induction processes.
- A true digital document production and distribution solution.

## CONCLUSION

The system developed by calfordseaden allows its key fee earning staff to concentrate on their primary task. Using Philips’ digital dictation improves the overall effectiveness of the support network by allowing work to flow easily through the system, delivering completed communications to clients quickly and efficiently. All this has meant that calfordseaden has been able to reduce its requirements for expensive London office space, not just, because fewer people require permanent desk space, but because support staff can now be employed in outlying offices. This therefore reduces costs without sacrificing quality. The system is flexible enough that staff can work at any location. This gives calfordseaden a great advantage for winning new business as it can establish a new project office anywhere in the UK, or anywhere in the world.

“We are extremely pleased with the system and believe it is an entirely superior and leading edge system. It gives us lots of advantages over tape-based systems - I think it’s a real winner,” commented David Metcalf, Managing Partner, calfordseaden.



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