

LawNet, Crimson Logic

Sun Microsystems Supports Singapore's First Electronic Legal Network



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Sun Microsystems’ servers, Solaris operating environment, and Java J2EE platform continue to prove their mark as the platform of choice for delivering functions-rich and fast time-to-market Internet services as Singapore’s leading Application Service Provider, CrimsonLogic, chooses Sun to underlie its nationwide legal services portal, LawNet.

LawNet is Singapore’s complete, one-stop services portal for the legal profession. The portal provides tools that cater to the full range of legal services provided by a lawyer, from due diligence on real estate purchases to filing multi-million dollar lawsuits. The only thing LawNet doesn’t do is to actually write a brief for a lawyer, but it comes close. In 2001, the portal began its migration to Sun’s technology and server platform in a move to enhance performance in stability, cost, services and platform versatility, leaving CrimsnLogic free to focus on developing Internet services that are better, more sophisticated and requiring less time to develop.

The Web of Law

LawNet is spearheaded by the Singapore Academy of Law (SAL), a statutory body formed to foster a collegiate spirit among Singapore lawyers. Its vision was to develop an online resource center that facilitated the work of lawyers and judges in preparing and executing legal proceedings.

In 1990, the task was given to CrimsonLogic (then known as Singapore Network Services) to design, develop and implement LawNet. Several months later, LawNet.com was born, with many databases to cater to a wide spectrum of legal research. Since then, the scope of the portal has expanded. It is now a full service center where lawyers and judges can research the latest legislation and case-law, file court papers, search companies and even expedite property transfer.

The expansion of LawNet owes a great due to its commercial caretaker, CrimsonLogic. As the operator, CrimsonLogic manages all aspects of LawNet’s operations, including daily upkeep, maintenance, upgrade and expansion of functionalities. Since implementing the system in 1990, CrimsonLogic, under the guidance of SAL, has continued to map out the long-term goals of LawNet, gradually moving the portal toward the objective of developing a paperless legal practice.

Today, LawNet is a complete conglomerate of legal resources. The portal hosts over 20 legal databases including litigation databases maintained by the courts for suits filed in the Singapore judicial system, Singapore legislation database provided by the Attorney-General’s Chambers, Singapore parliament reports from the Singapore Parliament, case-law databases, military court cases, international treaties databases as well as a host of historical and rare law reports to cater to even the most esoteric research needs.

The portal also provides transactional services to enable the development of a paperless national civil litigation system. The Singapore Supreme Court’s Electronic Filing System (EFS) enables lawyers to file lawsuits, extract copies of cause papers from the courts, serve legal documents on other law firms electronically, and perform public search queries on past and ongoing court cases.

Separate conveyancing modules, called InterReq™ and STARS™, give specialist real estate and conveyancing lawyers the ability to conduct speedy searches and quick due diligence activities for real estate and conveyancing transactions.

“LawNet is a collection of IT solutions catering to the needs of Singapore’s legal fraternity. Connectivity to a diverse array of hardware platforms is crucial. Sun solutions fit the role well with their emphasis on networking,” said Thomas Lai Leong Peng, Manager, Business Systems (Legal), CrimsonLogic.

Company

CrimsonLogic Pte Ltd

Industry

Legal Applications Service Provider

Products/Solutions

- Solaris™ Operating Environment
- Sun Enterprise™ 420R
- Sun Fire™ V880

Key Business Challenges

- Delivering the highest quality of services (QoS) to portal users
- Allows the quick production of new applications for new services and be able to integrate the new functions seamlessly to the portal
- Consolidated platforms to allow better management and cost control
- 24x7 availability, as well as reliability and flexibility

Key Business Solutions

- Industry leading response time, reliability, scalability and security for Internet deployment
- “Write once, run anywhere” programming for new applications
- Multi-systems consolidation on a robust, open-standards platform
- Performance in heterogeneous environment in terms of resource management and efficiency
- Capitalization of IT trends in network computing and Internet technology

Key Alliance

- Singapore Judiciary
- Singapore Academy of Law

Positioned for Growth

For LawNet to remain a leader in providing legal facilities over the Internet, its technological infrastructure must meet several business objectives:

- Delivering the highest quality of services (QoS) to its users
- Allowing for the quick production of new applications for new services and integrating new functions seamlessly to the portal
- Consolidating platforms to allow better management and cost control
- Ensuring 24x7 availability, as well as reliability and flexibility

A key to achieving these objectives is in examining the technologies that are available. An important challenge to portal developers today is the ability to generate applications quickly while maintaining a high level of quality of services (QoS) for their users. This is especially true as new technologies are constantly being developed to displace old ones, making the field of portal operations highly competitive.

When a service or a new application of technology is identified, portal operators must be able to quickly develop the new application for the service and be able to seamlessly integrate it into the portal. At the same time, response time and reliability should not be compromised despite the new additions or increased volume. Quick time to market, high QoS, with predictable availability, reliability, performance and security, are the keystones of designing and developing successful portals today.

An additional challenge for LawNet is to bring together a disparate set of databases and systems (some of them maintained and operated by different organizations) in such a manner that these systems can be accessed through a single sign-on in a single environment. This requires technological underpinnings that are flexible and open enough to perform in a heterogeneous environment and is compatible with all other major platforms.

LawNet was developed primarily in a Perl/CGI environment. However, to position the portal for the next phase of growth, CrimsonLogic decided to re-evaluate its platform to ensure having the greatest technological edge. The evaluation process included requirement studies, performance benchmarking, roadmap studies, proof-of-concept (POC) and pilot projects. Sun Microsystems stands out by meeting the solutions provider's requirements for stability, performance, cost and customer services.

CrimsonLogic began migrating LawNet's five main modules to Sun™ platform in the early part of 2001. By July 2001, the Electronic Filing System (EFS) was ported over to the new system. The business law and transaction module, BizNet, followed and began running on Java since June 2002. Intereq, the conveyancing module, is currently in pilot testing phase and is expected to be operational by August 2002. The remaining two modules, Litigation and Legal Research, have partially been moved to Sun servers.

Sun solutions that have been deployed for LawNet.com so far include:

- Solaris™ Operating Environment
- Sun Enterprise™ 420R
- Sun Fire™ V880

Future-proof the infrastructure

The key to LawNet's success lies in continuing to deliver sophisticated Web based services that are important to the work of a legal professional. CrimsonLogic chose to remain at the forefront of delivering those services by leveraging on Sun technology to achieve greater controls, more efficient management, quicker time to market and higher levels of services to its users.

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HEADQUARTERS SUN MICROSYSTEMS, INC. 4150 NETWORK CIRCLE, SANTA CLARA, CA 95054 USA,
PHONE: +1-800-555-9SUN OR +1-650-960-1300 INTERNET: www.sun.com

SALES OFFICES

AFRICA (NORTH, WEST AND CENTRAL): +9714-3366333 • ARGENTINA: +5411-4317-5600 • AUSTRALIA: +61-2-9844-5000 • AUSTRIA: +43-1-60563-0 • BELGIUM: +32-2-704-8000 • BRAZIL: +55-11-5187-2100 • CANADA: +905-477-6745 • CHILE: +56-2-372-4500 • COLOMBIA: +571-629-2323 • COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES: +7-502-935-8411 • CZECH REPUBLIC: +420-2-3300-9311 • DENMARK: 45 4556 5000 • EGYPT: +202-570-9442 • ESTONIA: +372-6-308-900 • FINLAND: +358-9-525-561 • FRANCE: +33-01-30-67-50-00 • GERMANY: +49-89-46008-0 • GREECE: +30-1-618-811 • HUNGARY: +36-1-202-4415 • ICELAND: +354-563-3010 • INDIA: +91-80-5599595 • IRELAND: +353-1-8055-666 • ISRAEL: +972-9-9513465 • ITALY: +39-039-60551 • JAPAN: +81-3-5717-5000 • KAZAKHSTAN: +7-3272-466774 • KOREA: +822-3469-0114 • LAOS: +371-750-3700 • LITHUANIA: +370-729-8468 • LUXEMBOURG: +352-49 11 33 1 • MALAYSIA: +603-264-9988 • MEXICO: +52-5-258-6100 • THE NETHERLANDS: +31-33-450-1234 • NEW ZEALAND: +64-4-499-2344 • NORWAY: +47-2202-3900 • PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA: BEIJING: +86-10-6803-5588 CHENGDU: +86-28-619-9333 GUANGZHOU: +86-20-8755-5900 SHANGHAI: +86-21-6466-1228 HONG KONG: +852-2202-6688 • POLAND: +48-22-8747800 • PORTUGAL: +351-21-4134000 • RUSSIA: +7-502-935-8411 • SINGAPORE: +65-438-1888 • SLOVAK REPUBLIC: +421-7-4342 94 85 • SOUTH AFRICA: +2711-805-4305 • SPAIN: +34-91-596-9900 • SWEDEN: +46-8-631-10-00 • SWITZERLAND: GERMANY: 41-1908-90-00 FRENCH: 41-22-999-0444 • TAIWAN: +886-2-2514-0567 • THAILAND: +662-344-6888 • TURKEY: +90-212-335-22-00 • UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: +9714-3366333 • UNITED KINGDOM: +44-1-276-20444 • UNITED STATES: +1-800-555-9SUN OR +1-650-960-1300 VENEZUELA: +58-2-905-3800 • OR ONLINE AT SUN.COM/STORE



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