

## Dickinson Wood invest in the latest Legal Software & Hardware Technology

### Background

**Dickinson Wood** the well known Doncaster law firm invested in the Liberate Legal Software System following a first meeting at the Law Society's Legal IT exhibition in London 2005.

Formed in 1990 the practice employs over 30 staff and specialises in services for the fee paying individual, split approximately 75% Conveyancing, 17% Matrimonial and 8% Wills & Probate.

New business is generated primarily from past clients, referrals and from the firm's reputation. As Linda Baughan the firm's practice manager said, "Repeat business is extremely important, so it's easy to understand why we cherish our reputation and focus so much attention on providing the best possible service to our clients."

Dickinson Wood's client services and accounts were first computerised in the mid 1990's, however by 2004 it was evident to the partners and to Linda that their existing system, while satisfactory in many respects, did not provide them with the ability to grow and in particular did not allow them to take advantage of the many, rapidly developing, e-conveyancing opportunities, restricting their ability to take on new business and hence constraining their overall profitability.

### The Decision

It can often be difficult to get staff to alter work practices and in particular change their computer system. Therefore the senior management team concluded that to ensure the process ran smoothly they would engage as many staff as possible in the decision making process.

In late 2004 Linda and her IT team began researching the market including studying the Law Society's Software Solutions Guide and visiting the Legal IT exhibition in early 2005. While at the London exhibition they had five individual demonstrations of potential new systems from which they short-listed three that met their system requirements: AIM, Norwell and Linetime. All three companies were invited to demonstrate their systems in Doncaster. After the demonstrations and users visits were completed, Linda left it to 'the team' to vote on which system and which supplier to invest in. The result was unanimous and in October 2005 an order was placed with **Linetime** for a complete IT solution including the **Liberate** Practice and Case Management systems, plus additional modules and a range of new hardware including servers, PC's and flat screens for all users.

## Why Linetime?

When asked why her team had chosen the Linetime solution, Linda re-emphasised how important customer service was to her and the rest of the firm. "Not only did Linetime impress me technically, they also impressed me personally. They were friendly, attentive to our requests and thoroughly professional in all their dealings with me and my team.

"We knew of the reputation of their software and of their development team, not only from the research we'd undertaken, but also from people we knew at another significant local legal practice who had been dealing with them for years. The fact that they also had an **LMS STARS** online interface for their conveyancing system was also very influential as we are on the LMS panel of solicitors.

"We were also very impressed with their product development strategy and the way in which they encouraged their technical team to constantly push forward the boundaries of their software offerings. This forward thinking philosophy was in stark contrast to our previous supplier who seemed quite happy to maintain a product that offered today what it had offered yesterday with no obvious 'road map' to take advantage of the latest software technology."

## The Benefits

When asked to list the benefits their new system was delivering to Dickinson Wood, Linda's immediately response was that it will enable their practice to post a greater profit this year. "What greater benefit is there? Apart from a significant increase in our profitability, leading directly from being far more efficient in everything we do, the new Linetime system is enabling us to take on more work and also attract new types of client through the excellent web access software Liberate Online.

"In addition, the Liberate Practice Management system is far more structured than our previous software so much so that all fee earners are now forced to capture valuable marketing information from new clients, information that we are now using as we become even more client-centred in everything we do.

"This improved level of information concerning why clients chose our firm will help enormously in the design and implementation of our future niche marketing strategies, leading to an improved reputation within our target market and more business of the type we ultimately desire. In addition this new system is actually helping to provide the fee earners with a far better outlook, it's making their work far more interesting, which itself leads to a much greater level of job satisfaction.

“Linetime has a reputation for an excellent and comprehensive accounts package and I’m pleased to say that it has. This element of modern legal software systems is often overlooked as being rather mundane, but if Liberate hadn’t had an integrated solid accounting module with associated easy to produce reports we wouldn’t have even short-listed it. Another great benefit of choosing Linetime was the ease and simplicity with which they achieved all the data conversion that was necessary to move us to the new system. We closed down the old system on the Friday evening and were up and running with Liberate by Monday morning, with all the data transfers and conversions being done at their Leeds support centre over just one weekend. You can imagine just how important it was that we experienced absolutely no interruptions to our business. Once again Linetime proved what a thoroughly professional company they are.

“While I’m talking of how professional the company is I must mention their attitude to training. When I obtained their initial quotation I did question whether they had ‘over egged the pudding’ with respect to training. However upon re-reading the Law Society’s Software Solutions Guide and talking it through with the Linetime people I came to understand that it was only by experiencing a period of extensive training that we were going to be able to get the maximum benefit from our investment. Once again Linetime’s advise and guidance has proven to be of great benefit as we gain more and more benefits from the system in terms of improved efficiency as the days and weeks pass by.”

### The Future

Dickinson Wood intends to take advantage of as many of the latest developments to come out of Linetime. As Linda said, “Remote web access is critical to the growth of our Conveyancing department and hence to the firm, so to have installed Liberate Online, possibly the best e-conveyancing system on the market, is obviously a big advantage. In addition, the Linetime interface to the Solicitor’s Tracking and Reporting System (**STARs**) has enabled the firm to gain massive benefits as we improve our case workload whilst reducing costs. This virtuous circle ensures that as we become more efficient by improving the manner and speed of reporting to the various mortgage providers, we automatically improve our chances of being allocated more cases.”

The combination of **Liberate** Case Management System and the **STARs** interface enables Linetime customers to quickly and easily receive instructions from the Panel Referrer (LMS in this instance) online and then to automatically send progress reports to the mortgage provider, once again via the web. The Liberate system provides managers with all the monitoring and control systems that are essential if the customer wishes to compete in the highly competitive market of Bulk Conveyancing where margins are tight and the requirements of the mortgage lenders ever more demanding.



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Other future developments within Dickinson Wood include the implementation of a Liberate Family Case Management system as well as a similar system for Probate matters.

Linda also mentioned the fact that “We are keeping a close eye on the whole area of the proposed introduction of Housing Information Packs (HIPs) and how this will affect our business. Fortunately the Linetime Development Director is also at the leading edge of this potential new development within the market and we are confident that if any firm has their ‘finger on the button’ so to speak, then it’s Linetime.”

### Finally

When asked whether she would recommend Linetime, its products, services and company to other legal firms Mrs Baughan was unequivocal in her response, “Yes”.