



Overview

- ◆ **Firm:** Whatley Lane
- ◆ **Area of Business:** General practice, individual and business
- ◆ **Location/s:** Newmarket, East Anglia

Business Challenges

- ◆ Competitiveness in the legal marketplace
- ◆ Ever increasing fixed costs
- ◆ Client expectations regarding the cost & efficiency of their law firm

Objectives

- ◆ Remove process bottlenecks to maximise efficiency & remain competitive
- ◆ Manage fixed costs effectively through the use of I.T. and outsourcing
- ◆ Continuously improve service to clients



“Our productivity is higher, our fixed costs are proportionately lower and we no longer depend on the expensive one fee earner to one secretary support model.”

*Rob Dellow,
Partner*



Challenge

Whatley Lane is a general practice based in East Anglia with a specialism in equine and bloodstock law. It prides itself on its ability to offer clients excellent service at competitive rates and is always on the lookout for new measures which will allow it to make the efficiencies that keep it competitive.

It also recognises its responsibility to deliver the best possible service at all times so finding strategies to continuously improve its quality of service is important to the firm's long-term plans.

As a result Whatley Lane began considering how it could use I.T. and outsourcing as a means of augmenting its office support services without increasing fixed costs.

Partner Rob Dellow explains: “The costs associated with running a legal business have increased exponentially in recent times so a key part of staying competitive involves keeping on top of costs.

“The fact that this cost consciousness has also come out in a time when clients are expecting better and more responsive services from their lawyers than ever before is also a significant challenge. Fundamentally, a client's good opinion of their law firm nowadays rests on how efficient they are. They expect us to be able to get letters out on time and to process documents properly.

“Happily this is an area where we recognise improving processes through proper use of technology and systems can play a large part in providing a responsive, client-friendly service.”

Solution

Consequently, Whatley Lane opted for nFlow's and Voicepath's integrated digital dictation and transcription outsourcing solution to make these cost savings and efficiency improvements.

Rob adds: “It's true to say that the main draw to us of the Voicepath and nFlow solution was integration. It meant we could feel the benefits of both services quickly.”

Voicepath general manager, Richard Bate, comments: “Firms have been using digital dictation for a number of years as a means of streamlining internal workflow. Transcription outsourcing then offers significant added value by allowing a firm to further speed up day-to-day document production and deal more efficiently with the natural peaks and troughs of a legal business.”

Rob continues: “Because both companies were able to liaise with our own IT support the implementation process was pretty painless. This allowed us to concentrate on training fee earners and support staff on how to get the best out of the system.”

The nFlow digital dictation aspect of the solution allows Whatley Lane to make significant internal time and efficiency savings as transcription can be shared out equitably among support staff, smoothing out peaks and troughs in demand.

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“Transcription outsourcing allows me to have them [dictations] transcribed whenever I need them. I no longer have to rely on there being secretaries in the office...”

*Michael Whatley,
Senior Partner*

The outsourced transcription part of the solution then acts essentially as an additional secretary to whom work can be directed. The nFlow system sends the dictation to Voicepath where it is automatically allocated to a teleworker for typing, following which the document is proofed and returned.

The system is also set up to automatically log the status of each job which means Whatley Lane can track the progress of outsourced work from start to finish.

nFlow sales and marketing director, Rob Lancashire, explains: “Ensuring jobs are logged in this way is key to making a success of outsourcing. This level of integration is unique among digital dictation and outsourcing providers.”

Benefits

Whatley Lane has now rolled out its use across the firm and the benefits are already being felt both operationally and culturally.

Rob Dellow adds: “The convenience of sending a dictation for outsourced transcription and getting a completed document back an hour or two later is immense.”

In fact the system has also had some unexpected effects for the firm. Rob continues: “When we first announced we were going ahead with the installation, some staff were more enthusiastic than others. As it turns out, however, the people who thought they would use it the least before are using it most frequently now.”

A case in point is the firm’s senior partner, Michael Whatley, who uses the system for its speed and convenience. He comments: “I find transcription outsourcing allows me to dictate documents and have them transcribed whenever I need them. I no longer have to rely on there being secretaries in the office, and the fact I know documents will be returned in a set time frame is very useful.”

The system has also allowed the firm to make significant efficiencies. Rob comments: “We have been able to restructure our teams and this has benefited the business in that we can now work on a model where there are a greater proportion of fee earners to administration staff. The effect is that our productivity is higher, our fixed costs are proportionally lower and we no longer depend on the expensive one fee earner to one secretary support model.

“In fact we are able to deploy secretaries more usefully as administrators, which makes them better value than if they were primarily typists.”

Testimonial

And the effects have also had a positive effect on working culture. Rob concludes: “It has certainly allowed us to change our working environment for the better. For one thing, our internal support staff are no longer hemmed in by tapes, nor are they under pressure to turn transcriptions around.

“Before implementing the system, the challenge of dealing with the natural peaks and troughs that occur here could mean testing times for fee earners and support staff alike. Now, however, we have the infrastructure to cope with exceptional situations as they arise, and the office is a much happier place for it.

“We have certainly felt the benefit of the Voicepath and nFlow system on a number of levels, and are confident it is helping the firm keep abreast of developments in a rapidly changing market.”