

LEGAL INDUSTRY PORTAL CASE STUDY

vision within a solution

Client Profile:

A medium-sized UK based law firm with some 650 staff in their 3 offices. They service corporate, commercial, public sector and private clients in the UK and abroad with a full range of legal services.

Driver:

The diversity of information required and gathered within the law firm was proving to be a nightmare for the IT department to manage. A solution, or process, was needed that would amalgamate all the sources along with the individual users' personal requirements into a single point of access across the whole firm.

Challenges:

- To understand and consolidate the wide range of requirements for the intranet portal
- To create a simple, effective startup portal that will entice users to use it and contribute towards its further development
- To Ensure that the organisation and users' viewpoints are reflected in a personalised format

“The portal provided us with a single key that helped unlock all information contained throughout our organisation”

Disparate information is precisely that – stored in different information pockets throughout the firm, with different access methods and formats.

The objective behind the introduction of the information portal was to provide the firm with practical and streamlined access to all the knowledge pockets within the firm, whilst enabling each department and practice area to have their own relevant and personalised view of their portal.

The main challenge was to replace all existing smaller intranets with a single Portal, ensure that the portal was easier to navigate as well as providing more information, therefore encouraging users to adopt the new technology.

Solution:

Once the concept of a new Portal was accepted and supported by the business sponsors, the feasibility of developing an in-house portal vs. acquiring one had to be established. Developing an in-house portal would have required an extensive amount of resources, therefore in the long term it was more feasible to purchase a commercially available portal requiring minimum customisation whilst meeting the set criteria.

The firm recognised that to ensure the success of the project, an internal project team had to be assigned, who would be collectively responsible for selecting the product, facilitating the requirements capture, internal communication of the progress and requirements, managing the implementation and finally for the roll-out throughout the firm. The challenge faced by the team was to identify all the disparate data sources that were stored locally and centrally and incorporate them in the new portal. This information was made up of: databases, HTML pages, java-based applications, existing extranets, existing intranets, links to the corporate intranet; other applications - all stored either locally or centrally.

Pilot groups consisting of different practice areas were setup to ensure requirements identified could be delivered via the new portal and that acceptance criteria were met. The initial portal deployment provided users with a single interface to the most commonly used applications and data storage: HR System, Case Management, Document Management, and Marketing database. Upon successful deployment of the first phase, the portal was further developed to incorporate specific information access for each of the user communities as well as a seamless integration with the corporate Intranet and Extranet. The final Portal provided the users with a single secure log-in and access to the firms various systems and repositories, as well as the World Wide Web, thus replacing all other access points on their desktops including the intranet, extranet and internet.

The firm's success in deploying this project was due not only to their systematic and methodical approach, but also in setting realistic expectations that were both quantifiable as well as qualifiable. Equally important to the overall success was an intrinsic knowledge and understanding that this was not simply a technology led project but one that would require: total ownership by business drivers, close participation by the user communities, regular communication, effective internal promotion and marketing of the solution, on-going reviews and user support.