

Chapter 4 - The Internet and Telecommunications

The Internet (and Intranet and Extranet) - The Most Powerful Communication Tool of All Time.

Is it a fact - or have I dreamt it - that, by means of electricity, the world of matter has become a great nerve, vibrating thousands of miles in a breathless point of time?

- Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–64), U.S. author

Introduction

“The Internet is a collection of information services, a communication pipeline, and file tra

The Internet is the most hyped and talked about technology concept ever. It is being touted as and is the most powerful communication tool of all times. What makes this tool different, with more potential than the telephone or television? The value of the Internet is the immense capability to interactively communicate with anyone inexpensively and exchange information using text, audio, graphics or videoconferencing anytime, and anywhere. Communication can be accomplished by electronic mail, sending or receiving computer files, interacting by voice, video conferencing, participating in various discussion areas and other tools. This capacity to communicate inexpensively with over an estimated 6,676,120,288 users online is phenomenal. It is the most powerful communication tool of all time. It took 38 years before radio had 50,000,000 listeners, and television 13 years to reach that mark. The Internet crossed the line in just four years.

The Internet is an international network of computers. It links thousands of computer networks including businesses, governments, educational institutions, individual users, law firms, and clients. These links transport digital information from computer to computer until it reaches its final destination. The Internet links the continents together into a global village. There are few rules governing conduct on the Internet. There is no controlling entity or service that controls the Internet. Instead, there are millions of computers that are linked together.

The Internet is more than the latest technology to impact the practice of law. It is a revolution that is changing not only the way we communicate, but also the way we practice law. The Internet has extended our reach and put the potential of global clients and courts within the grasp of every lawyer. A law firm needs to understand the dynamics of the Internet and place it meaningfully within the context of other law firm tools and solutions. It must be able to determine if the Internet, Intranet or Extranet is the best use of its available time and resources in terms of competitiveness, productivity and strategic advantage.