

>> CASE STUDY

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF NEW YORK LAS SharePoint Portal



CLIENT OVERVIEW

Since 1876, The Legal Aid Society has provided free legal services to New York City residents who are unable to afford private counsel. Annually, through their criminal, civil and juvenile offices in all five boroughs, their staff handles about 250,000 cases for poor families and individuals. Their clients are as diverse as New York City itself: homeless children, newly arrived immigrants, the elderly poor. The services they provide reflect the entire gamut of their clients' needs.

By contract with the City, the Society serves as the primary defender of poor people prosecuted in the State court system. Although other public defender agencies provide assigned counsel services in New York City, the Society continues to play the central defense role in the City's criminal justice system. The Criminal Defense Division is involved in planning or implementation of special-

ized court parts dealing with drug treatment, mental health services, domestic violence, juvenile offenders and community issues. As the City's largest provider of defense services, the Division has long been active in the struggle to find more effective solutions to drug abuse, and recently established a program that provides integrated defense and social work services to mentally ill, addicted clients, to ensure that they can secure treatment and housing after their criminal cases are concluded.

The Society is in a unique position to testify about the injustices created by the Rockefeller Drug Laws. Their Criminal Defense Division represented defendants in more than 57,000 drug cases in a single year. In both their criminal and our civil work, they are confronted daily with the inequities and tragedies created by these harsh laws.

CLIENT OBJECTIVE

Legal Aid was looking to modernize its information technology assets to allow a single point of access for all documents, calendars, and other data systems for its 1600 employees located in 11 different offices across New York.

GLYPHIC SOLUTION

Glyphic Technologies was selected to architect Legal Aid's multi-practice SharePoint portal accessible to all 1,600 employees spread across 11 separate offices. Glyphic architected, designed and developed a site that included the following practice groups and divisions: Criminal, Civil, Juvenile, Law Reform, Pro Bono, Administrative Department, Professional Support, Human Resources, MIS, Training & Library. This allowed for the practice groups and divisions to locate information specific to their practice.

Search Functionality

Glyphic Technologies, Inc. also designed a search tool that indexed all content and documents at the firm, making all Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF documents searchable on the SharePoint Portal. The search tool is able to generate context based reports, similar to Westlaw and Lexis search engines, highlighting terms and ranking them by relevance.

Document Management & Document Security Functionality

Glyphic designed and developed a tool for the "bulk uploading" of documents. The tool enables Legal Aid users to assign certain metadata elements to some or all documents in the group to be uploaded. For example, if 50 documents were produced in response to a discovery request, the user can "bulk upload" the 50 documents with the bulk upload tool that enables the user to assign metadata elements that are common to all the documents such as date uploaded, category of document, and users who have access to the document. Key metadata elements for a document are displayed by the document libraries in an easily-read chart or display. Key fields include the document title, date, category, and author. Each document is assigned one or more metadata elements that specify which users, or groups of users, may access the document.

External Access & Site Security Functionality

Glyphic architected and implemented the Legal Aid SharePoint site so that it is accessible from outside the firewall in two ways: to employees wishing to access the site via the Legal Aid Citrix server; and to non-employees who have been provided a login and password by Legal Aid. Glyphic provided an authentication mechanism for non-employee users who have rights to access the SharePoint site and to specify those areas of the portal to which they have access.

External users have access to the site only to the extent specifically granted. The site administrator has the ability to specify portals, or sub-pages of a portal, that are accessible only to specified users (employees and/or authorized non-employee users) who have been granted rights to access those pages.

User Forms & Blogs

Glyphic implemented user forms to allow users to complete information and submit it to the portal administrator. For example, the Human Resources portal provides users with a form for making selections regarding their employee health benefits or concerning other aspects of their employment which now provides for an automated workflow. Glyphic also implemented the site with the ability to host a blog in which authorized users can post new messages. The Legal Aid SharePoint portal administrator is also able to grant authorization to users to post new messages to the blog.

Architecture, Configuration & Custom SharePoint Portal Development Training

Glyphic was responsible for the all architecture, configuration and implementation of all software and hardware. Glyphic also provided Legal Aid with customized SharePoint Portal development training.

Tools/Technologies

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007, SQL Server 2005.