

How Speech Recognition and a Paperless Office Saved A Solo Attorney \$50,000 a Year!

As described in "Save \$50,000 a Year: Go Digital!," Law Technology News, July 2002, Milton Jones is a solo practitioner in College Park, GA specializing in consumer bankruptcy. He serves as a Chapter 7 trustee for the court, and his wife Mary is the office manager.

In 1977, the Electronic Case Filing (ECF) Project began in the Northern District of Georgia, permitting electronic filing of a case without paper copy. As one of the first consumer bankruptcy firms to participate, Jones completed the transition to Windows and ECF by October 1999.

How did the firm save from the new technology? Considerable time was saved because personnel did not have to stand in line at the clerk's office to submit or request pleadings. The firm also began using Dragon NaturallySpeaking. "We found that it cut down on the things we needed to send to the typing paralegal (i.e., letters, briefs, memorandum, input of initial case information, etc.) to the point when the paralegal left for another job, there was no need to replace him." Savings: \$2,800 monthly.

The firm also purchased a voice mail system, and did not answer the phone several times a day. "We could then return the phone calls in batches, saving tremendous amount of time."

The firm purchased a scanner at the end of 2000 and converted all the paper files in the office into electronic documents by early 2001. Now files and documents can easily be located. "Before if a document was misfiled it was lost forever."

As a result of automating workflow, the other paralegal's position was reduced to part-time, saving about \$1,000 monthly. Since there were less paper files, the firm moved into a smaller space in the same building, and rented its older larger space to another lawyer. This reduced rent from about \$2,000 to \$600 a month.

Paper/copier costs decreased to about \$175 monthly. Storage at \$50 monthly was completely eliminated. In addition to the expense of the new equipment and software, the firm increased contractor work to cover confirmation and motion hearings. This rose from about \$1,000 to \$1,700 monthly.

By 2002, the yearly savings came to \$54,900. Jones explained, "So, should you convert your practice to digital? You would be crazy not to. But prepared, the transition will not be simple or pain-free. However, we can say after the transition you will have a more efficient practice and more money left over at the end of your month."

File management, document assembly, time tracking, automated time and billing, speech recognition, and other digital technology all can substantially improve a solo practitioner's bottom line. And if you want a "paperless office" for your law practice, consider Custom Speech USA™, the number one provider of cost effective work management and speech recognition solutions for the legal profession.

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