

CUSTOMER PROFILE

The College of Law is the largest provider of vocational legal education and training in Europe, enabling students to become solicitors and barristers in England and Wales as well as providing training after qualification. It serves all areas of law, from the City to the High Street, to Queen's Counsel through to Legal Aid, from postgraduate to trainee to senior practitioner.

It now has branches in Birmingham, Chester, Guildford, London and York supporting 4,480 full-time and 952 part-time students. The College employs over 550 staff, including 235 teaching staff made up of solicitors and barristers. Today the College quite rightly enjoys an unbeatable reputation as a law school and as a provider of post-qualification training.

How The College of Law streamlined its project management process

"We're delighted with the product and we're delighted with CA. The competition really doesn't stand up in comparison." Chris Harris, software development manager, The College of Law.

Business challenge

The College is pioneering innovation in legal education. This includes spearheading computer-assisted learning developments – no other provider has so much technology purpose-built to develop students' skills. The College's IT team is at the heart of this drive for excellence.

Based in Guildford, the IT department includes a team of six software developers who are responsible for developing software for The College of Law Group.

"The Board prides itself on quality of service and works hard to maintain this. This ethos cascades throughout the entire organisation, and the IT team is no exception. The College of Law is extremely pro-technology, using it as the basis for continuous improvement, though always balanced with the business benefits in mind," said Chris Harris, software development manager, The College of Law.

"We implement a variety of different applications and new systems, ranging from new ways to register prospective students to biometric user identification trials. However, all of this requires extensive initial testing, modelling and building if projects are to run on time and to target. That's the primary reason we made the decision to work with CA."

Solution

CA's AllFusion® ERwin® Data Modeler is the industry's leading data modelling solution, designed to enhance the building, generation and maintenance of high-quality, high-performance databases, data warehouses and enterprise data resource models.

From the business rules that define the database to the physical model that forms the basis for the target database, AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler helps the developer visualise the structure and design for the database.

But more than that, the software is also a database development tool that can automatically generate thousands of lines of stored procedure and trigger code for leading databases.

The College of Law worked with Ameritas Ltd, the consultancy, training and resourcing solutions provider to help fulfil its business requirements. Ameritas, a CA Enterprise solutions partner, has extensive experience and expertise around CA's Life Cycle Data Management products, which includes AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler.

Just as importantly, Ameritas acted as an intermediary between CA and The College of Law. It enhanced the support provided by CA by giving the College ongoing access to experienced consultants with hands-on expertise of AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler.

Benefits

"It's very simple - AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler helps us remove the chance for errors when defining our databases," said Chris.

"For example, the College supports an organisation called the Central Applications Board. This is, in essence, a clearing house for anyone who wants to attend a law course with



How The College of Law streamlined its project management process (Continued from previous page)

any of the 31 institutions offering full-time legal training in England and Wales, including our direct competitors.”

The IT team wrote the relevant application to support this process, which last year was changed from a Sybase database to a Microsoft SQL server database.

Chris continues: “We used AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler to reverse engineer the Sybase database to get a model of what it looked like and then went on to use AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler to define and create the SQL server database.”

Going forward, the team has set up standards so that when they have to reuse new databases they use stored information to create the fields in the table. This, of course, ensures shorter delivery times going forward; it also gives the IT team greater agility when it comes to adapting to business change. Furthermore, it means that the systems that are created are of high quality from the start - the team appreciates that it won't have to revisit the database design at a later stage.

Business benefits

The implementation of AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler has even helped the team ensure better deals from third party suppliers.

The software's reverse engineering facility enables the IT team to have complete visibility of third party systems and from there they can make a balanced judgement on the viability of the tool set based on the requirement for control and quality right at the outset.

“We've also recently moved to Visual Studio .NET from Microsoft. This will mean that our approach to system design will also change. Fortunately, AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler is

flexible and robust enough to keep up with our future ambitions,” Chris added.

“It's all about aligning IT with the business. AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler helps us establish a solid foundation from which to build our IT applications and ensures the quality and flexibility of the end product. The College of Law is an exciting place to work in IT, as it's an organisation that's always willing to look for new and better ways to do things. AllFusion ERwin Data Modeler enables us to push the boundaries and the limits of our endeavours, but within a safe environment where we can catch the mistakes now, not later.”