



Case Study

Client | Clarke Willmott

Project | Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003

Portal Solution Saves Law Firm 30 Minutes Loading Time for Every Intranet Document

Clarke Willmott, a top 100 UK law firm, wanted to migrate its existing intranet to a more agile solution to encourage its lawyers to make more use of online resources. Silversands, a Microsoft Gold Partner, was awarded a contract to manage some of the law firm's IT services on an outsourced basis. For the new intranet, it deployed Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003, with Microsoft SQL Server 2000 running on Microsoft Windows Server 2003. Clarke Willmott can now update departmental and legal information across the organisation much more quickly, while its staff can remotely access the intranet any time anywhere. Document management has been simplified and the firm is in full control of its intellectual capital. In future, Clarke Willmott will gain even more benefits from SharePoint Portal Server by using it to deliver collaborative working solutions throughout the law firm.

Situation

Even the best legal practices often fail to make full use of their intellectual capital or efficiently share best practice among their staff. Ensuring that knowledge is shared throughout an organisation is especially important, particularly where it has grown by acquisition and is operating from remote sites miles away from each other.

Law firm Clarke Willmott is a case in point. From its early origins as a small market town practice, it has become a nationally respected law firm. The firm is nationally recognised in the industry sectors of property development, planning, and sport, and has strong complementary services in dispute resolution, commercial services and

wealth management. Clarke Willmott has 51 partners and over 520 staff, including 200 plus fee earners. It operates from three regional centres – Bristol (head office), Taunton, and Southampton.

Four years ago Clarke Willmott outsourced its IT equipment and service provision to an external IT service provider. In 2003, the firm migrated from Microsoft® Windows NT® Server 4.0 operating system and Microsoft Office 97 to the Microsoft Windows Server™ operating system and Microsoft Office XP. Val Fox, IT Manager, Clarke Willmott, says: "The overall outsourcing approach was deemed a success and is a model that Clarke Willmott wishes to continue."

In 2003, the firm also embarked on a re-tendering process for the outsourcing with several leading IT providers including the incumbent. Silversands, a Microsoft Gold Partner, won the contract, which took effect in October, 2003. Additionally, Clarke Willmott wanted its existing intranet migrated to a solution that offered greater functionality, flexibility, and usability.

Fox says: "We needed a user-friendly intranet to replace our legacy system so we could increase our use of the resources and better manage departmental and legal information and documents across the organisation."

Solution overview



Customer profile:

Clarke Willmott is a top 100 UK law firm, with nationally rated expertise in the industry sectors of property development, planning, and sport as well as the legal services of dispute resolution, commercial services, and wealth management.

Situation:

Clarke Willmott wanted to migrate its existing intranet to a user friendly solution that offered more functions, greater flexibility with a low total cost of ownership.

Solution:

Silversands deployed Microsoft® SharePoint® Portal Server 2003, with Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 running on Microsoft Windows Server™ 2003

Software and Services:

Microsoft Active Directory
Microsoft Office FrontPage 2003
Microsoft Office SharePoint Portal Server 2003
Microsoft SQL Server 2000
Microsoft Windows Server 2003 Standard Edition

Partner:

Silversands

Solution

Since October, Silversands has deployed Microsoft Office SharePoint® Portal Server 2003 as the software for delivering portal and collaborative working solutions to the law firm. It is also implementing an initial set of features and solutions that enable legal work to be completed more quickly.

Specific pieces of work developed in SharePoint Portal Server include a reciprocity register to track client referrals, a register to monitor complaints handling, a recruitment database, an online log for professional development compliance, and a new system to track projected billing figures.

SharePoint Portal Server enables the creation of team and personal

sites while giving organisations better control over access to business information. It was implemented with Microsoft SQL Server™ 2000 running on Microsoft Windows Server 2003. SharePoint Portal Server provides core support for XML and the ability to query across the Internet and beyond the firewall.

For security management of remote access by Clarke Willmott's staff, Silversands chose Microsoft Internet Security and Acceleration (ISA) Server 2000 as the best way to protect the firm from exposure to hackers and viruses. James Mallalieu, Account Manager, Silversands, says: "It was more flexible and better suited to Clarke Willmott than any of the alternatives."

Microsoft ISA Server includes Web proxy, caching, and easy reporting functions, as well as enabling the use of Active Directory® directory service based user accounts and group policies to control access through the firewall.

The solution will also enable Clarke Willmott employees to update the content of the intranet using Microsoft Office FrontPage® 2003, the user friendly Web site creation and management tool. Kez Bailey, Application Developer, Clarke Willmott says: "Pre SharePoint the intranet wasn't seen as a place to do things. All support functions of the firm now have fully operational sites that are maintained by content managers from within the department."

Benefits:

- Wider staff adoption of intranet
- Less dependence on paper files
- Documents loaded in less time
- New business development tool
- Encourages teamworking

Benefits

Lawyers Use Intranet Instead of Paper Files

Clarke Willmott employees are now making much more use of the intranet following the change to SharePoint Portal Server and all three of its offices are viewing the same documents. Instead of using paper files and manual systems, they can quickly locate and access documents, legal precedents, internal policies, and best practice notes, by searching or browsing the intranet.

Clarke Willmott now has individual team sites for all practice areas of the firm. Although not all of them are fully populated yet, many are

rich in content and have become central resources for many team member activities. Practice areas using SharePoint Portal Server every working day include commercial property, clinical negligence, dispute resolution, and corporate commercial.

Bailey says: "The board of directors is solidly behind the switch because of the ease of use and document indexing."

Fox adds: "The speed with which the central source of information can be explored and the fact that everyone is up to date are major advantages of our SharePoint Portal deployment, together with

the excellent security provided to our system by the overall implementation."

Time Saving of 30 Minutes Per Document

Clarke Willmott is saving at least one working day a week on consultancy costs because SharePoint Portal Server enables documents to be loaded more quickly onto the intranet. Bailey says: "Our consultant is saving around 30 minutes a document by using SharePoint as a central portal. That's around two-to-four hours a week uploading precedents alone. We expect to save more than 150 hours in total."



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The savings don't end there. Bailey adds: "The consultant is required to make changes to around eight precedents a week, which is a further saving of four hours. So, including new precedents this relates to just over one working day a week saved on maintaining precedents and practice notes alone."

Another feature that is saving time is the partners and employee directory. Bailey says: "Before SharePoint Portal Server this needed a lot of person hours to keep it accurate. Now it plugs straight into our Active Directory data resulting in access to information in seconds."

SharePoint Portal Server is deployed right out of the box without any additional development work. The search service is available immediately. Web Parts, which enable users to incorporate enterprise applications and Internet services into the portal, are also available from the outset, lowering development costs.

Fox says: "We will also be saving even more money, because we don't have to use an external company to manage and update

content on the intranet. We wanted to be in charge of our own intellectual capital and this solution has put us back in charge."

New Tool to Help Business Development

Since the adoption of SharePoint Portal Server, a number of routine functions have been automated including a valuable tool for marketing and gaining new customers. Clarke Willmott's previous intranet often suffered from a backlog of material for updating. Fox says: "Because it was cumbersome to make changes, the site was often out of date and it was little used."

The new reciprocity register, a joint-venture development between the firm's marketing and IT teams, enables partners and lawyers to track which clients have referred work to the firm. Bailey says: "Keeping track of referrals is something that large firms are doing, but which few mid-size firms have been able to develop beyond the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet stage. This system is transparent and gives access to all the lawyers who need to keep track of the work that we are doing with other professional service firms."

More Collaborative Working Between Teams

Clarke Willmott plans to implement Microsoft Windows® SharePoint Services to extend the benefits of SharePoint Portal Server further still. This will enable more collaborative working, because teams can make the content in their Windows SharePoint Services sites discoverable through the portal.

Fox says: "We are now looking at implementing teamwork spaces, for example, where teams can create communities to enhance communication between themselves and with other teams across the firm."

SharePoint Portal Server takes advantage of a number of features in Windows SharePoint Services including document libraries and Web Parts, which reduce development, support, and training expenses by providing a common look and feel at levels ranging from the individual to the enterprise. These features provide a robust base for Clarke Willmott to develop its business and promote its specialisations and strengths as a law firm.

The benefits of information sharing and collaborative working in the legal sector, using 'best of breed' technologies, are crystal clear. An integrated information management solution based on Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server has enabled efficient, collaborative working by users across multiple sites, greatly increasing productivity.



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