



## Xicon at Work

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**Peter Attwood,**  
IT Manager,  
Simmons & Simmons



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**T**here's always too much to do these days. If you switch between multiple applications, then repeatedly entering user names and passwords is a chore.

For the international law firm Simmons & Simmons, a major new IT project required an easier solution. Using Xicon's services, the company has implemented Oracle Portal 10g to provide a single secure sign-on, easier application access, and the foundation for a full corporate portal.

Simmons & Simmons is based in London with offices in Europe, the Middle and Far East, and North America. Employing over 1,850 staff, it is a broad-based legal practice covering key industry sectors and legal service areas. Simmons & Simmons was the only law firm to win the 2003 Queen's Award for Enterprise in international trade.

The company has major systems for finance, customer relationship management, and workflow. It is now investing over £3 million in new business management applications. These include Thomson Elite for financials, customer relationship management from Interface Software, and MetaStorm's business process management system. The project was driven by the need for more financial information on the desktop.

### **Too many passwords**

According to IT Manager Peter Attwood, there was a login issue even before the project got underway. While everyone had a Windows login, personnel using additional legacy systems had to login repeatedly on demand. Remembering and using one login and password is easy enough; any more and it becomes a burden.

Simmons & Simmons



"You can get around passwords by allowing people to use the same password in different systems. However, they still didn't like being challenged and re-challenged."

There was another problem. Users also needed to know where to sign-in to these disparate systems. For example, some applications were hosted on back-office servers, others were reached through the corporate intranet while one financial system was even more isolated. The £3 million Business Management System (BMS) project called for a change.

"The project sponsors said we had to come up with a single point of entry and make it look seamless," said Attwood. "We were therefore looking for something that was password synchronised and only challenged once."



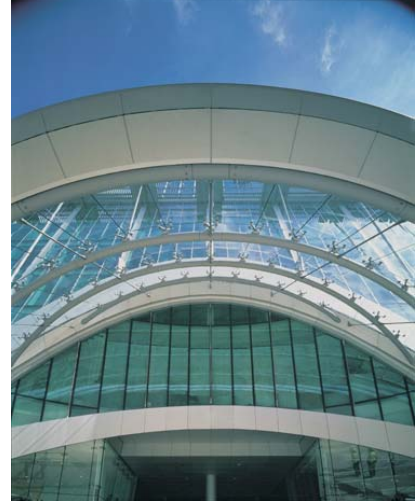
Simmons & Simmons has a heterogeneous infrastructure of Microsoft desktops, Novell servers/networks, and Oracle databases. Chosen as best-of-breed solutions, these systems were nicely matched to in-house technical skills.

As the BMS project became more advanced, the company became aware that a 'portal' might offer the answers. However, the underlying sign-on mechanism in each new application was different. Any portal had to use a browser and an Oracle database too.



#### Logical choice

An evaluation of Oracle, Microsoft, and Novell options then followed. This meant answering questions such as how quickly might a portal be implemented; how well would it fit; and how much might it cost? Simmons & Simmons quickly homed in on Oracle Portal 10g (a component of Oracle Application Server), partly because of in-house skills and the database environment. There was the right advice and support too.



Despite the need to upgrade the company's databases from Oracle 9i to 10g, the advantages were clear. 10g offered excellent integration between application servers and other web technologies. Xicon also offered a one-stop shop service including installation, configuration, development, training, advice, and support. "Xicon advised us once we'd made our minds up and then gave us every help that we needed," said Attwood.

"Xicon have been our Oracle partner for many years," said Attwood. "We buy our licences from Xicon as well as their Oracle training and development services. They built us a demonstration Oracle Portal 10g system to show single sign-on. It was also the cheapest solution by quite a long way."

# Xicon: Oracle Partner of Choice



"We had defined what Oracle Portal was going to look like and how much information we were going to bring from our systems into the portal," said Attwood.

Three Sun dual-processor servers were installed for portal development, testing, and production. Xicon then installed the new Oracle 10g elements including the infrastructure, portal middle tiers, metadata repository, and a database. At the same time, Xicon gave practical advice to the company's database administrators about 10g database migration.

Xicon then configured Oracle Portal's single sign-on features for logging-in to different applications. The work was detailed and included the writing of scripts as well as advice on Portlet development. Portlets are re-usable components that expose an underlying information source for desktop presentation in the portal. These components may be built using graphical tools.

## A single sign-on and more

Oracle Portal 10g goes beyond single sign-on by pulling information in from Simmons & Simmons' new CRM system and Business Objects. Another small application is an illustrated staff directory. Simmons & Simmons also took consultancy and workshop training from Xicon on site and via web-conferencing. Xicon consultants remained on hand to assist the project team throughout and were, in turn, backed by support from Oracle.

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## Key Facts

### Solution Summary

Oracle Portal 10g to provide a single sign-on for major new business applications and for future role-based portal development.

### Key Benefits

- Single secure application sign-on
- Increased security
- Future portal development

### Oracle Software

- Oracle 10g Application Server
- Oracle Portal 10g

### Hardware

- Sun

### Number of Users

- 1,850



The new portal went live in February 2005, for the first set of users in the Paris office, following some training in the new single sign-on procedures. At the moment, Oracle Portal 10g is inward-facing but there are tentative ideas for customer access. Major applications supported via the portal include Interface Software's InterAction, Thomson Elite and Metastorm e-Work.

Using a single user name and password once for signing on has proved a great benefit. Oracle Portal 10g passes the user's credentials to all the required applications when an additional login is needed. A centrally-administered login server ensures that user authentication is seamless and transparent for each permitted application.

**"The Oracle Portal is working well.**

**It's given us a single point of entry and a single sign-on to our applications," said Attwood.**

The work is unlikely to stop there. Apart from extending the portal to external customers, perhaps for access to financial information such as invoices, it may be configured to support different internal roles with multiple views. Another possibility is advanced document searching using Oracle Ultrasearch, an out-of-the-box solution.

Oracle Portal 10g has opened the door to a simpler yet more productive future.

#### About Xicon

*Xicon was founded in 1991 as a systems integrator and IT solutions company. Xicon helps its customers maximise their business advantage by providing a total solution as a strategic technology partner. Xicon does this through exceptional service delivery, which is only possible due to the high quality of its people and the culture in which they operate.*

*For more information on Xicon's solutions or to arrange a meeting with one of Xicon's Principal Consultants please initially contact Nancy Handley on 01925 248224.*

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