

Gazette
July 21 1999

Law firm plans IT 'revolution'

City IT law firm Tarlo Lyons has joined forces with a software developer to create what it describes as a 'revolutionary' Web-based legal document production service.

Last week, the firm applied for a UK patent on the software incorporating the 'invention', known as ScaffoldIT, which was launched by developer Logic Programming Associates.

The firm said the product was 'a Web server installation that automates the creation of tailored and personalised documents by means of an interactive Web session... It is a powerful business tool which places the on-line company executive in control of the sometimes difficult process of generating personalised documentation'.

Tarlo Lyons partner John Mawhood, who has worked in the field of document generation for a decade, explained that unlike existing document production technology, the user did not have to download software to begin with and need not even have Internet access, as long as they have a Web browser on their desktop computer. And with ScaffoldIT, the 'author' companies use nothing more than a standard word processor to create master documents aimed at, for example, customers, suppliers, and those filling in applications or questionnaires. Templates could be set up to limit the number of changes made by users and final documents were proof against further editing, Mr Mawhood added.

Grahame Cohen, managing director of Epoch Software, which has a similar interactive document assembly product, was not aware of ScaffoldIT but cast doubt on the value of patenting the software.

Dan Bindman

IT

ONLINE LEGAL SERVICES

IT specialist links with LPA to offer Internet legal services; applies for patent of software

Tarlo Lyons builds ScaffoldIT

By JAMES BOXELL

Highly-regarded IT specialist Tarlo Lyons has become the latest firm to begin offering legal services over the Internet after hooking up with software developers Logic Programming Associates (LPA).

The 22-partner City firm is using the ScaffoldIT system, launched by LPA last month, to offer clients the ability to build legal documents and contracts that contain elements of expertise provided by a team of Tarlo Lyons lawyers.

Partners at the firm claim that several software company and financial institution clients are already using the system, although they are reluctant to reveal their identities. Clients are known to include the Prudential Group, Schroders and Energis.

Tarlo Lyons has also filed an application for a UK patent on the ScaffoldIT software, which it claims contains a "revolutionary invention", developed by itself and

LPA, for creating intelligent documents over the Internet.

The Tarlo Lyons IT partner responsible for the project, John Mawhood, said he was unable to give details of the patent application in case it prejudiced the case, but he said there were a number of features the system used to create documents that had never been seen before.

Mawhood said another benefit of the system was that users would not need to download any software to use it, but would be able to build and pass on documents through a web browser or by e-mail.

He said companies were already using the system to intelligently create documents such as software and hardware agreements and leases. Tarlo Lyons is now working on an individual basis with clients to build legal document templates suited to their particular needs.

Between three and four Tarlo Lyons lawyers have been involved in the development of the system



Mawhood: no need to download

alongside the LPA programmers, and Mawhood estimated that the project so far had cost his firm a "six-figure sum".

He added that the idea was the result of a "brainstorming" session between the lawyers and developers, who have worked together on various projects in the past decade.

The use of expert document creation systems has been spreading

in the legal market. Linklaters recently unveiled a highly complex contract builder for its derivatives clients, known as Blue Flag Confirms, while Epoch Software has been offering high street legal documents through its Desktop Lawyer service, available on the Dixons Freeserve website.

Last week, investment and securities group Durlacher — which is recognised for its expertise in the European technology, convergence and media markets — arranged a private placement to invest £1m in Epoch, while Durlacher chairman and CEO Geoffrey Chamberlain has joined the Epoch board as non-executive chairman.

Epoch founder and CEO Graham Cohen said: "Durlacher's support will enable us to expand the Desktop Lawyer service and explore more vertical markets. Its research and established e-commerce skills will help us move quickly — at the speeds that are required for Internet success."