

A Dragon NaturallySpeaking Deployment at the Social Security Administration Increases Productivity and Reduces Costs

Lowering the Time and Costs of Legal Documentation

Everyone knows that long delays in communication with government agencies are inconvenient and expensive for citizens needing answers. What is less often talked about, but equally true, is that lengthy delays are also expensive for the agencies themselves. The reason why has to do with how information is processed.

One example is the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) processing of administrative appeals. When a social security beneficiary believes that their benefits are being paid incorrectly, they file an appeal with the SSA. Special judges who are experts in social security benefits law then examine the appeal and make a ruling. In the past, it took an average of 44 days after the appeal was filed for the finished ruling to be delivered. The reason for this delay was that in order to deliver the finished ruling, the judge would dictate their findings into a recording device. That recording was then routed to an administrative resource that would transcribe it, and send it back to the judge for verification. Since there were finite administrative resources, the transcription process became a "bottleneck," leading to the long delays. In addition to the delays, these administrative resources carry a large cost: in 2001 alone, they cost taxpayers over \$1,000,000.

In an effort to lower those costs and improve the turnaround time associated with the delivery of judge's rulings, the SSA began a search for technology that could automate the process by which rulings get documented.

One of the solutions the SSA chose to evaluate was ScanSoft's Dragon NaturallySpeaking®. Dragon NaturallySpeaking, the world's best selling speech recognition software, automatically transcribes speech at speeds of up to 160 words per minute and with accuracy rates as high as 99%.

Using Dragon NaturallySpeaking, judges can dictate their rulings directly into PC workstations and have the transcriptions automatically and instantly generated. The judge then has the option to make any required changes immediately and forward the completed ruling, or to route the draft transcript generated by Dragon NaturallySpeaking to an administrative resource who can simultaneously listen to the original recording and make any necessary changes.

The initial results of using Dragon NaturallySpeaking software were extremely exciting. Not only were resource allocation costs associated with transcription reduced by over \$500,000, but the average turnaround time of rulings improved from 44 days to 22 days – a savings of more than three full weeks. The SSA was so pleased with the results, that they deployed the Dragon NaturallySpeaking solution agency-wide, thereby saving valuable taxpayer dollars and improving the service they provide to social security beneficiaries. An additional benefit cited was an improvement in the quality of the rulings, since judges can review transcripts for any necessary changes right after dictating when the specifics of the case are still fresh in their minds.

Challenge: Increasing time and costs to document legal rulings on administrative appeals of social security benefits

Strategy: Implement Dragon NaturallySpeaking software.

Results: Ruling turnaround twice as fast and substantially reduced reliance on transcriptionists.

The SSA also noted that Dragon NaturallySpeaking was helpful to the people in the agency who suffer from disabilities. Dragon NaturallySpeaking is section 508 approved for use by people with disabilities because it allows for complete hands free use of a PC.

The benefits, both in time and cost savings, generated by the SSA through Dragon NaturallySpeaking clearly demonstrate the type of savings any legal organization can achieve with this solution. Whether it is a government agency, a law firm, or the in-house counsel at a major corporation, Dragon NaturallySpeaking can streamline the documentation process through automation technology. The results are happier customers, lower costs and improved productivity.

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