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Five Top Uses for Dragon in Law Offices

~ Blogged by Alexandria Carstens on July 17th, 2010

Legal practitioners were one of the first to embrace speech recognition many years ago. They became disenchanted with Dragon when they realized it could not deliver the accuracy that they desired. However, this was in the past. And like any software application, fine wine, and most technologies, Dragon has steadily improved with age. In fact, as a software fanatic such as myself, I've never known any software application to make the steady leaps and bounds that Dragon does from version to version.

To every Dragon user out there I have said for the last couple of years: *"If you are not achieving at least 99% accuracy with Dragon, we need to talk."* There is much I may be able to assist with, and have enjoyed doing so for over ten years. But I digress...

I wish to address WHY law offices are using Dragon and the areas it has impacted them most.

1. Email

Once upon a time there was an absence of computers in the law office, and when computers finally entered the law office, they did not reside on a lawyer's desk. Eventually the Internet proved itself a permanent technology, and electronic communications opened up a whole new door to efficiencies. However, still resistant, lawyers were dictating their email responses into a recorder and a human transcriptionist was typing them and sending an electronic version of the printed and proofread email document to the email recipient. Do not laugh — I have seen this... on more than one occasion.

At last the lawyer was forced to house a computer on their desk and even learn to use it. With this responsibility came email. And lots of it. In fact, the number one complaint I hear from lawyers (and even some doctors) is: *"I spend all my time writing email."* From quick forwards delegating tasks, to lengthy opinions. But it's the plethora of smaller emails, usually associated with non-billable time, that stems a legal professional's efficiency. One way or another, those brief emails must be sent.

And even if the lawyer can type 120 words per minute (Dragon performs well at dictation speeds of 140 words per minute), the lawyer is no match for Dragon's ability to perform repetitive tasks such as forwarding an email to an assistant with **"FYI"** or **"Please schedule per below"** in the body, and then deleting or filing the original email. Dragon can keep your inbox clear (relatively) and free up your time for billable tasks. Dictating email directly into Outlook (or other email applications), coupled with the use of a number of powerful voice commands, produces astounding results.

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2. Memos to File

Memos to file are important, yet can be time consuming. Pre Dragon, lawyers would dictate a memo to file or even hand write one on a note pad. If the former, a human would transcribe the memo which would still find its way back and forth for proofreading, correcting and eventual filing. This amounts to considerable person-power... just for a memo to file (which, while important, is still time-consuming).

Whether having transitioned into case management software, or maintaining hard copy files, dictating memos to file directly into the computer is by far the most efficient method. If a law offices uses templates, commands can very easily be created in Dragon to produce a new document based on the template (speak a word or two rather than executing a few mouse clicks or more).

Save your time and free up your transcriptionist's time for more important tasks by quickly dictating your memos to file once, and saving the memo according to methods employed by the law office.

3. Precedents

A precedent comprises of anywhere from a few pages to one hundred pages, with a few variable fields or many. A lawyer can either source the electronic or physical copy of the precedent for reference, use a recorder and dictate the contents of these variable fields to a transcriptionist who will open a new precedent, and enter in the information as dictated, OR, the lawyer themselves will open a new precedent, typing the information where appropriate — often scrolling endlessly through numerous pages to the next region for input.

OR... With Dragon, a lawyer could use a voice command to create a new document based on a precedent, and then with a press of a key or another voice command jump from variable field to variable field where dictation takes place. The lawyer could even give the document a proofread themselves and know that it is finished (once they save the document that is). Yes, it can be that easy.

Quickly create a new document based on a precedent utilizing a combination of Dragon voice commands and rapid, accurate dictation directly into the document yourself.



4. Lengthy Document Creation

When a lawyer creates a lengthy document with the use of a recorder, they do not see the resulting dictation until it has been transcribed by a transcriptionist. Most lawyers are very effective in maintaining the dictation in their minds throughout the lengthy dictation session, but even still, edits are often necessary. As a former legal secretary myself, I have witnessed contract documents transit back and forth between myself and the lawyer dozens of times before it was considered final. Actually seeing the text on paper or on the screen is necessary for document refinement.

Dragon places the power of document creation in the hands of the lawyer. Rather than waiting for transcription, the draft can be dictated any time and edited in the same session or at the lawyer's whim. Most lawyers who use Dragon in this fashion do not format the document, leaving this task to their assistants. Of vital importance is the substance of the document, the contents of which can be dictated, reviewed and edited any time by the lawyer.



If a lawyer does not wish to proofread (i.e. correct Dragon's errors) themselves, they can save the document with their voice attached. Their assistant would then open the document and proofread, correcting the document in such a way that Dragon will make fewer errors for the lawyer in future.

Regardless of the methods used, workflow can be optimized further and considerable time saved with far less back-and-forth-editing.

Using Dragon for lengthy documents (whether using an assistant for proofreading or not) places the power of creation in the hands of the lawyer. Documents are finalized faster, and time is saved all around.

5. Digital Recorder with Dragon Transcription

Some lawyers spend far more time outside of the office than they do inside. As a result, they still need to use their recorders and the dictation from those recorders will need to be transcribed.

Granted, with a digital voice recorder, digital audio files can be sent from anywhere in the world to a transcriptionist (also anywhere in the world), who will then create the appropriate documents from the recording. However, is this the best use of a transcriptionist's time? Some law offices are looking for ways to increase profits and sometimes turn to downsizing. Rather than downsizing, some restructuring of tasks may be more profitable.



So who is left to perform the transcription? Why not Dragon? Dragon can automatically transcribe digital audio files. A proofread and format will still be required, but much time will be saved in the actual transcription process. Dragon, coupled with a professional quality digital voice recorder, can save a law office time and resources, as well as boost profits.

6. Unexpected Added Benefits of Efficiency

I realize I've already addressed my **FIVE TOP USES**, but I would like to make mention of this often unexpected benefit to using Dragon in a law office. That is: custom command creation. Any repetitive task can be assigned to a Dragon voice command.

Examples include:

- Creating a new document based on a template
- Entering data into time sheets
- Rapidly opening a reference document (usually a PDF)
- Sending FYI emails to a recipient
- Speedily opening a major draft document for ongoing editing
- Navigating to an oft visited directory on the network (whether to open a document or save to)
- Logging on to a legal resource website such as QuickLaw
- The list is really endless...

My personal philosophy is that if there is an action that takes me more than about five mouse clicks or keystrokes, I create a voice command to have Dragon perform the same action in one or two spoken words. How much time can actually be saved if I perform repetitive functions throughout the day? A lot, was my answer.



As I am passionate about efficiencies, very little gives me greater joy than to sit with a client and show them how they can save time with Dragon voice commands. I am happy to either teach someone how to create Dragon voice commands that would make their lives more efficient, or I am very pleased to create such commands on the spot, catering to the whims and needs of the legal practitioner.

In Conclusion

Dragon can be implemented numerous ways in a law office, for the benefit of all. I have a client who once said (slightly paraphrased), *“Dragon gives me a competitive advantage over other firms. I like that.”* Such a statement gave me pause to think and wonder why more law firms haven’t deployed speech recognition technology.



If you wish to know how Dragon could benefit your office, please contact me, Alexandria, for a consultation. This is exciting technology that constantly improves with time. And truly — it’s there.

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