



Leading UK law firm improves efficiency and customer service with BlackBerry solution and digital dictation from nFlow

Freeth Cartwright LLP is one of the UK's leading regional law firms, serving both commercial and private clients. Based in the East Midlands, with offices in Nottingham, Derby, Leicester, Manchester and Birmingham, the firm has a wide range of clients throughout the UK, many of which have international connections. Its 500-person staff, including 260 fee earners, serve clients both regionally and nationally. The firm has a tradition of embracing technology to improve efficiency. Its Applications Development team developed an award-winning¹ bespoke workflow system called Case Viewer, which provides a comprehensive electronic work environment for lawyers. The firm was also an early adopter of the BlackBerry® solution. It uses a BlackBerry® Enterprise Server for Microsoft® Exchange.

The Challenge

Freeth Cartwright's fee earners are frequently away from the office visiting clients, and rely heavily on dictation to get work moving and instructions actioned. The cassette tape recorders being used were impractically heavy and it was difficult to edit recordings. Critically, the tapes had to be physically delivered back to the support team in the office which lead to delays in workflow and billing. Moreover, if the tapes were lost, anyone could listen to the recordings, which was a security concern for the firm.

The success of the BlackBerry solution for email inspired the firm to see if it could be used for mobile dictation. Chris Nicholson, IT Manager at Freeth Cartwright, knew what he was looking for: a system that would allow fee-earners to dictate on case matters from their BlackBerry® smartphones when working from locations where it was not possible or convenient to use their laptops.

The Solution

After market investigation, Nicholson decided to test the nFlow Mobile for BlackBerry digital dictation solution. His research also showed that it would be straightforward for his team to integrate the application into Case Viewer. In addition, the solution was licensed on a per-device basis, instead of being monthly or subscription-based, and didn't require costly consultancy fees or additional infrastructure costs.

Benefits

Almost immediate ROI

Fast and secure

Mobile digital dictation

Improved time recording

Better client service

¹ Legal Technology Awards 2008

"Using nFlow Mobile on the BlackBerry smartphone, the fee-earner can record multiple dictations when they are travelling and out of the office. When they're finished, they simply hit the send button. The dictation is instantly sent to the nFlow Gateway installed on the Exchange server where it is routed to the desired recipient, most often a secretary for transcription and filing in Case Viewer," says Nicholson. The BlackBerry application provides features such as pause recording, playback, rewind, forward, insert, overwrite, save as draft, title and mark as urgent.

Nicholson organised a pilot of the solution with a handful of the firm's fee-earners. The pilot began in September 2008 and was a resounding success. "The feedback from the pilot was very good. It met the needs of the fee-earners in what they expected from a digital dictation system." Based on these results, Nicholson began rolling out the solution across the firm's five sites. Each user receives a short training session that explains the key functionality of the solution.

The Benefits

Freeth Cartwright is committed to excellence in client service and efficient business processes that optimise productivity. Dictation is a key function within the firm. nFlow Mobile for BlackBerry smartphones has sped up and secured the dictation workflow.

"Within a minute of a fee-earner completing a transcription, say, on the train, the secretary can have it on the screen, ready to transcribe. It's just as immediate as if the fee-earner was sitting next to them in the office." With analogue cassettes, it would take 24 hours on average for a dictation to arrive back in the office and be transcribed.

The new solution also "means better service for our clients because we're turning these dictations around much faster," says Nicholson. This in turn also leads to timelier billing.

According to Nicholson's calculations, the nFlow Mobile for BlackBerry pays for itself with the first dictation. The one-time fee for nFlow is the equivalent of a few minutes of a fee-earner's time. "One hour of a standard associate's charge-out rate buys at least five one-time licences." He goes on to add that, "as we'd already made the original investment in the BlackBerry solution, the addition of nFlow was a small incremental cost compared to the time it would save the fee-earners."

The sound quality on the nFlow solution is good, the feedback from the secretaries who do the transcription has been excellent. In addition, the sound files are compressed, so they don't put pressure on the Exchange server. "The average file size is around 2MB, which is very manageable," says Nicholson.

In addition, if a BlackBerry smartphone goes missing, there's no risk that someone will be able to listen to the recordings. Like the rest of the data stored on the smartphones, draft dictations are protected by the smartphone's built-in password authentication and encryption. Completed dictations are encrypted during transmission between the BlackBerry Enterprise Server and the BlackBerry smartphone before being erased from the smartphone's memory.

Finally, the BlackBerry solution with nFlow Mobile has improved time recording. "Effectively, a digital dictation is time captured as a file. So if the recording is 20 minutes long, that can be apportioned against the fee-earners charge-out rate. Whereas when you've got an analogue tape, you can't really make a good judgement about how long that recording is, unless you sit there with a stopwatch," explains Nicholson.

Within just a few months of the pilot, the nFlow Mobile for BlackBerry solution has proved to be a simple-to-implement solution with a rapid ROI, that provides value-added functionality and increases the productivity of Freeth Cartwright's fee-earners.

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Chris Nicholson
IT Manager
at Freeth Cartwright

www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies