

Irwin mitchell

Business



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BUSTER**

Company: Speech Recognition Company LtdCustomer: Irwin

MitchellSubmitted by: Media LinkIrwin Mitchell, the fast expanding law firm with over 600 fee earners and 74 partners, is rolling out the use of speech recognition software in its major offices in London, Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield. Irwin Mitchell has partnered with The Speech Recognition Company (SRC) of London, the UK's leading provider of speech recognition solutions, to implement a successful project, resulting in measurable benefits.

commercial Property Lawyer and Partner, Martyn Holland, based at the Irwin Mitchell Sheffield practice, is particularly positive about the speech implementation, " It's fabulous!" he enthuses, adding, " Maybe that's a bit OTT, but it is at last sufficiently accurate and fast to allow serious use in a legal environment – possibly for the first time. I constantly get around 97% accuracy from it and use it regularly for letters, faxes, e-mails etc, particularly after hours when secretarial support is gone. I recently did an article for IMpact, which I just dictated straight in." Irwin Mitchell, which recently won The Lawyer Annual Award for Client Care, believes that speech recognition is helping its strategy of putting the client first. Over 75 lawyers are already using a speech recognition solution built by SRC, consisting of a bespoke software vocabulary coupled with the Dragon NaturallySpeaking engine.

The SRC solution will be extended to 150 lawyers by the end of the year, rising to 300 by July 2001. According to IT Director, Richard Hodgkinson, immediate benefits include the ability for fee earners to get documents to clients quicker than before, " because fee earners can create and complete documents themselves, without waiting for someone to type the document

for them.” Irwin Mitchell has invested over £100k with SRC in the project to date. Richard Hodgkinson added that, “ the solution delivered by SRC will provide the quickest payback of any technology investment we have ever made, once we are up to speed.” The firm is investing heavily in technology to win new clients by delivering a fast, efficient, cost effective service. For example, in addition to speech technology, the firm also uses case management systems, encompassing document management, with Axxia Systems Case Manager and Legis.

“ We believe that our commitment to technology and top quality advice underpins our ability to win new clients. Our investment in speech recognition is an important part of this winning formula,” he continued. Mr. Hodgkinson went on to explain that during 1999 the firm ran a speech recognition project with 20 lawyers. The programme was successful but never quite reached the critical mass necessary to become mainstream. In early 2000, Ian Kirton, the Irwin Mitchell SRC Account Manager, suggested some improvements to the project.

These recommendations included the adoption of the Dragon NaturallySpeaking system and the creation of a bespoke software vocabulary. Richard Hodgkinson agreed that any possible steps to increase system accuracy and ease-of-use should be taken. SRC then built a solution for Irwin Mitchell based around the Dragon speech recognition system ‘ engine.’” Much of the success with the system can, however, be attributed to the specialist skills and services provided by SRC,” he explained. An “ Irwin Mitchell” bespoke vocabulary was created through the analysis of

approximately seven million words of textual documents supplied by the Corporate Services, Personal Injury and Private Client departments.

This vocabulary complements the basic speech system by already ‘knowing’ Irwin Mitchell jargon, client names, partner’s names and the particular legal terminology unique to the firm.” A vocabulary that matches the client’s needs is absolutely vital,” says Kirton. He explains that there are three methods of creating a client-specific vocabulary from the standard “journalists” vocabulary that is supplied off-the-shelf. The first is to allow each speech user to correct mistakes, one by one, until the system has learned which words will be used and how each user constructs sentences. This is rather time-consuming and means each speech user will have to accept poor initial accuracy and a steep learning curve.

The second is to run a few thousand words of client documentation through the vocabulary building tool. This enhances the vocabulary and begins to tailor the system to the client. The third, and by far the most effective, is to build a bespoke vocabulary, which was done for Irwin Mitchell. According to Kirton, the impact of this vocabulary has been instrumental in providing each fee earner with a system that has very high initial accuracy.” It gives the new user a system that would have taken weeks, if not months, to create any other way,” stated Richard Hodkinson.

Macros and voice templates have been created and the system has been integrated to complement technologies such as case management.

According to Richard Hodkinson, “ the use of SRC’s skills to deliver and project manage a solution has been crucial.”” More than with other office

applications, it is essential to use specialist skills to implement speech technologies. I do not recommend that other firms try to do it on their own,” he says. The project has been described as “ en route to being a complete success” by Mr.

Hodkinson, who added that, “ lawyers not currently involved in the programme have been knocking on my door asking for their teams to be given the speech software.” Colin Howman, joint managing director of SRC, believes that speech technology is now appropriate for all the top 50 law firms.” We are achieving significant success in the legal sector, founded on our years of experience in delivering speech solutions, together with the innovative and unique services that we offer.” He added that “ SRC is the only company to have developed bespoke vocabulary building tools for the legal sector.” But perhaps the last word on the success of the SRC implementation should go to Irwin Mitchell’s Martyn Holland, “ Brilliant,” he concludes.