

Legal Assistance Branch

KAZ streamlines information management and boosts productivity for the Legal Aid Program.



Australian Government
Attorney-General's Department

The Legal Assistance Branch of the Attorney General's Department is responsible for developing, implementing and administering government policy on legal aid. This includes managing the Legal Aid Program (LAP), the Financial Assistance Program and the Community Legal Services Program.

The Legal Aid Program is a major element in promoting access to justice. People seek legal aid through the legal aid commissions in each state and territory which provide a range of services for criminal, family and civil law matters - including information and advice, primary dispute resolution and aid for legal representation.

The Challenge

To fulfil its duties, the Legal Aid Program has to access and analyse large amounts of data from the separate commissions. However, the data capture application being used was inadequate for the task: queries took too long; information was often more detailed than needed; financial records could not be accessed and reporting was inefficient. Moreover, the application required a high degree of maintenance that was difficult to provide in-house.

A recent agreement between the Commonwealth Government and the commissions required the Legal Aid Program to obtain better data capture and reporting capabilities. This meant the data capture application had to change substantially to incorporate new requirements. Key among these were standardised search methods flexible enough to meet individual queries, the creation of an integrated repository for both legal and financial information, and accessibility from the department's standard desktop environment.

Key Benefits

- Major productivity improvements
- Delivered on time and within budget
- Innovative use of existing technology
- Simple and flexible in operation
- Cost-efficient and easy to maintain

Our Approach

KAZ provided a multi-disciplinary approach that employed both its business intelligence and technical implementation capabilities.

The first task was to investigate LAP's current information management procedures in order to design an appropriate solution.

Using sophisticated business intelligence methodologies, the KAZ Information Intelligence Consulting Practice conducted a high level analysis of the situation. They then delivered a

comprehensive strategy to address the stated requirements. In addition, they proposed extra measures to further improve the program's information management capabilities.

LAP had initially asked for predefined reports. Instead, KAZ recommended developing a new reporting system. To avoid the need for new software investment, this system would use the department's existing Microsoft applications.

KAZ also suggested using on-line analytical processing (OLAP) technology to provide some data analysis capability. Because a thorough proof of concept approach was offered at the beginning of the project, these suggestions, once validated, were welcomed by the Legal Aid Program.

"KAZ has provided the Legal Aid Program with an easy to use, flexible system that integrates financial and statistical performance information leading to better business decisions and increased automation of key business processes."

*Maryann Brooke, Director,
Legal Aid Program, Legal Assistance Branch,
Indigenous Justice and Legal Assistance
Division,
Attorney-General's Department.*

A close collaborative approach with all stakeholders was actively fostered at all times. KAZ held regular status meetings and provided reports and assigned action items for both LAP and the department's IT group - the Information and Knowledge Services Group. This served to build a strong relationship and was invaluable for the final success of the project.

In addition, the data collection and reporting project teams were closely co-ordinated early on in the engagement to make sure all related requirements were met. The data collection phase used KAZ's .Net development capability while the reporting phase used KAZ's business intelligence abilities.

Throughout the deployment, an iterative approach was used to add key functions in separate stages. This ensured the solution was delivered in manageable components which could be used by LAP as they were completed. Furthermore, feedback could be included in the scope of work for the next iteration.

The Result

The KAZ solution met all of Legal Aid Program's requirements. The department can now rapidly capture quality legal and financial information from a single data environment and generate timely reports.

The solution is also easy to use. Standardised search methods using Microsoft Internet Explorer and Office applications allow seamless integration of data sources with a standard desktop environment via the intranet.

Flexibility is another advantage: with OLAP, users can make ad-hoc queries from their computer without programmer assistance.

"KAZ took our non IT clients and their business requirements and created an application with a business intelligence layer that allows powerful analysis of the data. The business intelligence tools developed by KAZ are simple to use enabling staff at all levels to examine the data, in the appropriate level of detail. KAZ has educated our clients in the use of business intelligence tools."

*Annette Bouchier, Assistant Secretary,
Information & Communications Technology,
Information and Knowledge Services Division,
Attorney-General's Department.*

The end result is that the Legal Aid Program has gained major productivity improvements. Staff now spend far less time finding and combining information and more time on analysis and reporting. Time wasted on error reporting has also been dramatically reduced.



As added benefits, the use of LAP's existing technology keeps costs and maintenance low.

The final implementation was also delivered within budget and in time for the coming financial year's Commonwealth Revenue and Expenditure Review – an important deadline.

In addition, the project has become a model for the department's 'Working Smarter' philosophy, its success earning praise across the division and forming a launching pad for potential business intelligence developments. In fact, the Legal Aid Program is so pleased with the outcome, it is considering KAZ for possible future engagements.

"The project has delivered an outstanding business tool, winning strong support from clients inside and outside the department. The product is an excellent fit to the department's Enterprise Architecture, ensuring its durability and adaptability. The leading practice techniques used by KAZ in this project will serve as a standard for future business intelligence projects in the department."

*Graham Fry, General Manager,
Information and Knowledge Services Division,
Attorney-General's Department.*

More information:

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Main technology components implemented for the Legal Aid Program.

These cover the solution areas of Business Intelligence, Integrated Reporting Datamart, OLAP and Business Reporting, and Desktop Integration.

- Excel based data capture schedules and a schedule generator utility designed by KAZ overcome the data capture challenge of different source systems or data formats at each state/territory commission. The schedules have embedded validation rules to ensure data is acceptable. Data within the schedules is loaded into SQL Server via a custom built data loader .Net application.
- Microsoft Data Transformation Services (DTS) transforms and loads the data into a reporting database and logs associated metadata and audit information.
- Microsoft Reporting Services is used to display predefined reports via the department intranet. These reports have been grouped into operational, management and system reports.
- Microsoft Analysis Services provides two OLAP cubes to support both free form and structured data analysis accessed by the Office Excel add-on for SQL Server Analysis Services.
- Data validation results are available to users by implementing common data consistency checks and audit warnings generated during the data load. These can be viewed via predefined reports available through the intranet.