

mation on base salary, as well as total compensation. There is also a job description. "Accountant I," for example, denotes someone with up to two years of experience.

★★★★ **Salaryexpert.com**  
SalaryExpert.com at <http://salaryexpert.com> was created by Baker, Thomsen Associates, a benefits consulting firm, to allow comparison of salary level and cost-of-living—buying power—in different areas. You get low, average and high salaries for the selected job title and there is a detailed job position description, in this case for an accountant and a systems analyst. The site also provides national salary norms for comparison.

It was a pleasant surprise to see that, while there are differences in the numbers quoted by each of the sites, they may to a substantial extent be explained by the fact that the different sites not only give us information for different years, but also a variable length of job experience. For instance, SalaryExpert and Careerjournal just give the general job title.

So, if you want free and reliable salary information, look at as many surveys as possible and carefully evaluate exactly what the job title and requirements are, as well as when the survey was done.

Other links to sites with listings of salary surveys (some free, some not) are as follows:

- [www.workindex.com](http://www.workindex.com), which is produced and maintained by the Human Resource Executive Magazine in cooperation with Cornell University's School of Industrial Labor Relations.

- [www.jobstar.org/tools/salary](http://www.jobstar.org/tools/salary) links to both general and profession-specific surveys. It is federally funded and originally was intended for California, but lists national surveys as well.

- [www.salary.com](http://www.salary.com), the Surveyfinder from Salary.com, gives lists of surveys you can buy.

- [www.valuationresources.com](http://www.valuationresources.com) has links to both salary surveys and to what it calls industry resources reports, which list surveys specific to an industry.

# Using the Internet

## How Extranets Can Facilitate A Firm's Communications With Its Clients

By Rodney Satterwhite

**B**y making continually updated materials directly accessible to appropriate clients 24 hours a day, seven days a week, extranets—extensions of a company's intranet (i.e., privately maintained computer network)—are revolutionizing the way attorneys collaborate with clients. Law firms that adopted extranets early on have witnessed a shift in both the technology and the way it is being used.

### Client Demand

Perhaps as a result of the risk-adverse nature of the legal profession, law firms still underutilize the opportunity to communicate with clients via extranets. Soon, however, shying away from this technology may not be an option.

According to the New Jersey Law Journal, "In the last year, many firms have found their clients demanding some kind of web access to their case information. Some have even threatened to leave a firm unless such access is made available." Brett A. Balmer, 159 N.J.L.J. 211(1/17/2000), p. 31.

In addition to requesting greater access to information, clients are requesting more control over the

information itself. For example, a rigid structure that can be customized only by the extranet developer is no longer acceptable. Users must be able to customize both the structure and the content of an extranet with minimal developer involvement.

At McGuireWoods LLP, we have attempted to satisfy these demands with rapid deployment extranets that we call McGuireWoods Connect. This service provides our clients with a modular extranet (that is, one containing pre-defined components) based on customizable templates for specific types of engagements: transactions, litigation, intellectual property licensing and employee benefits, to name a few. The templates allow us to create new sites for clients quickly, but still address the specific needs of each client.

Most important, our attorneys and clients can easily modify these extranets. After minimal training, attorneys do not have to rely on the firm's IT staff. In fact, it has become so easy and cost effective to establish a site that we may only keep a site running for 30, 60 or 90 days, and shut it down when the project is over.

### Functions

Extranets can perform several functions. First, they allow geo-

---

**Rodney Satterwhite** is the chief counsel/knowledge management for McGuireWoods, and he is a partner in the firm's Labor & Employment Department in Richmond, Va. E-mail: [rsatterwhite@mcguirewoods.com](mailto:rsatterwhite@mcguirewoods.com). **Eric H. Steele** and **Thomas Scharbach**, the members of Steele Scharbach Associates L.L.C., a Chicago consulting firm specializing in law office technology, contributed to this article. Mr. Steele and Mr. Scharbach can be reached via their company's web site, [www.ssa-lawtech.com](http://www.ssa-lawtech.com).

*Continued on Page 6*

**To order custom reprints or for permission to reprint articles published in American Lawyer Media publications, please contact Syndia J. Torres  
212.545.6111  
[reprints@amlaw.com](mailto:reprints@amlaw.com)**

## Using Extranets

Continued from Page 5

graphically dispersed team members to work together efficiently on a case or transaction. Second, they offer the potential for a "one-stop shop" access point for information that can be used by an entire team handling a case or transaction—lawyers, staff, clients and other law firms and outside parties.

Extranets also allow attorneys to make materials—such as current drafts or information requests—accessible to all appropriate client personnel directly, thereby allowing users to avoid the delay or expense involved when the lawyer has to send out the material to his client or the client has to circulate the material to its personnel.

As a result of this increase in collaboration, law firms can capture the tacit knowledge that represents the intellectual capital of a law firm. Rarely is the advice that a lawyer provides via e-mail or telephone retained or shared with others. In contrast, when lawyers use

threaded discussions such as those contained in extranets to provide this advice, both the questions and the answers, along with comments and input from all parties, can be captured and retained for future use. Thus, in the most fundamental way, extranets facilitate knowledge management.

Finally, extranets can provide clients with routine substantive legal advice maintained and accessible on a continual basis. Examples of this advice include: what to do if a lawsuit is served, an OSHA inspector arrives, an accident occurs or harassment is alleged; and how to obtain a patent or copyright.

The functions available on a rapid deployment extranet like McGuireWoods' do not vary dramatically from the norm: They allow for document sharing with version control, threaded discussions (both asynchronous and live), contact management, calendaring, project management and real time collaboration. However, unlike the norm, because of the high level of user customization available, we can allow individual users to create, modify or remove instances of any of these functional areas. For example, a user could create a new folder for a recently filed lawsuit. He or she could include in that folder a document database, a discussion thread and a case calendar—all without the need for any developer involvement. For those clients who do not want so much hands-on control, we can perform the tasks as needed.

The other benefit is that the firm's legal assistants or lawyers who have the best direct knowledge of the clients' needs and the legal issues in the case actually can shape the extranet as it is being used.

### The Evolution of Extranets

The flexible qualities of rapid deployment extranets have changed the way we use them. First, the conceptual approach to extranets has shifted. In the past, extranets were reactive: They addressed a specific problem related to a specific legal matter. Now, they are

proactive: They can be used at multiple points in the attorney-client relationship even where there is no specific demand for them, to improve the flow of communication. Extranets are now a part of the standard array of services we offer to clients, and are positioned alongside our legal services as a product that has independent value. They are not reserved for large cases or large deals, as they were in the past.

Second, not surprisingly, the number of active extranets that we employ has increased approximately tenfold.

Third, because of the increased numbers, we have identified a need for continuous improvement in the extranet design cycle, an issue that was not as prominent when we employed just a few larger sites. For example, after implementing the first 10 or so McGuireWoods Connect sites, we identified a need to streamline the new user authentication process. We now have standardized guidelines for doing so.

Finally, we are marketing our extranets differently. Because of the increasing prominence of extranets, we recognized early that lawyers must be comfortable with the technology so they can discuss it and use it with their clients and prospective clients. We therefore have focused on internal education and marketing tools to better equip our attorneys to introduce extranets to their own clients. At McGuireWoods, this has included multiple in-house presentations to lawyers, and tools such as live demonstration sites, PowerPoint presentations and marketing brochures.

In conclusion, we have found that the advantages of the extranet evolution far outweigh any concerns. We are able to affect more clients with this technology, and to be more responsive in the process. We can meet and exceed the growing client expectations that have sprung from the corporate embrace of collaborative technology. In short, extranets are now being used as an integral method of enhancing attorney-client relationships.

## American Lawyer Products

*The American Lawyer*  
*The National Law Journal*  
*Corporate Counsel Magazine*  
*The New York Law Journal*  
*Delaware Law Weekly*  
*IP Worldwide*  
*Law Technology News*  
*Law Journal Press*  
*Legal Intelligencer*  
*Legal Times*  
*New Jersey Law Journal*  
*Pennsylvania Law Weekly*  
*Texas Lawyer*

**For subscription  
information, call  
(212) 313-9373 or e-mail  
[circ@amlaw.com](mailto:circ@amlaw.com)**