

## **Legal 4 All Information Management System and Web Portal**

### **1. Introduction**

An organization's success greatly depends on its ability to get accurate and timely data on its operations of varied nature and to manage this data effectively to guide its activities. There is tremendous flow of information or data both within and from outside any organization. This amount of data available may explode by leaps and bounds, and the value of the data as an organizational asset should be widely recognized. If the organization does not have the ability to manage and store this vast volume of data, and to quickly retrieve the required information that is most relevant to a given query, then this data tends to become a distraction and liability, rather than an asset. This irony drives the need for an increasingly powerful and flexible Information Management System. Although data the key ingredient used to generate information, not all data provides relevant and timely information. As a consequence, sheer volume of data can be a burden to the organization if it is not processed with clear-cut objectives in mind. To get the most out of these large and complex data sets, organizations must have the right tools that simplify the tasks of managing the data and extracting useful information timeously using an effective and efficient user-oriented information system.

### **2. Background**

Law 4 All, is a legal aid that functions on a membership basis providing individuals and companies with access to affordable access to legal services. Its mission is to help individuals and companies fight against inequality and disregard for individuals' rights arising when there is an imbalance of power.

Law 4 All provides various legal aid packages which members and potential members alike can choose from . Once subscribed, the member becomes eligible for legal representation from recommended legal practitioners.

### **3. Current System Work Flow**

#### **3.1 Member Registration**

The registration process is done through the completion and submission of a physical form to Law 4 All offices where payments are made and the member information is recorded in Microsoft Excel sheets or Microsoft Access.

#### **3.2 Claims**

Members fill out a form requesting for legal representation and manually submit to Law 4 All and Law 4 All will manually check through Microsoft Excel sheets if the member is eligible for legal aid. If the member is eligible, the firm will recommend a legal practitioner who will once case is closed bill Law 4 All.

The member's account will be manually updated to reflect the closed case and costs involved.

### **3.3 Billing**

Members are manually reminded of their subscription renewals and outstanding balances. Branches have their own lists of members and records which are manually synchronised with the Head Office's master file.

## **4 Problem Definition**

The following pain points are in our view impeding Law 4 All's efficiency in managing members overall which includes registrations, renewals and payments\subscriptions;

4.1.1 Law 4 All currently uses Microsoft Excel sheets to register and store member information from their multiple branches and information storage system is decentralized. This may cause data inconsistencies and loss of integrity of the circa 3000 members

- Branches around the country and a decentralized information storage system present difficulties and time consuming tasks to keep track of day to day activities.
- A member is registered at the branch where they registered and their records are only accessible at that branch until such time when records are manually synchronized with the Head Office's master file. And the records not in realtime synched with other branches nationwide. This in turn slows down membership verification and validation of membership during claims in the event that a member tries to get service from a different branch from the one they initially registered.
- There are delays in report generation as this is a manual process i.e. generation of the following reports for a specific period and category\package;
  - Number of active and inactive members
  - Number of pending registrations, registered members and members with expired

- Members requesting for service will have to visit Law 4 All office to fill out forms and get their membership validated which is a manual and time consuming.
- Member payments are either made at Law 4 All, deposited at the bank or transferred via mobile wallets after which the member will manually submit the proof of payment to allow for their records to be updated in Microsoft Excel. This information will only reflect at the branch where the payment was made until such time when the master file at the Head Office is updated.
- Manual billing might not remind the members of their due to expire, expired subscriptions and debts which makes member tracking cumbersome as the members increase in number.
- Updating of member information ie. contact or member package upgrade\downgrade etc. is being done manually by visiting or emailing Law 4 All.

## 5 Objectives

Law 4 All Information Management System and Web Portal is tailor made to improve organisational efficiency by streamlining current manual processes and introduce flawless, automated and realtime information exchange between branches and access of legal aid services for members and practitioners via the Web Portal. This will also allow for quick and realtime reports generation from any Law 4 All branch. The list below details what the Management of Information System aims to achieve as we envision it;

- **Centralized Storage:** Aims to provide a central repository database for all branches thus in turn improve data integrity and consistency by having the same match of data at any given time.
- **Accessibility:** Aims to improve the way information is submitted, viewed and shared between all branches by providing an online platform for both members and Law 4 All to help keep track of all registrations, membership renewals and claims at branches nationwide.
- **Portal:** Aims to provide an online platform accessible from any location provided there is internet connectivity to enable remote member registration, membership subscription renewal payments and members'

legal aid requests thus increasing efficiency and productivity as this will in turn will reduce data capturing work at the Head Office and saves members travel time.

- **Billing:** Aims to provide an automated system that will remind both Law 4 All and members of any outstanding balances and expiry of memberships. This will also help Law 4 All to validate membership status upon request of legal aid from the member ie. The ability to view member account status and quick decision making on eligibility.
- **Online Payments:** Aims to provide a portal with an online payment gateway to allow members to make payments and update the records accordingly from any location where there is internet connectivity. Accepted payment methods are Ecocash, Telecash, ZimSwitch, VISA and MASTERCARD
- **Communication:** Aims to provide a platform where Law 4 All and legal practitioners can communicate regarding claims and legal service provision while keeping a record of the claim on the member's dashboard and all claims from the legal practitioner by date, amount, case number, etc.
- **Legal Practitioners:** Aims to provide a central repository for all legal practitioners, their specialities and locations. The system may also allow for legal practitioners to register with Law 4 All to have them added to the recommended legal practitioners list.
- **Efficiency:** Aims to reduce time to process queries i.e. generation of reports to aid decision making at the click of a button eg. reports such as number of expired subscriptions, debtors, active\ inactive members by period (year, month or week) and package.
- **Security:** Aims to provide a secure data storage by providing access levels and login credentials to eligible Law 4 All staff members.

## **6 Hypothesis**

The Information Management System is going to be web based and will work off a database. The database will have the ability to handle numerous simultaneous transactions and will be easy to use for personnel with minimum IT knowledge.

## **7 Justification**

There is need for an online Information Management System development to overcome the following;

- Delays in generating reports, accessing and retrieving data
- Inaccuracy of manually validated membership status
- Delayed access and updating of membership records and claims from other branches
- Data inconsistency i.e. whenever data is retrieved current data should be displayed for all branches nationwide

## **8 Conclusion**

The Information Management System will help improve efficiency and productivity at Law 4 All by providing ease of access of pertinent information to all Law 4 All stakeholders.