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# Law Firm Makes Case for eRoom

By Anne Chen

**D**LA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary US LLP is the second-largest law firm in the world, and its attorneys needed a way to collaborate and share documents with one another as well as with clients and co-counsel. The verdict: Use of EMC's Documentum eRoom, a Web-based collaboration platform that allows for secure information sharing.

The eRoom collaboration platform gives DLA Piper not only a competitive advantage when pitching new clients, but also a way for attorneys around the world to work together efficiently. In fact, the use of eRoom saves the firm as many as 15,000 hours annually, according to Michael Tominna, collaboration systems manager at DLA Piper.

"We have cases with as many as 300 members from 40 different law firms for which documents need to be shared," said Tominna, in San Diego. "Trying to manage that much work product with that many firms would be very difficult without something like eRoom. It allows us to avoid redundancy as well as the time and hassle of sending materials back and forth via e-mail."

Based in Baltimore, DLA Piper employs 32,000 attorneys in 24 countries and 62 offices. The firm is the result of a merger between Piper Rudnick LLP, Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich, LLP and DLA. Five years ago, attorneys at the firms that eventually became DLA Piper used e-mail and file sharing to collaborate on cases. Lacking a central place for information, attorneys

spent a lot of time sending materials back and forth via paper documents and over e-mail, Tominna said.

Tominna, who was working at Gray Cary at the time, determined that a Web-based platform would allow attorneys to effectively collaborate and share documents both within and outside their own firms.

Tominna initially considered about 60 vendors, then sent a RFP (request for proposal) to five vendors. The field was narrowed from there to just Documentum eRoom and IBM's Lotus QuickPlace, and Tominna conducted a "bake-off" between the two. In the end, Tominna said, eRoom's functionality and ease of use won out.

"The main thing about eRoom that made it stand out among everybody else was the ability roll your own databases," Tominna said. "Giving users the ability to create those databases on their own to track various types of information and users was really what sold us on the product."

At DLA Piper, eRoom runs on servers from Hewlett-Packard running Microsoft's Windows Server 2003. Microsoft's SQL Server 2000 database is used on the back end, while its Internet Information Services 6.0 is used for front-end Web servers. The eRoom site is SSL (Secure Sockets Layer)-enabled, and users are required to have complex passwords.

DLA Piper customized eRoom and branded it with the name Collaborative Edge. Tominna also performed a number

of other customizations, including removing member buttons so that all users are anonymous. In addition, a database application called eContracts was developed to allow an eRoom administrator to specify all contract renewal and termination dates and send notification to users when those dates approach.

## All for One

Following the merger of the law firms, it was decided that DLA Piper would continue to use eRoom. Today, more than 3,000 internal and external users use 1,500 eRooms to manage cases, contracts and projects.

Training end users to use the product has been hassle-free, according to Tominna. This has contributed to eRoom's success at DLA Piper. "We've got a 15 minute rule here," he said. "If I can't put a product in front of an attorney that [he or she] can learn in 15 minutes, then forget it."

Last year, Tominna upgraded eRoom from version 6 to 7, a process that took about 72 hours and included the deployment of additional servers. With the upgrade completed, Tominna is evaluating EMC's Authentica, which would allow greater manageability of eRoom documents.

"Our usage of eRoom will continue to grow, and the biggest thing coming up will be the enhancement to the system so that we can do secure documents within the system," he Tominna said. "That's really the next place collaboration will need to hit on."

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