

> Customer Success Story

Dickstein Shapiro Increases Level of Client Service with Hummingbird Enterprise™

“When it becomes a challenge to use technology, our employees will not be as productive. With Hummingbird Enterprise, we’ve improved the research capabilities for our attorneys, enabling us to produce a more valuable product and improve the quality of the work we provide our clients. For us, Hummingbird was the obvious choice.”

— Keith Berkland, Applications Development Manager, Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky LLP

Business Profile

Industry

Legal

Organization

Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky LLP

The Challenge

- > Wanted to streamline knowledge transfer process from experienced partners to new attorneys
- > Needed web access to a personalized, secure document management system, for both internal users and external clients
- > Needed scalable, extensible, and open document collaboration platform to integrate custom line of business applications

Hummingbird Solution

- > Document Management, Knowledge Management and Portal

Key Benefits

- > Easier internal access to documents, from any client
- > External client access to document-based knowledge assets via Hummingbird Enterprise™ Webtop and Hummingbird Enterprise™ DM
- > Scalability to support future customization via open protocols
- > Minimal training and high adoption rates with straightforward web-based interface
- > Full lifecycle requirements for information

Even though its client list reads like a who’s who of the Fortune 500, the legal firm of Dickstein Shapiro Morin & Oshinsky knows it can’t simply rest on its laurels. Instead, the firm has continually looked to improve the ways it delivers legal solutions to its clients, a strategy in which electronic information management systems already played a big part.

“What we produce for our clients is the knowledge and wisdom that lives in our attorneys’ heads,” says Keith Berkland, applications development manager for Dickstein Shapiro. “If we can shorten the knowledge transfer process and share our experience, it makes all of our attorneys more productive and provides a valuable service to our clients.”

In the mid-1990s, the law firm invested in electronic document management by deploying a Hummingbird solution. Its forward-thinking IT infrastructure technology was rated number 9 out of 132 firms around the country and the strategy helped Dickstein Shapiro remain one of the top 15 law firms in the Washington DC. area. The firm has a globe-spanning list of clients including AT&T, Hitachi, Oracle, NEC and Raytheon, just to name a few.

“Our early IT work involved linking people’s knowledge to electronic data repositories of knowledge,” Berkland said. “It’s been highly successful inside the firm and the bedrock of our IT efforts over the past eight years.”

Business Challenge: Share More Information with More People

But in 1999, an internal technology team consisting of attorneys, researchers and technical staff started looking for ways to build upon its successful IT operations, to bring even more knowledge-sharing and cohesiveness to its organization. Moving to web-based technologies, Berkland says, was a natural progression.

“We started looking at portal technology to bring all of our knowledge management technology together in a more meaningful way,” Berkland says. “And a web-based platform provided a perfect learning environment for our attorneys.”

Specifically, the law firm was looking for a software solution that would help it share data not only on a wider internal basis, but with outside entities as well, a requirement that demands a flexible, scalable and secure solution.

Gathering its attorneys’ knowledge and experience into portals, Berkland says, was an elegant solution, since it provided a single point of access for data, documents, processes and applications that could be accessed securely from any location with simply a web browser. The thin-client structure also gave more freedom to the administrators, who didn’t have to worry about whether or not external users had up-to-date client software, since all they needed for access was a browser and password.

“The most compelling reason for a portal structure is the ability to publish information to an outside audience,” Berkland says. “With access to a portal, our clients can see and consume their information in a secure environment.”

While many web and portal packages exist in the marketplace today, Berkland knew that the product Dickstein Shapiro was looking for had to be open and scalable to support future growth. In addition, the solution had to integrate seamlessly with its current business-specific third-party knowledge applications for discrete legal functions, for all its practice areas, especially corporate and litigation.

Case Closed, with Hummingbird Enterprise

Given the existing investment in the earlier version of the Hummingbird document management infrastructure, Hummingbird was a logical vendor for Dickstein Shapiro to consider when the law firm went looking for a portal solution. Convinced by the power, open architecture and flexibility of the document and knowledge management and portal technologies of Hummingbird Enterprise, the case was quickly closed.

With Hummingbird Enterprise, Dickstein Shapiro was able to pull all of its unstructured data into focus with the robust search, categorization and retrieval capabilities. “Being able to search through multiple sources and pulling back one result was one of the things management liked most about the Hummingbird solution,” Berkland says.

The scalable engine in Hummingbird Enterprise gave Dickstein Shapiro confidence that the company wouldn't outgrow its software. Additionally, the web-based interface and advanced security features in Hummingbird Enterprise provided the backbone for the law firm's plans to allow clients to securely access their own data, without adding an administrative burden on Dickstein Shapiro's technical staff.

The portal framework of Hummingbird Enterprise Webtop provided the solid platform to seamlessly integrate the firm's other applications and data, enabling Dickstein Shapiro to create a web-based arena where its clients and attorneys could more efficiently share data and communicate.

“The Webtop application for external access was the main feature we were looking for,” Berkland says. “And now with Hummingbird Enterprise Webtop we are able to make the system available to people on the outside, looking in.”

Results: Moving Forward, Faster

With the Hummingbird Enterprise content management software technology now being used by more than 800 Dickstein Shapiro employees at multiple sites, the law firm is delivering better collaborative opportunities both internally and externally, according to Berkland.

“Knowledge transfer is very difficult in any environment,” he says. “Getting knowledge passed from a senior partner to a young attorney costs time, effort and money for us as a firm, as well as for our clients.”

Because Hummingbird Enterprise is easy to use, Berkland says the Dickstein Shapiro attorneys are able to quickly tap into the software's power, finding new ways to structure searches and reports to better serve the clients' needs.

“We try to give our people tools and technologies that are so easy they can use them without having to think about them,” Berkland says. “With the earlier version of the Hummingbird document management solution, our systems were good, but now they're even easier to navigate and understand.”

By opening up information via the portal environment facilitated by Hummingbird Enterprise they can also alleviate the typical legal snowstorm of faxes and e-mails that swirl around any negotiation, Berkland says.

“E-mail is great, but it isn't the only way we communicate and collaborate on projects. We have clients all over the world who may need to review contracts or respond to litigation requests. The Hummingbird Enterprise Webtop portal allows them to consume their knowledge and respond to requests on their schedule,” Berkland says. “Clients should be able to access their information when they want to and the portal and web-publishing tools from Hummingbird allow us to do that.”

Because Hummingbird is committed to an open product architecture, Dickstein Shapiro knows that it will always be able to tailor its solution to best satisfy each client's needs. And it's also confident that in Hummingbird it has a partner that has products it can depend on to keep its client information secure.

“We picked Hummingbird because it has great products and great people,” Berkland says. “It's an open environment that we can customize when we need to. And right now, Hummingbird is the only vendor out there with the products that address our needs from start to finish, with processes to manage and track information along the way. They're filling needs, and even identifying them, before we do.”



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