

Chapter 3 - Networking and Group Computing

Workgroup Computing and the Internet

Telecommuting - All of the electronic links among

The Web provides a global means of publishing information that is based on a “pull” model. The Web browser specifies a specific URL and requests a copy of that HTML page, which is then translated to the workstation. The WWW is developing into a true group computing system as the pull model is being complimented with a “push” model of sending information to other users. With the rapid deployment of broadcast push technology, the Internet is developing into a robust group-computing platform. Some essential features needed for the Web to continue to develop into a group-computing platform are:

- *Interactivity or collaboration.* Handling a legal matter requires the interactivity between various legal and nonlegal personnel. It is not just a one-way sharing of information, but requires brainstorming, idea sharing and problem solving from all members of the team.
- *Notification.* All team members must be capable of being reached on the system with e-mail. In addition, members should be easily notified of new documents and easily retrieve the information for viewing. Document storage with an integrated messaging service provides the ability to locate key documents.
- *Triggered events.* Workgroup-computing systems built on database systems can monitor the status and initiate action based on data in a particular field. If a response to a pleading is due ten days from a particular date, then the system can be set to notify the appropriate attorney. Messaging and web based systems must have the same capability.
- *Customization.* The way in which lawyers work, along with the different specialties, requires that a system be customizable. Viewing and organizing information in different ways provides the legal professional the tools to analyze and present information while conforming to his or her work processes.
- *Multiple levels of security.* To preserve client confidences, different security levels should be available. Sensitive litigation data, contract negotiations, and other sensitive client information, have to be protected.
- *Integration with other applications and resources.* Legal professionals use a variety of desktop applications to manage and control case information. Word processing, databases, spreadsheets, and other applications should be able to be seamlessly integrated into the work-group computing to allow for easy access to case information. Workgroup computing should not replace these systems, but provide for tight integration. For example, Lotus Notes has integrated with many popular legal applications in a complementary and not competitive mode.
- *Mobile user support.* More and more legal professionals are telecommuting and doing their work away from the office. They should be able to continue to participate in the workgroup computing process. They should be able to browse through data, compose and edit documents,

and schedule legal matters.