

Practical Law Company Grows Online Revenue by 30% Year on Year

Partner Profile



NCS

London, England
www.ncsLtd.com

Oracle Certified Advantage Partner
NCS was founded in 1996 and provides a full range of technology integration services, including consultancy, bespoke application development and support as well as Oracle Licensing and Asset Management. The company has a client base of over 500 companies in a wide range of industries including financial services, media and government.

Customer Profile



Practical Law Company (PLC)

www.practicallaw.com

Industry:

Professional Services

Annual Gross Revenue:

£2 million to £100 million

Employees:

Fewer than 500

Oracle Products & Services

- Oracle9i Database
- Oracle9i Application Server (Enterprise Edition)
- Oracle Internet File System (IFS)
- Oracle Text
- Oracle Data Guard

Key Benefits

- Scalability to support 30% year on year growth
- Single-source publishing direct from the database
- Multiple data sources consolidated into single repository
- Streamlined creation, editing and publishing of articles

" Oracle and NCS underpin our ability to grow our online revenue and launch new, innovative products to an expanding customer base by delivering a technology platform where high productivity, flexibility and speed of service are keys to our success. " -- Niels Montanana, Technology Director, Practical Law Company.

Practical Law Company (PLC), a leading provider of legal know-how and market intelligence to law firms and large corporates, has built its scalable, integrated platform for creating and distributing publications online using Oracle database and content management tools. Founded in 1990, PLC ranks among the best in its sector. Switching from Microsoft SQL Server to Oracle has allowed the company to consolidate multiple data sources into a single repository. Oracle enables PLC's XML-based content to be created, stored, managed and retrieved easily, and provides 'single source' publishing of HTML, PDF, MS-Word and other formats for Web and paper products. PLC's publications are highly rated in the legal industry and in 2003 the company won the e-LOTIES award for 'Best online legal information provider.

PLC's Web-enabled publishing allows editors to use familiar tools to create and update content either from the office or from off-site locations. Clients enjoy rapid access during busy periods to the online publications they have subscribed through standard Web browsers. Customer usage patterns and statistics are captured and analysed within the Oracle database, helping PLC's marketing teams plan and develop new products.

PLC is saving 50% on hardware and maintenance costs by running its production systems on Linux. NCS provides round-the-clock management, together with ongoing consultancy and support, freeing the company from the need to employ specialist database administrators. PLC's Oracle system is fully backed up by Oracle Data Guard to ensure continuous service to customers in the event of hardware failure.

Streamlined, Automated Editing and Publishing

Oracle Database provides a repository, Web-enabled through Oracle Application Server, for managing PLC's XML data and documents on a common platform and ensures they are readily accessible to both internal users and external subscribers. The repository is built around an extension to Oracle Database, Oracle Internet File System (IFS) which provides document management functionality including access control, versioning and check-in / check-out capabilities. Oracle also integrates with Arbortext Epic, an XML editing tool used extensively throughout PLC, enabling editors to create and edit new documents quickly and easily.

Scalability to Offer Increasing Range of Services

"As well as scaling to allow PLC's growing user numbers to enjoy rapid online access to publications during peak periods, Oracle Database enables the company to develop new products. In addition to its publications on commercial property, competition, corporate and intellectual property law, PLC is launching online products for employment and financial services. The company also plans to allow smaller legal firms, who do not have large online repositories, to securely store their own legal know-how documents on its website.

"Legal documents have a long shelf life and need to be kept for many years," said Montanana. " Oracle's scalability and high performance will ensure customers have reliable, 24/7 access to their documents whenever they need them. Our service will provide a cost-effective way for companies to retain electronic copies of important documents without having to invest in dedicated, secure, online storage repositories."

New Documents Searchable in 15 Minutes Rather than 3 Days

Documents are indexed using Oracle Text that allows fast, scalable searching and query processing. "Making new documents

- Consistent, rapid customer access with no bottlenecks
- New material searchable within 15 minutes of upload
- Improved knowledge of customers needs aids decision-making
- Linux cuts hardware and maintenance costs by 50%
- 24/7 system support and expert consultancy from NCS

searchable used to be a time consuming task that we only undertook twice a week. With Oracle Text this is such a quick and easy process that we do it each time we upload content. New material is now available through our search pages just 15 minutes after it has been loaded on to our website," said Montanana.

Multiple Processes Handled from Single Platform

Seamless interfaces between Oracle Database and PLC's back office processes streamlines administration. The web site subscription process is fully integrated into Oracle Database. Email notification services, which allows registered customers to receive updates on legal topics of particular interest, is also operated directly from the Oracle platform. Web site user numbers and page hits are recorded to Oracle database allowing sales and marketing personnel to analyse statistics and monitor trends for different products and services.

Improved Stability and Maximum Price/Performance from Linux

Moving to Linux for both its production and development systems has allowed PLC to keep total cost of ownership low while optimising stability and performance. Oracle's direct support for Linux makes it a risk-free solution for medium sized companies like PLC who want to benefit from lower-cost platforms without sacrificing performance or capability.

NCS Virtual Database Administrator Service Ensures Fixed-Cost Support

PLC has outsourced the management of its Oracle Database to NCS to ensure round-the-clock support without the need to employ dedicated system management staff. NCS Virtual Database Administrator service covers all aspects of Oracle database management from remote monitoring, diagnostics and reporting to remedial management. Recovery plans with backup procedures are continuously reviewed and updated and monthly health check scripts run to ensure optimal system performance. Virtual DBA service also provides ongoing consultancy to ensure that PLC extracts maximum value from its technology investment.

Oracle Data Guard Ensures Service Resumption and Business Contingency

PLC is using Oracle Data Guard to provide a back-up copy of its production and development databases at a separate location. This will ensure service continues to customers in the event of hardware failure or an event that makes it unable to continue business at its London offices.

Why Oracle?

PLC chose Oracle because of the integrated XML capability and ease of data partitioning and management of Oracle Database.

"Oracle's large-scale, Web-focused content management solution, integrated with its market-leading database offered us high performance, scalability and native support for XML," said Montanana. " Oracle has a better product that will deliver greater long-term value than the competitor systems we looked at."

Why NCS?

PLC had used other consultants before switching to NCS whom it found to be the best business fit for a medium sized organisation. NCS's knowledge of Oracle technology and their commitment to PLC's success ensured an on-time implementation.

"NCS were very efficient, professional and responsive to our needs," said Montanana. " Their people have a comprehensive portfolio of skills, which enabled them to meet all our requirements. They were the right team for the job."

Implementation Process

We NCS managed the implementation process and transition from Microsoft SQL Server to Oracle Database, which took six months. During this time both systems ran in parallel. The switchover to Oracle took place with no disruption to PLC's day-to-day operations.

Advice from PLC

- An integrated database and content management solution delivers better value than buying and interfacing two separate products.

- Choose implementation partners who are experts in their field and have proven experience with organisations that are similar in size and structure to yours.

Practical Law Company offers a range of specialist legal know-how services that help companies run their businesses better

