

LEGAL INDUSTRY COLLABORATIVE CASE STUDY

Creating vision within a solution

Client Profile:

A large international law firm, founded in early 1900's, specialising in all areas of business law. Its legal teams consist of over 600 specialised lawyers based in Europe, the Americas and Africa.

Driver:

In a law firm any form of information collaboration has to be effective, immediate and very secure. The existing system did cater for this at a basic level, however, the requirements had changed and the need for a customised real time and interactive service had become apparent.

Challenges:

- To provide well defined requirements prior to piloting the solution for the customer
- To ascertain that the solution is effective and easy to use by both internal and external customers
- To provide easy maintenance and support
- Provide fast deployment processes within the firm

"This solution is the best of both worlds, it's open enough to customise and closed enough to be secure."

In both the data and deal room, especially the latter, the facility allowing customers and users to view and edit documents had to exist - they had to be able to add additional documents, storing them in some form of folder hierarchy whilst having access to both public and private discussion threads, provide on-demand and event-based scheduling and provide Whiteboard and annotation tools as well as some sort of alerting procedure. All of the above had to be web-based.

Solutions:

The decision was made to deploy an off-the-shelf solution. The adopted solution provided a content repository where all documents were stored. Its process engine was used for the management of components in the design, execution and tracking of processes and activities. The two components were sufficient to provide the Collaborative Arena.

The internal users of the Collaborative Arena used the solution within the firewall when communicating externally. They were aware that the information was going to be placed inside a DMZ (demilitarised zone) which would and effectively be submitted outside the company. The external users were each provided access via a secure channel (HTTPS) to the Collaborative Arena and would not be able to gain access to information outside the DMZ. Each external party was offered a personalised view into their Collaborative Arena, thereby making it relevant to them.

The deployment of the solution was made easier with its integration into the applications (such as MS Word and the Document Management System) and availability of standard templates. The training focused mainly on the procedures that needed to be following with regard to security and processes.

As with any other industry, the legal industry is no exception when it comes to the need to share information and knowledge.

The need to work collaboratively is of paramount importance within the legal industry, as there are many instances when a number of different practices have to work on a single client matter.

The main elements of a collaborative environment include a well defined library and an interactive workspace which are known as data room and deal room respectively. The former is a collection of documents relating to a certain aspect or view of the law; the latter is more of an enhanced word-processing, e-mailing, and forum system rolled into one, where the customer and the firm would interact on a collection of documents.

