

> Customer Success Story

Selmer adopts Hummingbird Enterprise™ for Legal for a Content and Matter-Centric solution

“Without question Hummingbird Enterprise has grown to become the most important and critical part of our IT infrastructure.” — Hege Stenersen Stokke, Chief Information Officer, Advokatfirmaet Selmer DA

Business Profile

Industry

Legal

Organization

Advokatfirmaet Selmer DA

The Challenge

- > Overhaul the Firm's IT infrastructure with a more reliable document and knowledge management system
- > Deliver out-of-the-box functionality that is easy to implement
- > Implement a centralized solution that would help lawyers share, manage and store documents and best practices for easy access to information

The Solution

Hummingbird Enterprise™ for Legal

Key Benefits

- > Webtop application enables faster access to the Firm's corporate knowledge, improving client service
- > Library of contract templates available to fee-earners in a more efficient and controlled manner, providing much faster turnaround to client requests
- > All information and best practices now stored in the Hummingbird system, including documents, e-mail, contracts, HR information and financial reports, to give lawyers a complete matter-centric solution

Advokatfirmaet Selmer DA sees itself not just as one of Norway's most innovative law firms, but also as a modern and expanding human resources business. The fifth largest firm in Norway, Selmer employs over 130 staff, of whom over 90 are qualified lawyers and business or legal advisers.

Although the Firm's client base ranges from Norwegian and foreign corporations, through institutions and public sector organizations, to private individuals, it targets its activities primarily to legal and strategic counseling for companies doing business in the Norwegian and international business arenas.

Different Approach

One of Selmer's key differentiators is its approach to teamwork. In this respect the implementation of Hummingbird Enterprise™ as a firm-wide enterprise content management (ECM) system fit perfectly with its business ethos, as Hege Stenersen Stokke, Chief Information Officer at Selmer explains. “We are very innovative in everything we do. For example we don't just give our clients legal advice, but also a complete range of business consultancy services. We bring together lawyers, taxation specialists and business consultants in project teams, so we can give a client a complete view of how a contract or a new business acquisition or development will affect or benefit their business, rather than just discussing the legal aspects.”

“Bringing together such different skills calls for an exceptional level of teamwork. So when we decided to implement a content management system we knew that it would have to offer much more than just a way of organizing our documents,” says Stokke.

Total Overhaul

The implementation of an ECM solution was part of a complete overhaul of the Firm's IT infrastructure, something Stokke recognized as sorely needed when she joined the firm. “We were using a mixture of Microsoft® and Citrix®, with central document storage, and it was a very unreliable system. Unfortunately when a Citrix Server goes down it takes up to twenty people off line, so we very rapidly moved back to a distributed PC environment.”

“Of course this has benefits, but putting computing power back to the desktop also means that people will use it, and that means they will tend to store stuff on their PCs,” Stokke continues. “So at the same time, we had to implement a solution that would manage the storage of documents centrally in such a way that whoever needs them can get access, and very easily.”

After a considerable evaluation of a number of competing products, Stokke decided to implement Hummingbird Enterprise in phased stages, starting in January 2004. “Having inherited a very disjointed legacy I made a number of strategic decisions. One was that we would consolidate and standardize on a very small number of proven systems, the other was that anything we implemented should be capable of delivering an extremely high proportion of its functionality out of the box.”

“The Hummingbird platform offered both a trusted and proven solution for document management, and it also gave us a document management solution that we were able to implement fully in just 12 weeks.”

Initial Reactions

The first reaction of the lawyers within the Firm was extremely positive, although initially they took a little persuading to fill in profiles on each document and e-mail to ensure that they could be found in the relevant matter file. However, the next stage in Stokke’s ‘building block strategy’ was met with a very warm welcome, as Stokke explains.

“We moved very rapidly to implement the Hummingbird Enterprise™ Webtop application to give portal access to the document management solution. Initially this was accessed through Microsoft® Outlook, but using the portal takes you directly to the home page of the firm’s Intranet. This is excellent for lawyers, both at their desks and when they are working away from the office, because they can instantly identify any documentation related to a matter or a specific client, or indeed on any subject on which they are working.”

Another key factor in the success of the Firm’s Webtop application has been its integration with Axapta, the Firm’s practice management solution. This allows each lawyer, subject to security and access privileges, to click on a set of buttons at the foot of the window and identify how much time has been spent on each aspect of the matter, how much has been billed, and how much has yet to be charged to the client. Even more impressively, it also displays details of the client’s payment record on each matter, allowing lawyers to gently remind clients when sums are overdue for payment.

“The reaction of the lawyers to this feature was priceless,” says Stokke. “Giving them such transparency has not just helped them become much more aware of the management of client matters, it has also helped us to make a major improvement to our financial management.”

Innovations Improve Client Service

Other useful innovations are the ability to identify documents using structured and unstructured searches of both the profiles and document content. Selmer has also used the Hummingbird functionality to help build a library of contract templates that include key conditions or terms that apply to particular markets and sectors. By accessing documents like these in a matter of seconds, lawyers are now able to deliver a much faster turnaround to client requests.

Stokke also believes that in addition to improving client service, having much faster access to the Firm’s corporate knowledge is also helping it to become more proactive. “The time taken to formulate responses to Requests for Information, or discovery requests has been reduced significantly. We have also seen a much closer integration of front and back office functions and have been able to reduce errors and omissions. All these actions deliver substantial benefits in operational efficiencies that in turn help improve profitability.”

Although the functionality and efficiencies of Hummingbird Enterprise have helped to make its adoption by the firm successful, Stokke believes that anyone implementing such a program should be very aware of the need for good change management. “Lawyers as a whole do not like change. To implement any major system change calls for a high level of buy-in, not just from the partners, but from the individual lawyers and their teams. We achieved this through a regular program of briefings and demonstrations to show them how the system would help them find information much more easily, whether downloading a standard contract form, or finding out who had changed a document and when,” says Stokke.

Close Partnership

Throughout the implementation Selmer worked very closely with SaveIT, Hummingbird’s specialist partner in Norway. Cecilie Vanem, SaveIT’s CEO believes that Selmer has demonstrated how a desire for innovation, balanced with a structured approach to managing risk, can deliver outstanding results. “Selmer has continually sought to do very complex tasks using out-of-the-box functionality,” says Vanem. “This has proven to be a very sustainable approach, because it means that we are able to work very closely with Hummingbird to ensure that all their requirements can be met by tuning and using existing functionality. Certainly I would say that they are one of the most innovative users of content management in the legal profession.”

Hege Stenersen Stokke agrees that the success of the project would not have been achieved without the very close teamwork that has been displayed between Selmer, SaveIT and Hummingbird. “Without question Hummingbird Enterprise has grown to become the most important and critical part of our IT infrastructure. I rely on Hummingbird to solve any issues we have, which they do extremely quickly and well, and I also rely on them to help us drive the firm forward by innovating and integrating better and more effective functionality.”

“In any business the key ingredient is the people,” Stokke continues. “The team from Hummingbird and SaveIT are very efficient, effective and professional. Between us we have built a solution that is not just supporting Selmer, but giving us a powerful platform that will underpin our growth and success in the future.”



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