



“The solution is a shining example of how a successful relationship between developers and client can produce a world class business solution. We could not have asked more of Tikit, the dedication of their personnel to the project and their technical expertise coupled with the Court’s involvement are what ensured that this project was the success it has been.”

John Hunter, IT Manager, ECHR

Client: European Court of Human Rights

Streamlined case management at the European Court of Human Rights

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is a judicial body that adjudicates complaints brought against a state by individuals or associations on the grounds of violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Background

Working under the auspices of the Council of Europe, the Court’s jurisdiction covers 44 member states – a population of over 800 million citizens.

Based in Strasbourg, the Court, like many conventional law firms, has a need to access and store both a large number of documents and metadata relating to its “client” base. For instance in 2002 the ECHR had over 35,000 applications lodged against contracting States.

Before the merger of the Court with the European Commission of Human Rights in November 1998, the Court examined the possibility of using SISC, a bespoke case management system that had been developed for the European Commission of Human Rights. However, after an extensive feasibility study it was decided that in its current form SISC would not be able to cope with the expected increase in applications. To ensure that the Court could handle a substantial and increasing caseload, it needed a solution that streamlined the case management process enabling it to become more productive and efficient.

The chosen solution

The Court launched an international call for tender and Tikit were awarded the contract. After numerous discussions between Tikit consultants and the Court it was decided to implement the CMIS (Court Management Information System) using a mixture of “best of breed” products as well as developing a customised application database to deal with the internal work processes of the Court.

The process

Tikit consultants spent a significant amount of time with John Hunter (Head of the IT Division), his IT staff and a number of lawyers and secretaries to acquire understanding of the existing systems requirements and the Courts working practices. This made it possible to determine the elements of the existing technical set-up that would be of value within the new system and decide how a more

About Tikit

Tikit is the leading independent provider of IT consultancy, services and software to legal and accounting firms. Tikit’s clients in the UK, Europe and the United States include more than 90 of the UK’s top 100 law firms, 20 of the top 50 US law firms and 18 of the top 50 UK accountancy firms. Headquartered in London – and listed on the London Stock Exchange (AIM:TIK) – Tikit combines in-depth knowledge of the business needs of legal and accounting firms with a unique capability to plan, implement, integrate and support virtually all of the IT requirements of a modern legal or accounting practice.

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Streamlined case management at the European Court of Human Rights – continued

advanced system that fulfilled all of ECHR's needs could be built.

A platform for development (Visual Basic 6, Microsoft SQLServer 7 & Crystal Reports) was selected and Tikit set about prototyping and developing ideas and concepts for the system. At the same time, a comprehensive functional requirements specification was established as well as project plans and contractual deliverables.

CMIS was also to be integrated into the Hummingbird document management system with PowerDOCS as the interface and a custom integration into CMIS was performed by Tikit. This allowed users to access all relevant documents relating to a case from within the case management system.

The system was developed and tested on a module-by-module basis, with each module delivered to John Hunter and his IT team for testing (iteration testing). The feedback generated by the Court enabled Tikit to implement the required changes quickly.

One of the largest tasks of the project was to write a data conversion programme that would convert the data from the existing database into a new database format for CMIS. The data migration process was performed a number of times to clean up the existing data to fit the new CMIS relational model.

When everything was ready to go live and the Court had satisfied themselves that the new software met each of their requirements, a 'big bang' approach was adopted for its implementation. The data migrations were run over a single weekend; the old system was turned off on Friday at 5:30pm and the new system was ready for use at 8am on Monday.

Cultural issues

Whilst the technical aspects of the CMIS implementation was free from significant problems, a number of cultural issues concerning the change from the old system with the implementation of PowerDOCS arose. Initially, a number of the users were unhappy with the switch from a folder and files based (explorer) system, to a search based system. However, these objections were soon resolved following a number of one-to-one training sessions during which the system was explained.

The Court's staff consists of some 44 different nationalities, it is therefore imperative that the CMIS system be intuitive and user-centric in order to be accepted by this multi-lingual, multicultural user base.

Following the implementation of CMIS, the Court saw a 60% increase in productivity, specifically in terms of data entry and in the creation of letters. One significant benefit of the new system was that a user can now perform an action against a number of cases at any one time. Previously the system had only allowed for actions to be made on a single case at a time.



"The CMIS solution has dramatically increased the productivity of the Court, and has enhanced and streamlined its work processes."

John Hunter, IT Manager, ECHR

About ECHR

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg is an international judicial body established under the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950 to monitor respect of human rights by states. The European Convention on Human Rights is a convention adopted by the Council of Europe. All 47 member states of the Council of Europe are parties to the Convention. Applications against Contracting Parties for human rights violations can be brought before the Court by other states, other parties or individuals.

For further information about any of Tikit's solutions, services or products, please contact:

T: +44 (0) 20 7400 3737

E: marketing@tikit.com

www.tikit.com

Tikit, 12 Gough Square,
London EC4A 3DW

T: +44 (0) 20 7400 3737 (London)

T: +33 (0) 15 560 1850 (Paris)

T: +34 (0) 91 185 9750 (Madrid)

T: +1 312 396 4040 (Chicago)