

Legal IT/Philips' Survey: The rise of the digital dictators

This article was written for the Liquid Discussions section the Neil Cameron Group Consulting website (www.neilcameronconsulting.com) in response to an article in the September 2003 issue of [Legal IT](#) called "Survey: The rise of the digital dictators".

In the September 2003 issue of [Legal IT](#) under "Survey: The rise of the digital dictators", Des Cahill reports on the results of the recent Legal IT/Philips survey on the use of digital dictation machines in the legal marketplace. The headline is:

"If one follows the old saying that the best inventions are the simplest ones, digital dictation would seem to be the current favourite."

The article starts: "It is sometimes easy to think of IT investment decisions as all being either expensive upgrades of existing hardware and software or even more expensive roll-outs of new equipment. As an example of the old saying that the best inventions are the simplest ones, digital dictation would seem to be the current favourite."

In a later section of the article about digital dictation in the broader context, the writer leads into a quote from me by saying:

"For the technology commentators and consultants outside the law, digital dictation is just a small step on the way to the wider goal of speech recognition. For them the implementation of the new technology only involves the abandoning of the physical tape for the 'virtual' tape...As **Tim Travers**, puts it, "One of the next interesting developments will be how quickly firms enhance their existing digital dictation capability with speech recognition capability. Although the potential for increases in productivity are often realised and are not to be ignored, implementation of digital dictation involves little actual change of working practice, since analogue 'tapes' are simply being substituted by digital tapes or files. The typing of the files or the carrying out of instructions on the files remains an overhead. However, the ability for lawyers to 'communicate' with the various applications on their desktop by speech progressively over time would certainly transform any legal practice."."

As the article goes on to say, "maybe lawyers are not ready for this big a change in their working habits." We agree, the widespread use of speech technologies in the legal market beyond digital dictation is into the future, but nevertheless it should remain part of a firm's longer-term strategy, because its successful deployment could both enhance client service delivery and raise profitability.

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