



INDUSTRY CASE STUDY

Search here

Lynne Jones, head of library and information services, KM director Claire McNamara, and head of IT projects and change (RIC) Paul Jenkins, HFW, explain how Solcara Legal Search from Thomson Reuters helps the firm to run more smoothly

The ability for fee earners to find information quickly and painlessly is what makes the difference between a well-oiled law firm and one that's stuck in the mud.

Firms can no longer be competitive if they're reliant on manual processes or out-of-date systems. Now more than ever, clients expect the provision of legal services to be fast and to offer better value for money.

Claire McNamara, KM director at HFW, says the firm has addressed these consumer demands by using tools such as Solcara Legal Search from Thomson Reuters, which reduces the time fee earners spend on basic research.

"One of our key goals is to increase lawyer productivity and efficiency, and we look to legal technology to achieve this. Using Solcara to search

our external information sources from our intranet has helped us to accomplish this," she says.

Head of library and information services Lynne Jones adds: "That's its key success for us – it is completely integrated into our intranet, making it accessible and easy to use."

A new vision

To kickstart its KM-efficiency journey, the firm completely revamped its intranet. Jones and McNamara worked closely with head of IT projects and change (RIC) Paul Jenkins to develop a sophisticated search functionality for the intranet.

Jones says: "We use a combination of SharePoint search capability for our internal information and Solcara Legal Search for our subscription sources. The Solcara functionality can be accessed from the

For more information, visit:
legal-solutions.co.uk/solcara

search box on all pages on our intranet, but it works independently across the library pages.

“When we were thinking about designing our search application on the intranet, we had a very clear idea of what we wanted the user experience to be.”

What’s great about having Solcara work this way, Jones adds, is that users don’t need any special training because all of the systems run on a single interface.

“It’s important that our users get a single unified search experience. The ability to navigate between tabs to search internal or external sources means that all research can start in one place. They can then toggle between content sets to find relevant information. We demonstrate it as part of our library training, but it doesn’t require much by way of formal teaching.”

Jenkins says: “Systems must be designed primarily to aid the delivery of legal services and our search tool successfully achieves that goal.”

“Our aim around integrating Solcara Legal Search into our intranet project was to further the business goal to be more efficient – and, of course, deliver a faster service to meet the needs of our clients.”

Configure it out

Jones says that fee earners don’t really care where the search functionality comes from, as long as they get results.

“We’ve configured a number of content sets based on resource type, legal sector and jurisdictions. The way this looks in practice is that search boxes sit on each page, giving the user the option to search material by content type or

subject based on their individual need.”

The system is very heavily used now that it’s embedded in our intranet, she adds. “You don’t even realise you’re using it, what matters is that it works.”

HFW, as with many law firms, subscribes to a vast amount of online content. Historically, when the library team talked to people about practicalities of finding information, one of the big issues faced by users was knowing which resource to use to find the information they needed.

“It doesn’t matter where things sit or whether users know who publishes it, now they can just run their search,” says KM director McNamara.

Solcara Legal Search allows the firm to make sure that people are finding things that are relevant to them. This saves time and therefore money.

The firm pared down the Solcara search screen to reduce clutter on the page. Jones says: “Users were put off by seeing too many filters and toolbars, and having to work out the logic behind them. Now that it’s clearer, people have more confidence that they know what they’re finding when they do a search.”

All about the client

The firm’s main driver is that IT systems have to enable fee earners to deliver their work more efficiently, says Jenkins.

“The clients demand it – they want savings on fees and the only way to do that is to cut down the time between a matter being started and finished. It should be simple. It comes back to us using our systems, including Solcara Legal Search, to enable fee earners to work better,” he says.

“The configurability and flexibility of Solcara Legal Search meant that we could use its key functions and drop it into place where we wanted it and change the look to fit our staff’s needs.”

For the library and knowledge management teams at HFW, integrating Solcara Legal Search meant they could help the firm’s fee earners to get to information quickly, adding value to the delivery of legal services. ▴

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