

# Increasing productivity, spending less time on paperwork.

The Cloquet Minnesota Police Department streamlines reporting with Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional.

## Challenge

Relying on two secretaries to transcribe all officers' dictations made it challenging to complete quality police reports in a timely manner. Due to Minnesota's 36 Hour Rule, reporting delays could result in the release of an individual in custody. Incomplete reports could lead to challenges in court. That's why the Cloquet, MN police chief wanted to provide his officers with a productivity tool to speed and ease the reporting process.

## Solution

The Cloquet Police Department purchased Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional licenses for its 21 full-time employees. Officers and detectives are now able to dictate reports directly into templates while details are still fresh in their minds. This enables the department to submit quality reports to the city and county attorneys' offices faster than ever before.

## Results

Thanks to Dragon, the Cloquet Police Department has streamlined its reporting process, enabling them to submit thorough reports with unprecedented speed, respond accurately to media and other inquiries, and reallocate secretarial staff to other critical tasks.

The Cloquet Police Department provides law enforcement services to the citizens and visitors of Cloquet, a city of 12,000 in Carlton County, Minnesota. The department also serves the neighboring city of Scanlon, as well as portions of the Fond du Lac Reservation. The Police Department has an authorized strength of 19 sworn officers and two civilian staff members. These 21 full-time dedicated employees who are responsible for all community-oriented police services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

“As the timeliness and quality of our reports improves, we’re seeing fewer challenges from the attorneys in court.”

**Wade Lamirande**  
Cloquet Police Chief

Dedicated to protecting and serving the communities within his jurisdiction, Cloquet Police Chief Wade Lamirande is always looking for ways to improve efficiencies within his department. He was particularly concerned about the turnaround and quality of police documentation, including crime, incident, arrest, and accident reports, which are sent to the city and county attorneys’ offices. He knew there was a lot riding on the timely submission of high-quality reports, especially given Minnesota’s 36 Hour Rule, which requires that a defendant arrested with a warrant be brought before a judge within 36 hours after being detained.

#### **Keeping up with paperwork**

Within a given shift, Cloquet police officers and detectives may deal with cases ranging from traffic violations and vehicular accidents to assaults, burglaries, and domestic violence. Since the department must document and track the details of each incident, officers and detectives were typically jotting down handwritten notes at the scene and dictating those notes into a handheld recorder as soon as possible thereafter. At the end of their shifts, they would download the audio files and put them in an online folder, where the department secretaries would access and transcribe them into text documents.

“While our secretaries are excellent at transcription, there would often be times when they couldn’t understand what the officer was saying due to background noise or lack of context,” explained Lamirande. “As a result, the secretaries might have to contact the officers about their reports after they get off midnight shift, which could mean calling the officers at their residence and waking them up to try to clarify the reports.”

When the department was racing against the clock to submit reports to the city and county attorneys’ offices per the 36 Hour Rule, there wasn’t always time to have the transcribed reports reviewed by the officers and their supervisors. Without proper review, report quality and thoroughness sometimes suffered.

“Reports that lack critical detail or contain misinformation are far more likely to be challenged in court, making it more difficult to prove probable cause for bringing charges,” explained Lamirande.

There were even a couple of times when the secretary was out after an incident-packed weekend, making it impossible for the department to get all its reports transcribed and submitted within the state-mandated 36 hour period.

“The last thing an alleged victim or victim’s family wants to hear is that a defendant was released from jail because late or insufficient paperwork prevented the attorneys from showing probable cause,” comments Lamirande. “We could still charge the alleged criminal after release, but we’d have to wait until all the reports are done, do a formal complaint, and get him into court that way. Meanwhile he’s back out on the street.”

#### **Seeking a productivity solution**

When Chief Lamirande attended the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association’s Executive Training Institute and Law Enforcement Expo, he stopped by the Chader Business Equipment exhibit to check out their offerings. Jason Brovich, Chader’s voice technology sales representative, showed Lamirande the latest version of Dragon® NaturallySpeaking®, Nuance’s industry-leading speech recognition software for the PC. Dragon enables users to dictate text three times faster than typing—with up to 99% accuracy—and command and control their PC and applications entirely by voice.

“I had been keeping my eye on Dragon for a number of years, thinking that this technology could really improve efficiencies within my department,” said Lamirande. “The software’s recognition accuracy just kept getting better and it had evolved to the point where I thought it could deliver some significant productivity benefits.”

Later that year Lamirande secured the necessary funds and purchased Dragon NaturallySpeaking Professional licenses, along with handheld speech microphones, for his 21 full-time employees—putting the department on the path to more productive reporting.

#### **Preparing for success**

Jason Brovich from Chader Business Equipment helped Lamirande through initial steps designed to optimize Dragon’s speech recognition accuracy right out of the gate. Chief Lamirande worked with an officer and a secretary to customize Dragon’s vocabulary to include unique names, locations, and terminology that are frequently used in the department’s reports.

“We police for the Fond du Lac Reservation where a lot of the Native Americans speak the Ojibwe language, so we needed to add some unique vocabulary to accommodate that,” explained Lamirande. “We also scanned a year’s worth of officers’ reports so Dragon could learn their writing style up front for improved recognition.”

Brovich also helped Lamirande's staff to create macros that bring up formatted Microsoft® Word report templates with a simple voice command. Using these templates, officers would be able to dictate specific incident details into bracketed areas for faster turnaround of professional, consistently formatted reports.

Lamirande was careful to ensure the department provided computers that were powerful enough to run Dragon, since system requirements can impact the software's overall performance. Once Dragon was installed and preparatory tasks were complete, Brovich scheduled an eight-hour training session with an experienced Nuance instructor, Ryan DeLone, who guided all members of the department through the software's rich set of features.

"Part of my job as Chief is to lead change, and I was asking the officers to take greater ownership for their reports," explained Lamirande. "I made the training session mandatory for everyone in the department, and I'm glad I did. The training is essential for increasing adoption and helping users. I also had to reassure the secretaries that we would be reallocating their time to other important tasks as their transcription duties decreased."

#### **Streamlining the reporting process**

With Dragon, Cloquet police officers and detectives are able to return to the station at the end of their shift and dictate field notes directly into a Word document while the details are still fresh in their minds. They review the transcribed documents, correct any errors, and put the files into an online "Completed Dictation" folder. The secretaries open these transcribed documents, proof them one more time, and then cut and paste the text into the appropriate report fields in the SHIELD records management system. This process has enabled the Cloquet Police Department to complete and submit high quality reports with unprecedented speed and ease.

"Mondays used to be a really stressful, hectic time as we scrambled to submit reports to the city and county attorneys' offices in accordance with the 36 Hour Rule," explained Lamirande. "With Dragon, the reports are already done by the officers, and the secretary just has to do a quick read and send them over. That's been a huge plus."

Because Dragon has relieved the two department secretaries of their heavy transcription workload, Lamirande has been

able to reallocate these resources to other critical tasks, like forfeiture splits and reports to state and federal law enforcement agencies.

"I recognized that our secretaries' plates were really full and that transcription was taking up a lot of their bandwidth," added Lamirande. "I wanted them to have time to do other things that the department was falling behind on, and Dragon has made that possible."

Dragon has had some unexpected benefits as well. Because reports are completed so quickly, the administration, officers and investigators are able to review and discuss case files on arrests that have occurred overnight or over the weekend for improved communication and collaboration.

"Before Dragon, we might be able to see that an officer had dictated a domestic incident report, but because it hadn't been transcribed yet, we wouldn't know who was involved or any other details," explained Lamirande. "Now we're able to see the whole report right away and that's been a huge asset."

Immediate availability of detailed reports has also made it much easier for Lamirande and the Deputy Chief to respond to media inquiries in a timely and accurate manner. Because Dragon automatically transcribes the officers' reports at the end of every shift, the department administration is able to access those files—day or night—and review all the case details before making a statement.

#### **Reaching new levels of efficiency**

After using Dragon for only a few months, the Cloquet Police Department has already cut documentation turnaround time and improved report quality. As users' proficiency and comfort level continue to increase, Lamirande expects his staff to start taking advantage of Dragon for email and other tasks, thereby driving greater efficiencies department wide. He is even considering having officers dictate reports directly into laptops within their patrol vehicles at some point in the future.

"As the timeliness and quality of our reports improves, we're seeing fewer challenges from the attorneys in court," concludes Lamirande. "There's a whole new level of professionalism in our reporting process and that's helping us to better protect and serve our communities."

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