

Digital voice recording devices save time, work, while offering a higher degree of accuracy

By Liz Lipton

A growing number of lawyers are using digital voice recording. "In fact, 37 percent of TechnoLawyer.com's (www.technolawyer.com) 14,000 subscribers have expressed interest in dictation and speech recognition," reported publisher Neil J. Squillante.

Typical applications

- Lawyer Enrico Schaefer, an independent practitioner in Traverse City, Mich., and author of the blog, The Greatest American Lawyer (<http://greatestamericanlawyer.typepad.com>) dictates into his Philips 9350 recorder. He also uses a Philips SpeechMike microphone to record directly into the Quikscribe Recorder software on his laptop.

With his Quikscribe Recorder, he can cut and paste text, spreadsheets, images (including screenshots) documents, templates, e-mail addresses, URLs, etc., into audio files. When the

audio file is played in Quikscribe Player, these insertions appear as markers and sound alerts. His administrative assistant simply presses CTRL-V to automatically paste the contents of the marker into the transcription document.

Also, Schaefer often captures parts of Adobe Acrobat PDF documents and inserts these images into his voice files. Schaefer said, "For example, if I am dictating a brief, and I want to make a reference to the plaintiff's complaint allegations 13 and 14, I simply insert them into my recording. This is very powerful visually because the court automatically knows that is an exact image of exactly what was in the complaint."

Another example: When dictating a motion, Schaefer often inserts portions of a complaint. He also often captures parts of Adobe Acrobat PDF documents and inserts these images

into his voice files. To insert dictation into previously recorded audio files, Schaefer uses Quikscribe Recorder and/or the insert button on his 9350. So instead of typing e-mails, he often simply records a voice file and e-mails it as an attachment.

Furthermore, when using Adobe Acrobat 7.0 software, he inserts dictation into PDF documents. This dictation appears as audio icons at their insertion points. Schaefer said, "When reviewing a client's contract, I dictate after every paragraph my thoughts and concerns. Then I e-mail this to the client and they listen to my comments."

In comparison to sending a five- or 10-page cover letter, he said, "My client has received a lot more information and a lot more detail - at the exact points in the document that we are referring to, and I have done this in one-fifth the time it would have taken me to write a cover letter."

- Angelo A. Paparelli, managing partner, Paparelli & Partners LLP, in Manhattan and Irvine, Calif., records voice files via the firm's Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone system, ShoreTel Advanced Call Manager (Version 6.1). He simply calls his voice mailbox and records via his phone. The audio files are automatically e-mailed as attachments to his e-mail inbox.

For example, using his speakerphone and with the consent of all participants, he records meetings. His staff then e-mails these voice files to off-site employees, among them, many who live in different time zones.

After obtaining their permission, Paparelli records conversations with clients and third parties as well. For example, instead of writing a confirming letter to a client or colleague, Paparelli calls them and they thoroughly discuss the matter. He usually concludes the conversation by asking the client if they concur in or disagree with a particular strategy or approach to resolving a problem.

Compared to writing a confirming letter, Paparelli noted the following advantages: "This is much quicker. My clients have a better understanding of the matter. Follow-up letters may leave out information that at the time is not viewed as significant, but which, at a later date, turns out to be important. A voice recording is more convincing evidence that a matter was actually discussed than an e-mail; and this is more productive than writing

confirming letters because such letters often generate more phone calls or e-mails."

- Alan Behr, a partner in the Manhattan office of Alston & Bird, always carries his lightweight (75 grams with batteries) Olympus DS-660 digital recorder. He often dictates while out of the office. His secretary transcribes his voice files. [Although this particular model Behr uses has been discontinued, many devices with comparable features are readily available.]

Behr designated each of the recorder's folders for a different task. For example, he dictates his handwritten time-entry notes into "Folder A."

To quickly find any point in a recording, Behr presses the recorder's rewind button, which plays eclipsed fragments of his voice going forward; or he downloads the file into Olympus's DSS Player software and drags the software's "sliding pointer" to different points on the time axis. "That's a very handy feature, because with a couple of mouse clicks you can pinpoint any phrase," he said.

Additional resources:

- Two particularly interesting posts on Schaefer's Blog "The Greatest American Lawyer" (<http://greatestamericanlawyer.typepad.com>) are:
 - 1) "Thinking about Digital Dictation" (<http://tinyurl.com/gryuu>).
 - 2) "Enter the Virtual Law Clerks": (<http://tinyurl.com/zvxy1>)

- The Web site for HTH Engineering, Inc. (<http://www.start-stop.com>) features the following informative booklet, *Going Digital*, at (<http://www.startstop.com/pdf/dummmiesguide.pdf>). [Note: HTH Engineering is also in the process of making this booklet available on its Web site.]

- Technolawyer.com (www.technolawyer.com) features several reviews about digital voice recorders and digital voice recording.

- The Web site for Achieve Results (www.ARtraining.com) features articles about voice recognition and related topics. ♦

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