

BERWIN LEIGHTON PAISNER CASE STUDY



“We couldn't have achieved such a high standard without the help of FAST.”

Berwin Leighton Paisner lays down the law to ensure Software Compliance

FAST Award adds gravitas and provides competitive advantage.

Berwin Leighton Paisner (BLP) is a highly regarded City law firm, which employs over 900 people and has an annual turnover of over £100m.

It was formed in 2001, by merging two experienced companies - Paisners and Berwin Leighton. The company's areas of expertise encompass real estate as well as the corporate and financial sectors.

BLP's IT department is as committed to best practice as each and every one of the company's legal practitioners, and consequently has recently been awarded Best IT Law Firm of the Year by The Lawyer magazine and the British Computer Society's IT Director of the Year. As part of BLP's ongoing drive to improve efficiency, its IT department made the decision to take a closer look at its assets and in particular to ensure its software licences were in order.

Kathy Hanna, IT project co-ordinator and compliance officer, at BLP takes up the story: "Although we felt that we were in control of our assets for the most part, we wanted to provide proof, especially as the company was growing rapidly and the merger was in the pipeline."

Kathy turned to FAST for assistance, which would provide her with the comprehensive methodology that she would need in order to achieve complete software licence compliance.

Early days

Kathy's first step on the road to licence enlightenment was to attend a FAST software management day. This involved a number of training seminars and workshops, followed by a short examination. This covered the basics of the FAST programme, and prepared Kathy for the task ahead.

Whilst BLP already had in place a Peregrine asset management tool that had been purchased in advance of Y2K, FAST advised that the first practical step should be to revise policies and procedures so that BLP's users would know what they were and were not allowed to do. Auditing the network before implementing policies is a pointless exercise unless users are aware of their responsibilities.

It's a bit like mopping up a flood before turning off the taps, because users may still be introducing illegal or unwanted software onto the company network.

Kathy's team created clear and concise policies and procedures to cover all aspects of software procurement and use. These were backed up by disciplinary measures to show employees the consequences of being found in breach of the policies.

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This also demonstrated the seriousness of the programme. Open days for everyone in the firm were arranged, to raise awareness amongst users.

On the whole, BLP's users welcomed the introduction of the policies, and were happy to sign them off. As commercial lawyers, they recognised the importance of dealing with intellectual property issues, and more importantly, were keen to avoid any potential litigation themselves.

"We didn't meet much resistance from users, who easily understood the legal implications of not being compliant," said Kathy.

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Checking the books

The next step for Kathy and her team was to conduct a full audit of BLP's 62 servers and 1,066 PCs. Only 900 PCs were networked, so as well as an electronic audit of the network with the Peregrine tool, a walk-round audit was also done so that details of the non-networked equipment could be recorded.

This was time-consuming, as the Peregrine tool could not identify some of the specialist software files used by BLP. Each unidentified file had to be checked individually before the audit register was deemed complete.

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Once the audit was complete, Kathy then reconciled the audit register with licences and invoices to demonstrate proof of purchase. There was virtually no shortfall, so very few additional licences had to be purchased - something that Kathy is very proud of.

“I knew that we already had very good controls in place which meant that most software purchases were managed centrally by the IT department,” said Kathy. “However, compiling the asset register was the proof that I needed to show to our partners, and meant that further expansion of the business wouldn't pose a problem.”

Certified

Kathy presented BLP's audit submission to FAST for approval, which was given after an on-site visit. “The idea of the inspector was quite scary, but when he arrived in person, he was very human and understood the issues that we were up against.”

BLP was then presented with the FAST Gold award for software compliance. “We couldn't have achieved such a high standard without the help of FAST,” said Kathy. “I was especially impressed with the regular legal updates, which alerted me to changes in legislation.”

Kathy also used the telephone helpline to discuss specific issues with a FAST Account Manager to clarify grey areas. “Each supplier has different licence agreements, and we would ask for advice on how to interpret these, which was a clear benefit of the FAST Compliance Programme.”

Returns

Although difficult to quantify any sort of return on investment, Kathy has already realised some of the benefits of FAST compliance. In competitive bids, the FAST award shows that the IT department works to a recognised industry standard, providing competitive advantage over other law firms during the bidding process.

During negotiations with software publishers, Kathy has been able to prove that BLP is 100 per cent compliant to speed up the process. She also saved money on a recent Quark upgrade, by identifying that there was no need for the full product.

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For more information please call **0844 815 5742**, email **contactus@fast-compliance.co.uk** or visit **www.fast-compliance.co.uk**