Marine consultancy gets Enterprise search for free

TMC Marine takes advantage of open source with Lemur Consulting's free Flax Basic software

TMC Marine is a UK-based firm offering a number of consultancy services to the shipping industry. These range from planning salvage/wreck removal to cargo surveys, superintendancy, technical investigation and ship condition assessments. This complicated industry relies heavily on recording highly detailed information. TMC Marine currently has over 300,000 documents on its servers; precedence outlines, technical sheets and reports on specifics of individual ships. These documents exist in a variety of formats including Adobe PDFs, Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

Data proliferation was making searching for information via a traditional directory tree-structure impractical and time-consuming. And so TMC Marine turned to Lemur Consulting. Lemur Consulting builds tailor-made search engines around an open source core; allowing companies to gain a tailor-made search solution that is also highly cost-effective. Lemur Consulting also offers a pared-down version of its Flax Enterprise Search Software for free: Flax Basic.

Flax Basic easily installs on Microsoft Windows. It can conduct complex multi-term searches rapidly, and is one of the fastest such systems on the market. It will search effectively inside files in common formats such as Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Adobe Acrobat, HTML, RTF and plain text. The search engine is completely scaleable with no limit on the number of documents or records searched. The basic version even includes automatic spelling correction.

Lemur Consulting provided TMC Marine with Flax Basic along with the support needed to get the search facility installed and running in minimal time. Flax Basic tied in to all of the computers across TMC's network, and was set to index all of its data every day. TMC Marine also had the option of selecting to synchronise certain individual folders or network areas during periods of heavy network traffic. The results were immediate. TMC Marine found the interface easy to use and perfect for its needs.

"Although we're still in the early stages, some of our Directors have used the system and they think it's fantastic," said Dhiresh Raghwani, IT Manager, TMC Marine. "I've been using the system for a while myself and I think it's brilliant. Our consultants no longer need waste time digging through directory structures. Flax Basic is likely to free up significant time for our consultants to be more productive in other areas. This will almost certainly be beneficial for our bottom line."

Charlie Hull, CEO of Lemur Consulting, added his viewpoint. "It's funny, but companies often don't realise the magnitude of the benefits of efficient search

until they have a system installed. The benefits of Flax Basic are so immediately apparent that it often acts as a wake-up call to extend to the fuller-featured software, Flax. Flax searches quickly, securely and comprehensively. In the long run efficient search can save a huge amount of time and money. This, and the cost-effective nature of open source-based products make Flax the perfect option for improving business efficiency in these difficult times."

While Flax Basic is comprehensive for document search, the core technology can be expanded upon to search email, web pages and records within databases, both proprietary and open source. Flax technology offers wildcard, phrase and proximity searching, faceted search and support for user tags. In addition to spelling corrections the full version also offers autocompletion, thesaurus and synonym support, as well as stemming for 14 different languages.

Further information on Flax Basic can be found at www.flax.co.uk

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About Lemur Consulting

Lemur is highly active in the information retrieval market with international clients from sectors including academia, public relations, e-commerce, government and private businesses. As a cross-section Lemur's clients include/have included Accenture, the Newspaper Licensing Authority (NLA), The University of Cambridge and Mydeco. Lemur's Flax™ software delivers a cutting-edge enterprise search solution, using the power of open source software to drive down costs and provide world beating search performance with no software licence fees. http://www.flax.co.uk

Lemur is also the developer of Bamboo™, a collaborative, web-enabled multimedia database system used by academics and researchers.

Lemur's accolades include an award from the British Computing Society for its powerful, innovative search tools.

About TMC Marine

TMC provides a high quality, technical investigation and surveying service to the marine insurance, ship owning and legal professions.

TMC (Marine Consultants) Ltd was established in 1979 by three partners, each of whom brought many years of marine surveying experience to the company. Since that time shipping has undergone many changes and during this period TMC has grown and adapted to meet the challenges of today's demanding maritime industry.

The company employs over 20 people in the UK, and is certified by Det Norske Veritas to 9001:2000 Quality Assurance Standard, and has offices close to The City of London, in Chatham and in Newcastle.

For further information see http://www.tmcmarine.co.uk/