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CASE STUDY

Winston Solicitors turn to Threads Intelligent Message Hub

When Leeds law firm Winston Solicitors were looking for a straightforward way to capture and search telephone calls it turned to Threads and its Intelligent Message Hub.

Established in 2002, Winston Solicitors has built a strong reputation acting for individuals and businesses on a range of legal matters. From the outset, this forward-thinking business chose to invest wisely in technology to deliver the very best in client service.

The rapidly expanding practice currently has a team of over 50 staff, and provide legal services to local and

national clients. Areas of law include family, conveyancing, wills, trusts and probate, employment, personal injury and criminal injury, plus, more recently, armed forces compensation claims. This sits alongside commercial legal services for businesses.

What ties the firm together, says Practice Manager Camilla Asher, is the highly personal approach that the whole team embrace in supporting clients through some of the most challenging and rewarding times of their lives.

Winston Solicitors and Threads - a typical month in numbers

- Number of staff with calls recorded: **36**
- Total calls recorded: **4,736**
- Total call time: **268 hours**
- Total calls transcribed: **1,761**
- Total transcription time: **121 hours**
- Total cost for May: **£463** (Monthly subscription; £100; Transcription cost: £363)

Lawyers today have to manage the varied ways clients wish to communicate, from email and telephone to Teams and WhatsApp. Capturing those conversations in a convenient and searchable way can be a challenge.

For written communications and video conferencing where transcripts can be automatically generated, it is a problem relatively easily solved. But it presents a whole new set of challenges for telephone calls.

Lawyers taking client calls are often left with no option but to take written notes, sometimes by a colleague, which are then added to the relevant client file.

“Putting aside the time that can take, time which cannot necessarily be charged to a client, the nuance of the conversation is often difficult if not impossible to capture.”

says Teresa Davidson, Partner and Head of Family at Winston Solicitors.

“Before call recording we were reliant on keeping a detailed note, but this was time consuming and could never be as full as a recording and transcript.”

Golden Threads

That is until Winston Solicitors discovered Threads.

Whilst telephone service providers have long been able to provide recordings of incoming and outgoing calls, recording quality has not been sufficient for speech recognition software to provide accurate written transcripts.

It was when searching for a new telephony system and settling on a system from Sangoma Technologies that Winston Solicitors eventually discovered Threads.

Threads taps directly into the open-source FreePBX exchange increasingly used by VOIP telephony capturing high-quality audio recordings of all

Technical Details

Threads is a Cloud-based service that captures, transcribes, and organises all of a company's digital messages (emails and phone calls) into one easily searchable database. Additionally, phone calls may also be transcribed.

Message meta-data is extracted to automatically and intelligently create a subscriber-specific address book, eliminating the

need to manually maintain directories of contacts and companies.

Threads is able to provide high quality transcriptions by extracting VoIP call and routing data at much greater resolution than most call recording systems. Additionally, by intelligently processing email data, Threads can apply vital context to phone calls and further improve its understanding of speech.

Winston Solicitors phone system is manufactured by Sangoma which utilises the ubiquitous FreePBX deployed in millions of systems in over 220 countries. Threads has its own API developed specifically for use with FreePBX to extract call and routing data.

Threads runs as an Amazon AWS instance and can deploy any Cloud-based speech recognition system that provides a suitable API.

Winston Solicitors calls. Calls are transcribed by Speechmatics.

Transcripts are provided as a Word document, presented in a similar way to a script with call participants clearly identified. Transcripts sit alongside audio files stored on Threads databases with Winston Solicitors lawyers able to read and listen to calls at the same time.

“The accuracy of the transcripts is very good and includes an AI-generated call summary,” says Camilla.

Impact

Winston Solicitors trialled Threads for six months, formally adopting the platform in April 2023. Its impact has been immediately felt.

It has, says Teresa, improved internal efficiency and accuracy straightaway.

“It has removed the time lost to capturing call information for client file notes and more accurately reflects the often-nuanced conversations we have

with clients. We no longer need to double-up on client calls, with assistants joining a call where there is a real benefit and purpose. Above all, there is a comfort factor that client calls are being accurately captured. Put simply, it is making our lives easier.”

There are also risk management benefits too, for Winston Solicitors, with searchable telephone recordings creating a powerful audit trail should the need arise to review a file.

Threads is now firmly part of Winston Solicitors case management practices providing its lawyers and their clients with the peace of mind needed.

Going the extra mile

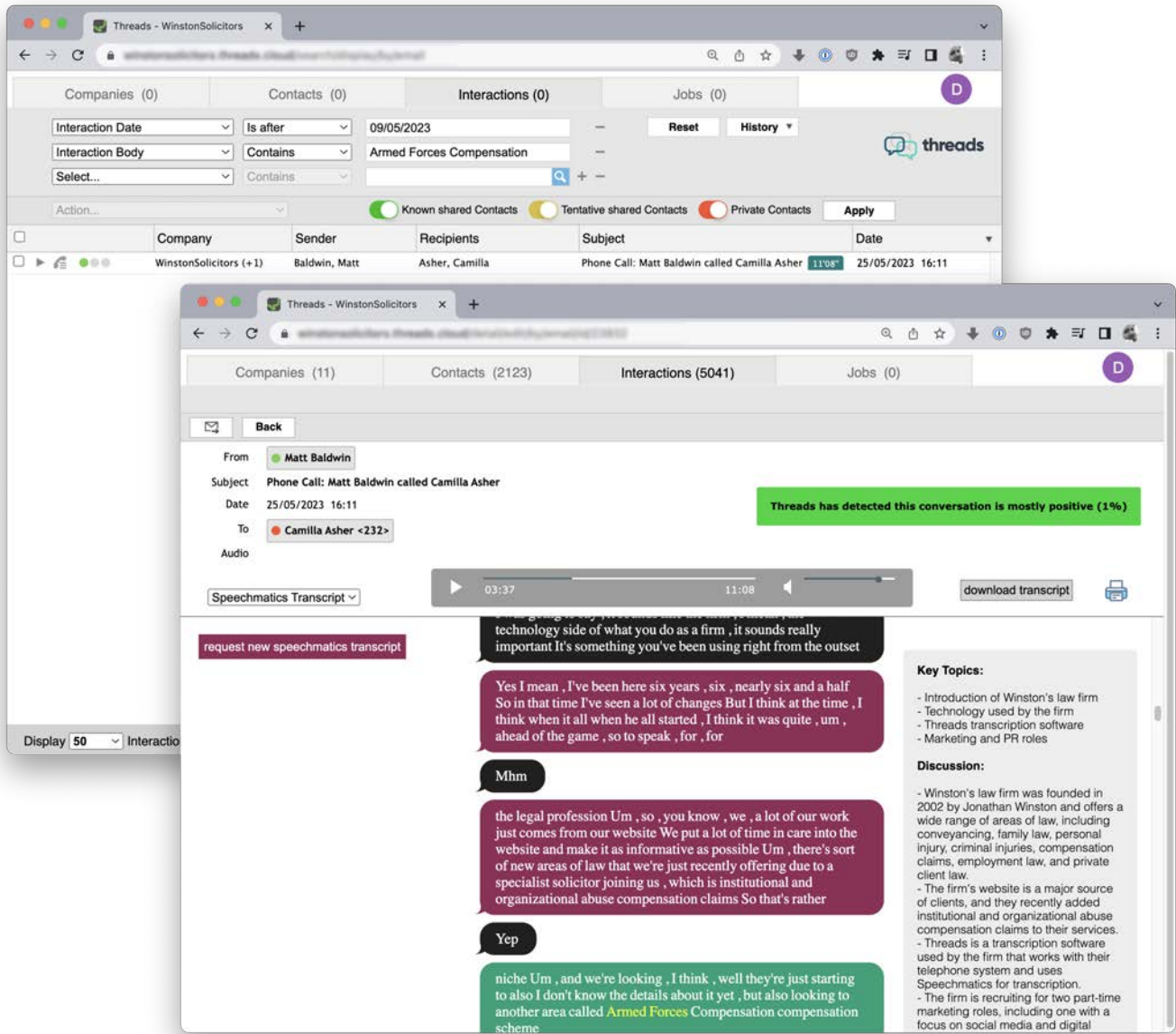
Winston Solicitors deployment of Threads involved several major challenges.

First and foremost was the requirement to integrate Threads with FreePBX and its commercial version, PBXact. By design, Threads ingests calls by monitoring the subscriber’s network (LAN) and extracting VoIP data traffic. This strategy was adopted partly to make Threads

agnostic to the PBX manufacturer, but also because most PBX systems do not store call recordings at sufficient fidelity to provide reliable speech recognition. Supporting FreePBX involved a significant amount of development to analyse call flow.

Second was the need to integrate Threads with Winston Solicitors Practice Management system adopting MS Word format transcription files.

Recognising the enormous worldwide installed base of legal practices and FreePBX users, it was decided to speculatively extend Threads functionality to meet the needs of Winston Solicitors. Since the setup for FreePBX call routing was substantially different from LAN monitoring, and the telephone system was new to Winston Solicitors, this involved Threads in a longer than usual trial period.



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'Threads' is registered trademark
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European Patent 15,709,729.6
(2019) and US Patent 10,733,981
(2020).