



Philips SpeechExec Enterprise Helps Police Capture Benefits of Improved Dictation Solution

Duluth, Minnesota

The Police Department of Duluth, Minnesota, trying to do more with fewer people, had postponed what it knew would be resisted by those slow to adapt to change. However, by 2009 it was past time to upgrade its out-dated dictation, transcription and records management processes. With 150 officers spread across three facilities - a downtown substation, a west station and headquarters - the mere logistics of complying with the official transcription processes were putting enormous strain on people's time and taking too long to complete.

The department needed to improve productivity and turnaround time before it affected the ability to serve its public. To prevent that it turned to Philips for the solutions and assistance that would transform what was perceived as a dreaded change into new, streamlined capabilities everyone enthusiastically embraced for drastic improvements in every area of the department.

"They say cops fear change," says Gayle Holton, Sergeant, Duluth Police Department, "but for our 150-member police force, facing the change to Philips dictation technology was a painless process that was well worth its advantages." This change brought the department's capabilities for recording, dictation and records management out of the audio cassette age and into the efficiencies of Philips Dictation Solutions' up-to-date digital world.

For years, the Duluth police officers had been tape recording their interviews and dictating reports on a variety of microcassettes - despite obvious drawbacks:

- Poor quality of tape recordings
- Need to turn cassettes every 30 minutes
- Time-consuming copying and official processing
- Required transcription and distribution
- Cost of tapes and people to transcribe
- Limited accessibility of recordings
- Lengthy turnaround times
- Inadequate tracking and storage systems

Looking to Philips as a market leader

The department, recognizing it needed a better recording and dictation system, began a six-month evaluation process in June 2009. After developing specs and listening to a number of vendor presentations, the team selected Philips SpeechExec Enterprise solution with Digital Pocket Memo 9500 series digital recorders. The roll-out was managed by the Philips certified dealer Chader Voice Technology.

"Philips scored top with us for several reasons. We liked its quality equipment, simplicity and ease of learning and good value," Holton says. "We also especially appreciated that the SpeechExec Enterprise software allowed recordings to be submitted and accessed at any time by authorized users from computers across the department regardless of their station location." He notes that this reduces work for administrative staff and trips to headquarters for the officers.

Software installation and user training was a smooth transition

Once the purchase decision was made, no time was lost in getting the system up and running for the entire department by mid-December. The software was installed quickly in two days, and all four crews - about 120 people - were trained in 30-minute sessions after their shifts across two days.

Chader Voice Technology and Philips professionals assisted with the training, providing a PowerPoint presentation and Quick Reference Guides for the new users to follow at each work station. The officers quickly adapted to using the recorders they found intuitive with the familiar button on the side. Whether fearful or not, the training and the ultimate transition proved uneventful and painless.



Philips Digital Pocket Memo 9500 and SpeechExec Enterprise Software

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“The improvements have been dramatic and the efficiencies have touched every area of the department.”

Gayle Holton, Sergeant, Duluth Police Department



Sergeant Gayle Holton

Big dictation changes, means big benefits across the board

After only two months, all Duluth police bureaus, stationed across three buildings, have experienced dramatic improvements:

- Officers' time to process recordings vastly reduced
- Turnaround processing time is almost immediate
- Quality of recording is far clearer
- Tape-turning interruptions eliminated
- Recordings always available in system
- Conversations can be recorded secretly
- Distribution, storage and access is electronic and easy
- Transcriptionists are free for other assignments

Digital recording saves hours of time and unnecessary trips

“The results have been remarkable,” Holton says. “A labor-intensive process that once took at least one hour of an investigators' time, is now accomplished very quickly.” Before the Philips system went into use, police officers were required to make copies of their cassette tapes in real time, find an envelope and take it or be sure it got to headquarters where it was transcribed, stored and accessed.

Now officers simply download their digitally recorded interviews and dictated ticket reports into the software in a simple process, which

makes them immediately accessible for listening by password users at headquarters and all other Duluth police computer locations.

Digital Pocket Memo provides clearer quality of recording

There were times before Philips when it was impossible for police transcriptions to hear what was actually recorded on the old cassette tapes due to fluctuation in volume, mumbled words, worn out equipment or other problems. This made it impossible for them to fully document what was actually said in the interview. Microphones in Philips' Digital Pocket Memo recorders pick up every word, so transcriptionists now easily understand and capture the entire conversation word for word.

“Clarity is particularly important when police wants to record a conversation without the other party's knowledge,” Holton said. “And, yes, it's legal.” Now investigators are not hindered by the 30-minute time constraint before a tape machine's obvious mechanical click reveals that the conversation is being recorded. “There is little or no distortion even when recording from inside a pocket. Clearer quality lets us do better police work,” he adds.



“A labor-intensive process that once took at least one hour of an investigators' time and was not completed until 24 hours later is now accomplished in less than two minutes.”

“The two most important differences Philips has made for our department: improved quality of recordings and reduced processing time for our officers.”

Gayle Holton, Sergeant, Duluth Police Department



Sergeant Gayle Holton

Philips SpeechExec Enterprise software improved records management

The department realized it needed to find better storage and a more efficient way to track its dictation files. “One of the motivating factors for upgrading our dictation and transcription processes,” Holton admits, “was to get rid of the shoeboxes full of old cassette tapes stored in our kitchen area.”

Access to recent tapes was also problematic. Previously if anyone needed to listen to a tape, they had to come to headquarters, go to the Evidence Room and either copy it or sign it out. “It’s much more efficient now that recordings are saved and easy to find in the software system,” Holton says. “They’re readily available whenever necessary - without making a trip to headquarters.”

Philips digital recordings can also be emailed, enabling staff to respond to lawyer and court requests in a timelier manner. The department also recently acquired Philips’ statistics module and after its implementation looks forward to easier, more accurate tracking and auditing.

The right solution made everyone’s job easier

“The efficiencies have touched every area,” Holton states, “and the timeliness of our services has greatly improved, making everyone more productive.”

Already short-handed, no department positions were lost, but rather some employees’ time was freed so they could be assigned to other important activities.

“While initial reaction to the announced change may have been ‘Now what?’” Holton explains, “there has been only positive feedback from the police force. They love it.”

In fact, he reports that one officer, known as a complainer, was heard to say, “Thank Goodness for digital recorders! Now we don’t have to deal with copying tapes and taking envelopes to headquarters anymore.” This created the general consensus among departmental leadership: If the complainer likes the change to Philips dictation solutions, it must be working well for everyone.



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