

Streamlined reporting delivers big efficiency gains

Rogers Police Department speeds document turnaround, improves report quality and reduces overtime costs with Nuance's voice recognition software.

Challenge

- Understaffed police department sought new ways to drive efficiencies
- Clerical staff had to work significant overtime to keep up with report transcription
- Lack of time for supervisory review affected report detail and accuracy
- Late submission of reports to the County Attorney's office could result in release of defendants

Solution

- Dragon Professional installed on shared desktop computers at the police station
- Officers dictate directly into LETG Report Management System (RMS)
- Officers can also dictate into digital voice recorders on the go

Results

- Clerical staff no longer has to work weekends to keep up with report transcription
- Department significantly cut clerical overtime costs
- Clerical staff can focus on value-added projects
- Officers see report content on screen as they dictate, resulting in improved detail and accuracy
- Streamlined reporting leaves ample time for supervisor review
- No defendants have been released due to late reports since implementing Dragon

The Rogers, Minnesota Police Department, which serves a rapidly growing community of 14,000 residents and the state's second largest commercial base at the junction of Interstate 94 and Highway 101, needed a way to streamline its reporting process in order to reduce clerical overtime, improve report quality, and ensure timely submission of incident reports and case files to the Hennepin County Attorney's office per Minnesota criminal procedure rules.



“We’re understaffed as a police department. Last year we handled just under 20,000 calls for service with just 18 sworn officers. That’s why we’re always looking for ways to increase efficiencies and make taxpayer dollars go further. Dragon helped us do just that by expediting our records flow with fast, accurate dictation. Now officers can spend more time out serving in the community and clerical staff can focus their efforts on added-value tasks.”

Jeffrey Beahen

Chief, Rogers, MN Police Department

The challenge

When Jeffrey Beahen was appointed Chief of Police and Agency Administrator in 2012, one of his first priorities was updating the Rogers Police Department’s reporting processes and technology. “When I first joined the department, everything was done on paper, which meant there was no easy way to track or find things,” explained Beahen. “On top of that, our reporting processes were time-consuming and labor-intensive, too often putting us at risk of missing critical filing deadlines.”

The department’s two-person clerical support staff transcribed reports recorded by police officers or investigators and filed them by specified deadlines. Under the rules of Minnesota criminal procedure, defendants taken into custody must be arraigned in court within 36 hours of arrest. As a result, the clerical staff typically faced a huge backlog of reports that needed to be submitted to the Hennepin County Attorney’s office in Minneapolis by 9:00 a.m. on Monday. If the appropriate reports are not submitted in time to allow for criminal complaint preparation, law dictates that defendants in custody must be released.

“To handle the report backlog, clerical staff would often have to come in on Sundays to transcribe recordings and put together case files,” added Beahen. “If they didn’t work weekends, they might come in on Monday morning and have 35-40 reports to transcribe and submit by 9:00 a.m.”

Reliance on weekend overtime not only drove up clerical costs and affected morale, but it left little time for supervisors to review reports. “We were under such pressure to get the reports transcribed and sent downtown that there wasn’t time for a sergeant or myself to look at the officers’ reports to see if any elements were missing,” said Beahen. “We didn’t have that critical layer of quality control.”

The solution

Beahen decided to implement Dragon® Professional voice recognition software from Nuance to streamline the reporting process and increase overall department efficiencies. “I had looked at voice recognition several years earlier when I was with another department, so I knew the kind of value it could add,” explained Beahen. “But when I saw a Dragon demo, I was amazed at how far the technology had come in terms of speed and accuracy.”

Working with Grabar Voice and Data, Inc., a Nuance value-added reseller, Rogers Police Department purchased 21 Dragon Professional licenses for its shared desktop computers. Now police officers can dictate directly into the department’s LETG Record Management System (RMS) and see their words appear on the screen—up to three times faster than typing—as they speak. Roaming user profiles allow officers to use any available computer at the station with full access to their custom vocabulary and voice shortcuts. Alternatively, they can dictate into Olympus® digital voice recorders while out in the field and Dragon will automatically transcribe the audio files when they connect to one of the computers back at the station.

“Seeing content on the screen as they dictate is helping the officers produce more thorough and accurate reports,” commented Beahen. “They’re able to review, edit and fill in missing details as they go, which makes a big difference.”

Dragon works seamlessly with the department’s RMS without requiring custom integration. The department worked with Grabar to set up templates for each report type to ensure proper and consistent formatting. Because Dragon lets users dictate text anywhere they would normally type, officers can fill in fields by voice to get their reports done in record time. Voice shortcuts like “Insert Opening Paragraph” allow them to insert

boilerplate text with a simple spoken command for added speed and efficiency. Officers notify their supervisor through the RMS that a report is done and ready for review. Once the supervisor checks and approves the content, the clerical staff simply packages the incident report or case file and sends it to the Hennepin County Attorney's office electronically.

Although Dragon delivers up to 99 percent recognition accuracy right out of the box, the department has customized the vocabulary, adding law enforcement acronyms like HGN (horizontal gaze nystagmus) and DMT (DataMaster breathalyzer) and crime scene terminology like lividity and mottling to achieve even better recognition results.

In addition to using Dragon for report creation, department personnel use the software for email, letters, meeting minutes and other routine administrative tasks that would previously involve typing to save time and increase productivity.

"These days everyone is used to interacting with devices by voice—whether it's their phone, tablet, or in-car systems—so incorporating Dragon into our workflow was easy and painless," said Beahen. "After just a couple of hours of training, our officers were off and running with the software, and getting great results."

The results

Thanks to Dragon, the Rogers Police Department has been able to speed document turnaround and improve report quality, both of which help move criminal proceedings forward and bring more offenders to justice.

"By cutting transcription out of the process, we now have all our reports packaged and submitted by 8:15 on Monday morning, so there's no time crunch," said Beahen. "The Hennepin County Attorney's office is thrilled that they're getting the reports in plenty of time to prepare the criminal

complaints and start court appearances as early as 10:15 a.m. We haven't had a defendant released as a result of late paperwork since we started using Dragon."

Dragon has also delivered significant cost savings, an important benefit as the city of Rogers seeks to stretch budget dollars and do more with less. On average, the department was paying one of its two clerical staff to come in and work between six and eight hours each Sunday at overtime pay. On top of that, the clerical workers were putting in an additional 15 hours of overtime a week just to keep up with the transcription backlog. By implementing Dragon, the department was able to eliminate about 23 hours of overtime per week, which adds up to significant savings over the course of a year.

"I had initially put in a request for a third clerical support position in 2016, but once we started using Dragon I no longer needed the additional headcount," commented Beahen. "The City Council was pleased when I canceled that position because it allowed them to re-allocate the funds to other needed services."

Now that the department's clerical support staff are no longer bogged down with transcription, Chief Beahen has been able to shift their focus to other important projects that benefit the department and the community. "Each clerical employee now has an additional 30 or so hours a week to work on projects like web-based crime prevention programs and data analysis that are helping us better protect and serve the people of Rogers."

"The pilot feedback validated that Dragon can significantly improve caseworker productivity," concluded Beerits. "The Dragon roll-out process, incorporating multiple training sessions and ongoing support, greatly facilitated user adoption and helped ensure the pilot's success."

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