



Getting 'smart' with your user interface

SV Technology and Handshake Software have formed an alliance to create a new version of SV's LawPort legal portal system (which is sold and supported via Tikit in the UK) that will be based on Microsoft's Web Parts and SharePoint technologies. The move coincides with the growing view that in the .NET era, the days of delivering portal content through limited functionality, thin but relatively dumb web browsers are drawing to a close and that 'smart' or 'rich client' user interfaces will take their place.

'Smart client' is defined as applications (such as Microsoft Outlook and Word) and devices that can take advantage of the power of off-line local processing but have the flexibility of web-based computing – and so overcome the principal drawback with web systems that you cannot use them when you are not connected to the internet.

According to a Jupitermedia research paper, published on the Microsoft web site, over 65% of organisations using web-based applications have encountered connection problems, with one \$100 million SAP project deemed so "utterly unusable" that staff resorted to manual, paper-based methods to work around the limitations of the software.

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The post Y2K tech boom finally arrives

Has the long awaited post-Y2K legal technology boom finally arrived, with law firms now getting around to replacing all those Windows NT generation systems they installed in the late 1990s? If the financial results reported by legal systems suppliers over the past few weeks are anything to go by, then the answer is a resounding 'yes' – and let the good times roll once more.

Earlier this month the Tikit Group, which as an AIM-listed company has to comply with the strictest accounting standards, reported its interim results for the six months to 30th June 2004. These showed a turnover of £5.89m – an increase of 52% on last year – and net profits up 83% to £429k. Interestingly, the strongest area of growth was in sales of third-party software, which grew by 70%, prompting chairman Mike McGoun to comment that "This confirms our view that the next cycle of replenishment of IT systems has begun, following the major upgrades at the turn of the millennium." Traditionally Tikit, which next month celebrates ten years in the legal IT market, has enjoyed a busier second half to its trading year.

Privately owned Visualfiles (previously Solicitec) also published bullish results for its trading year ended 30th June, with group turnover up 18% to £9.44m and net profits of £434k. One of the fastest growing areas was Visualfiles Scotland, which recorded a 34% increase in turnover, but the company's new Australian subsidiary is now also profitable and overall the group already has in excess of £3 million in its order book.

Eclipse Legal Systems, another case management software specialist, reported a 35% increase in its turnover to £3.1m for the year to 30th June and "a commensurate rise in profitability" while Practtice has just reported "its best summer ever" winning six contracts, worth in total £300k, for its new .NET Osprey.TM practice management and Groupware email systems.

Russell-Cooke orders Axxia

Russell-Cooke has selected Axxia Systems as its preferred partner for a major IT upgrade that will see the top 200 firm installing Axxia's accounts, fee earner desktop, practice management and management reporting systems. Although neither side has made any official comment, Insider sources suggest the deal was a two horse race between Elite and Axxia, with Axxia winning because the firm was concerned Elite would prove to be too complex and expensive to implement.

By coincidence we are also hearing reports that a top 200 firm in the north of England has recently reached a similar conclusion and will be opting for a more conventional PMS. We've said before that Elite seems unstoppable but perhaps it does have an Achilles' heel – that once you get outside the top 100, Elite becomes too big, too complex and too costly to implement and that firms who do want that little bit of extra functionality would be better off adding an MIS, such as Cognos, to a standard PMS.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ TWO WINS FOR VIDESS

Family lawyers Avery Naylor in Swansea and leading Kent firm DGB Solicitors are the latest practices to install Videss Legal Office case and practice management systems.

■ METASTORMS INTO PANNONE

Pannone & Partners has gone live with its implementation of the Metastorm e-Work workflow and business process management system. The system, which was installed by e-Work specialists ResSoft, is being used to streamline internal processes for handling case referrals and case management.

■ SMITHS SWAP OUT DEBTCO

The Smith Partnership in the East Midlands is to swap out its AIM Debtco system and install Visualfiles software in its place to handle volume debt recovery work. On the decision to replace Debtco, Smith's partner Russell Davies said the firm wanted a system that could provide clients with extranet access to place instructions and monitor the status of cases and that while "many suppliers talked the talk," Visualfiles was "in a league of its own" when it came delivering an online debt package.

■ AUTONOMY IS GOOD IDEa

The UK's Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) is installing the Autonomy search and retrieval system and working with ResSoft to implement an agency-wide knowledge management system.

■ RTA CASE AT GORMAN HAMILTON

Road traffic accident claims specialists Gorman Hamilton is spending £120k on a new 75-user ProClaim case management system from Eclipse Legal Systems. The budget also includes a new file server for its Newcastle head office and thin-client links to its Leeds office.

■ COBBETTS INSTALL IP TELEPHONY

Cobbetts has contracted Bailey Telecom (0113 243 9921) to install a £140k IP telephony solution that will integrate the firm's three sites in Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham into a single 700-user virtual office. The new system will also support the firm's move towards a hot-desking working environment. www.baileytelecom.co.uk

New partnerships and perspectives at TFB

TFB has become the first UK supplier of case management systems to be appointed a technology partner of Workshare. The result is Workshare's market leading DeltaView red liner and document comparison application will now be available to existing and prospective users of TFB's Partner for Windows case management software in the UK and Ireland. TFB also see the DeltaView integration as a way of making case management systems more attractive to commercial practices, who have traditionally regarded case technology as inappropriate to the less formally structured, more ad hoc nature of their workloads.

In a related development, TFB is to start rolling out a series of applications that have been developed by law firms to add extra functionality to the Partner for Windows suite. The first of these is a management information system developed by TFB user Fraser Brown. Further products in the pipeline include financial services and personnel management systems. www.tfbplc.co.uk

Cut price PDF creation

Avanquest UK has released eXPert PDF version 3 Pro, which was developed by parent company BVRP. This is a highly comprehensive PDF file creation application, including password protected encryption, that is broadly comparable with Adobe Standard – except on price. eXPert PDF retails for £39.99 compared with £249.99 for Adobe. It is available through major software retailers. www.avanquest.co.uk

Solution 6 rebrands as Aderant

Solution 6 Professional has changed its brand and company name to Aderant. Despite sounding like a posh word for glue, the new name is actually derived from Latin words meaning to aid, advise and offer expert opinion. Aderant will continue to develop and deliver its core products, including CMS.Net, Novient, Business Intelligence (formerly Net Results), Keystone and CABS into the law firm and professional services markets. The rebranding follows the recent change in ownership of the group with the remaining part of the Solution 6 business in Australia now known as MYOB.

In other Aderant news: the company has added an Opportunity Calculator module to its Business Intelligence suite. The new module enables firms to predict the profitability of new business by running 'what if' scenarios for new matters.

And, Thompsons, one of the UK's largest personal injury law practices, has become the latest firm to order Aderant's flagship CMS.Net practice management system. Thompsons, which selected Aderant from a shortlist of four suppliers and will be rolling out CMS.Net to 20 offices nationwide, currently runs a bespoke practice management system. www.aderant.com

Copitrak adds research cost recovery to portfolio

Copitrak Systems (020 7621 2350) has launched Researchtrak, a new desktop application that tracks the amount of time lawyers spend conducting legal research online, allocates it to relevant client/matter numbers and then automatically posts the cost to the firm's billing system. Copitrak's Mark Gower says the system, which can be managed centrally, both removes the need to wait for bills to arrive from service providers, such as Lexis and Westlaw, before costs can be allocated to client accounts and should make the manual reconciliation and inputting of bills a thing of the past.

Thomson Elite, which launched its rival online research cost recovery system earlier this summer, reports that an informal survey of delegates attending its recent annual user conference found that over 90% were looking for assistance with validating and managing online research, as well as improving subsequent cost recovery and billing.

US know-how vendor sets up distribution channels in UK

Recommind, the US company behind the MindServer Legal knowledge management system, hopes to announce details of its first UK law firm win, plus a raft of new US signings, later this autumn. In addition the company now has a channel partner programme underway and has signed up both Baker Robbins (020 7923 5100) and Phoenix Business Solutions (08707 351426) to act as legal market partners in the UK. Further afield, Indigo Systems has become Recommind's partner in Australia.

Consultants are from Saturn

This month sees the launch of Saturn Legal (0207 399 7788), a new consultancy specialising in practice management systems with particular expertise in Elite and CMS and their related Rol and implementation issues. The two founders are Lindsay Barthram, previously with Elite and Tikit, and Vince Dimalta, previously with a top 10 firm. www.saturnlegal.co.uk

Better document automation?

Tikit and Korbitec, the South African company best known for its GhostFill document assembly software, have formed a partnership to develop a new lawyer-friendly document automation system. Called SmartDraft and scheduled for release in spring 2005, this new .NET system will still use GhostFill as its back end but will have a plain English user interface so it can be used by anyone, rather than just IT staff specifically trained in document assembly mark-up and coding languages.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ CUSTOMS DEBT WORK WIN

Clarke Willmott says one of the factors contributing towards its recent appointment as the main solicitor for civil debt recovery work, on behalf of HM Customs & Excise, was its IT infrastructure. The firm uses Linetime's DebttimeSQL as the platform for its debt recovery work.

■ CURWENS ORDER SOS

Fourteen partners Curwens, which has five offices in the north London/home counties area, has ordered a new accounts and case management system from SOS. The project also includes scanning and email integration.

■ NEW HR SYSTEM AT LEVENES

Computers in Personnel (0870 366 2300) has been awarded a contract by specialist litigation practice Levenes to supply the firm with its Ciphre People human resources and people management software. The firm will also be installing the Ciphre Net self-service module. www.computersinpersonnel.com

■ TIKIT ACQUIRE EURO Foothold

Tikit has purchased the French IT systems integrator and consultancy Lecsoft SAS for an initial consideration of €1 million in cash and shares and a further payment, subject to targets being met, of €2 million. The move gives Tikit offices in Paris and Madrid, both to service existing French and Spanish clients and to serve the growing number of US firms opening continental European offices and now looking for local IT support facilities.

■ WRAGGE'S COMPLIANCE TEST

Wragge & Co, in conjunction with Cognos, have devised Compliance IQ, a new self assessment tool that allows financial services organisations to measure their compliance with regulations. www.compliance-iq.com

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PEOPLE & PLACES

■ LSSA GETS NEW CHAIRMAN

Barry Hawley-Green, the founder and chairman of the Laserform/LFM group, has become the new chairman of the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA). He replaces Alan Richardson of Norwel, who has stood down after three years in the chair. In the wake of the recent SDLT (Stamp Duty Land Tax) debacle, Hawley-Green says one of his objectives is to ensure more organisations, whose initiatives have an impact on legal software design, consult with LSSA before imposing any changes.

■ PILGRIM'S NEW MARKETING HEAD

Pilgrim Systems has appointed Maxine Henderson, previously head of marketing at Scottish law firm Henderson Boyd Jackson, as its new marketing manager.

■ INHOUSE TRAINING MAKES GRADE

Browne Jacobson has become one of only a few law firms in the UK to be accredited with 'international training department' status by the Institute of IT Training. The accreditation recognises the firm's exceptional inhouse training facilities.

■ COPITRAK HAS MOVED

Copittrak Systems UK has moved to new premises at 5th Floor, 52-54 Gracechurch Street, London EC3V 0EH. The new phone number is 020 7621 2350.

■ ALL CHANGE AT COGNITO

Zahid Hamid has left Cognito Software and group marketing manager Tony Dean has been given responsibility for the Cognito legal systems business.

■ BOWL HIM A GOOGLY

Congratulations to John Eddowes of copy and litigation support bureau Legastat for having his book *The Language of Cricket* (Carcant Press) cited as an authority by the commentators on *Test Match Special* when discussing the term 'bowl him a Chinaman'.

TYPO CORNER

Pericom have been in touch to say their recent win at Birchall Blackburn was not a swap out of an old Avenue system but a replacement of an AIM Professional system. Our apologies to TFB, who took over Avenue Legal Systems in 2001.

Mobile working - different horses for courses

Although the last 12 months will probably go down in history as the Year of the BlackBerry – as more and more lawyers have adopted the handheld device as not only their PDA of choice but also as a viable alternative to lugging around a laptop – we should not lose sight of the fact there are alternative wireless technologies out there.

Gateley Wareing, which has three offices in the Midlands, has settled on HP iPaq pocket PCs running Microsoft Windows Mobile, so staff continue working with their familiar office applications, including Microsoft Outlook and Word while out on the road. Gateley Wareing has also implemented the **Smartner** (01223 353535) Duality systems (available through **Teksys** 01923 247707) to provide a communications link between the iPaq users and their desktop applications, as well as the firm's email network. The firm's IT manager Dee Scarlett said one of the attractions is that even where mobile access is poor, lawyers can still work on their iPacs. www.smartner.com

In contrast, **Tarlo Lyons** has eschewed the PDA approach for smart phones – in their case the Sony Ericsson P900 – running the **OpenHand** (020 8962 3270) mobile email software application. According to the firm's IT director Simon Bennett, the advantages of the OpenHand software include the fact it is device independent and totally secure. In the latter case, not only are communications between the OpenHand server and the P900s protected by 128bit encryption but because no data is actually stored on the phones, if a P900 is lost or stolen, there is no confidential data at risk of being compromised.

www.openhand-mobile.com

However we are living in the BlackBerry era so no piece on mobile computing would be complete without some news about that device. Over in the US, the latest development is that the legal publisher **West** has now joined the BlackBerry ISV alliance programme so subscribers to the Westlaw Wireless service can now access legal information via their BlackBerrys.

Staying with the US theme, following the successful rollout of the BlackBerry to lawyers in its New York offices, **Clifford Chance** has now begun rolling it out to lawyers in the UK. By July, over 300 lawyers were using it, in conjunction with the BlackBerry BES Enterprise Server, to access their emails, office calendars and address books. (BES automatically synchronises each user's device with their office mail box.) The firm's project manager Rob Flack said "the BlackBerry's simplicity and ease of use was a major selling point". The firm worked with **Isis Telecommunications** (0870 1635000) on the UK rollout.

www.isistelecom.com

Finally, **AT Communications** has developed a range of new software for the BlackBerry that will allow lawyers to keep track of billable time, as well as access internal billing systems and documents via a wireless link. The company is currently offering a 30-day free trial of the software. For more details call 08700 558080 quoting reference BBT004. www.atcommunications.co.uk

Records management on way thanks to acquisition

Having already added email management to document management, Interwoven now plans to create a single unified records system that also encompasses paper documents.

The first step was last month's acquisition by Interwoven of Software Intelligence, a leading US supplier of records management systems. SI's current RM product has now been renamed Interwoven Records Manager and is initially being integrated with Interwoven WorkSite, with a target launch date of just two weeks' time on 30th September. This will be followed next year by an all-new version of the Records Manager system.

Interwoven vice-president Dan Carmel said that as well as providing a framework for managing documents and content, whether in a physical or digital format, for their complete life cycle, from creation to archiving, the introduction of Interwoven Records Manager would also make it easier for organisations to formulate and manage comprehensive retention compliance policies. Carmel said firms would now be able to centrally manage and automatically assign retention policies at a client, project or folder level to ensure that no documents were inadvertently destroyed, nor retained any longer than necessary.

The initial response in the US has been positive. One US firm said they were "expecting good and got better" while Jeffrey Schwarz of McDermott Will & Emery said it would overcome the risks associated with "managing records retention in silos".

■ Interwoven has also extended the scope of its email management technology to include Lotus Notes – the system can already handle Outlook and Novell GroupWise.

Workshare beefs up metadata protection and launches risk site

Earlier this month Workshare launched two new initiatives to help law firms minimise the risk of inadvertently exposing potentially damaging or sensitive metadata in their documents.

The first was the launch of a version 3.0 of its Protect content control application. Enhancements introduced in the new version include support for Excel and PowerPoint, the ability to convert documents into a PDF file format without the need to purchase additional software, the ability to introduce standard metadata policy settings (on how and what metadata should be cleaned automatically from documents) at a practice wide or departmental level, and support for Lotus Notes and GroupWise so metadata can now be stripped from all emails – the system already supports Outlook.

In a related development Workshare has launched a content security resource web site offering information, best practices, assessment tools (including Metafind, a free software download that can highlight the metadata floating on your own site) and a forum to help individuals and organisations understand and assess metadata risk. www.metadatarisk.org

D&W pick Xvar over Computacenter

Edinburgh-based systems house Xvar (0131 551 7010) has completed a major infrastructure migration project for Dundas & Wilson, which has seen the Scottish law firm move from a Lotus Notes messaging environment to a Microsoft Exchange 2003 plus Outlook platform. The project, which was completed on schedule – despite the fact that to avoid disruption to users, most of the migration work had to start around midnight each night – also involved integrating Exchange with the firm's Hummingbird document management system.

Although Xvar has worked for a number of mid-sized law firms (it is also involved in the Scottish pilot of a hosted Exchange/ASP solution for smaller firms) the Dundas & Wilson contract was the company's first big firm deal, which was won in a head-to-head with D&W's current managed service provider Computacenter. www.xvar.it

DMS NEWS IN BRIEF

■ PDF FACILITIES FOR WORKSITE

The summer has seen the launch of two new PDF utilities for users of the Interwoven WorkSite document management system. LexExec has released PDFExec for WorkSite, a PDF conversion add-on that can convert any printable WorkSite document into a PDF file. A free 30 day evaluation copy can be downloaded from the web. And Document Automation Developers (like LexExec this is a US company) has launched its iImage Imaging Server for Interwoven. This is designed to handle high volume image processing, including OCR and converting PDFs into a text searchable format, within a WorkSite environment.

www.lexexec.com/DWNWorkSite.asp
www.docauto.com/iImage_Server.htm

■ WORKSITE WINS FOR RESSOFT

ResSoft has had a busy summer in the Interwoven market, with both Mills & Reeve and Withers buying additional WorkSite licences plus Shadbolt & Co, Lawrence Graham and insurance brokers Cooper Gay all transferring their practice wide DMS support contracts for Interwoven from their incumbent suppliers to ResSoft.

PEOPLE & PLACES - 2

■ TFB TO SPONSOR SCOTS AWARDS

TFB, which now has a substantial presence in Scotland, will be one of the sponsors of this year's Scottish Legal Awards. TFB will be sponsoring the Law Firm of the Year category. The closing date for nominations is 30 November and the awards ceremony takes place in Edinburgh next February.

■ ROBBINS JOINS MANTIX

David Robbins, who for the last couple of years has been working as an independent legal IT consultant and before that was head of IT at Shoosmiths for 11 years, has joined the City-based consultancy Mantix (020 7480 0620) as a managing consultant with responsibility for developing the company's business in the legal sector. Mantix specialise in helping larger organisations maximise their return on investment in IT and business change projects. www.mantix.com

■ LEXCEL CONSULTANTS AT AIM

Two further members of AIM Professional's training department - Phil Harker and Jenny Gawler - have become accredited Lexcel consultants and can now help law firms and local government legal departments prepare for Lexcel assessment. Sue Turner is also a Lexcel consultant and AIM estimate that one in eight of its customers have now opted for Lexcel accreditation.

■ SELECT SPOT SQUASH CHAMP

Select Legal Systems' decision to sponsor local schoolboy and squash wizard James Earles just over a year ago was clearly money well spent as this summer Earles, who is still only 11, became the England Under 13 Open Squash Champion. Earles secured Select's sponsorship despite beating one of the company's directors on the local Hull and East Riding squash circuit.

■ AIM SCOOP MOBILE APPS AWARD

AIM Professional was one of only four winners in a competition organised by Microsoft to encourage the development of Windows Mobile applications. The award was made for a prototype of AIM's pocket time recording system, which was developed in .NET compact framework and designed to run on smartphones as a mobile companion to desktop time recording.

Tape Exchange offer cash for old analogue kit

This week sees the launch of The Tape Exchange, a new initiative designed to help law firms write-off the cost of their old analogue tape machines when they migrate to a new digital dictation workflow system.

Under the scheme (which should particularly appeal to firms on limited budgets and who are reluctant to move to DDS because their old equipment technically 'still works') the Tape Exchange will pay £50 for every old fee earner tape machine or secretarial unit and then donate the equipment to the charity World Emergency Relief for use in a developing country.

The scheme was devised by DDS market leader BigHand and firms have until 30th November 2004 to register their old equipment. The Tape Exchange is hosted and available exclusively via the Legal Technology Insider web site, where you will also find full terms and conditions. www.legaltechnology.com

More outsourced transcription services come online

For many firms the missing link in their digital dictation strategies has been the inability to find a suitable transcription service that could handle their work on a remote, outsourced basis and was compatible with their digital dictation software. One solution we are now seeing is DDS software suppliers teaming up with transcription companies so they can offer their users compatible services.

SRC has signed up two UK outsourced transcription services - **JPScribe** (020 8429 8543) and **Voicepath** (01926 821900) - to its hosted digital workflow service based on the WinScribe DDS system. And **Stat Plus** has just teamed up with **EBS Digital**, who can now offer users of the SPS digital dictation system the option of long term or ad hoc transcription contracts, including typing overload and holiday cover. EBS operate on a 24/7 basis using UK-based secretaries, with work normally turned around in the same day although there is also an express two hour service. EBS can also handle analogue tapes. For more details call Paul O'Connor of Stat Plus on 020 8254 5113.

Nflow's universal integrator

Nflow Software (01245 463377) has launched a new universal integration add-on that will allow its digital dictation system to be integrated with virtually any other legal office system that uses a database. Nflow has already created integrations with PMS software from Elite, CMS, Axxia, ResSoft and Miles 33, plus the Hummingbird and Interwoven DMS (there is also a partnership with Mountain) and the latest initiative is intended to widen the scope for integration and simplify the process of linking client/matter information to dictation files.

Dictation - next moves by the hardware suppliers ?

For the past three years almost all the major developments in the digital dictation market have been pioneered by the workflow software suppliers – but is this position about to change and are we going to see the hardware companies taking the initiative?

Philips has already drawn a line in the sand with the recent launch of its SpeechFlow 2.0 dictation workflow system. This is aimed at the smaller law firm (typically 5 to 25 users) that wants something more sophisticated than the author/transcription file management software bundled with dictation hardware but does not need all the bells and whistles of the specialist workflow management system. Reflecting this positioning, Philips see SpeechFlow 2.0 as a product that would be sold through office equipment resellers, rather than DDS suppliers.

So will it catch on? It is a powerful application that is as good as, if not better than, some of the low-end DDS workflow systems but seems to have split the opinion of mainstream DDS suppliers. Some regard it as a threat, some regard it as catering for a market they are not interested in, and others say it will never happen, on the basis that implementation will require software, network and database configuration work – all tasks many office equipment resellers try to avoid.

But, while the jury is still out on Philips, another supplier – **Grundig Business Systems** (01277 725131) – is taking a different approach to the hardware market. With its German parent's restructuring now complete, rather than getting embroiled in software, Grundig is focussing on the needs of the authors who dictate and the secretaries who transcribe. Although as UK sales director Barry Finch points out, secretaries already use PCs so it is the non-PC using authors you must accommodate.

To this end, Grundig can support users of analogue tape – it has even launched the Stenorette Digital 4240, a dual mode system that handles both digital and analogue dictation. It can support digital authors who still operate in an analogue mode and prefer to give their secretaries a paper file with a memory card containing the dictation. It can offer one-to-one file transfer by email. And it can provide a hardware platform (the new Digta 4015 is a veritable Lexus of the portable dictation recorder market) for third-party DDS workflow management systems.

But probably the biggest shake-up relates to the imminent arrival of competition for the Philips SpeechMike Pro range. These are the dictation microphones that plug into a PC and, because they feature a trackerball, can double as a mouse, so you can simultaneously dictate and control your PC. Latest hardware figures suggest Philips is currently the market leader but the SpeechMike Pro accounts for nearly 80% of these sales. (Strip out the SpeechMike and Olympus take the top slot.) The first of the potential competitors is Grundig with its ProMike 840 USB microphone/mouse, currently slated for a Q4 launch, while the second is the **US VEC Corporation** with a system that at least one major UK DDS workflow software supplier is seriously considering as a viable alternative to the SpeechMike.

DDS NEWS IN BRIEF

■ MORE BIG FIRM ROLLOUTS

Following an earlier pilot in the firm's Bristol office, Beachcroft Wansbroughs is now rolling out a WinScribe digital dictation workflow system from SRC throughout its London offices.

And, following a pilot this spring in the real estate department, which established the product's integration with the firm's document management and Elite practice management systems, Berwin Leighton Paisner has rolled out Nflow's DictaFlow digital dictation system to 767 users across the firm. The contract was handled by Nflow distributor Tikit.

■ BHF FILE FORMAT FINDS FANS

BigHand's own .bhf voice file format is winning more fans with over 50% of all law firm digital dictation users in the UK now using it in preference to the older Vox and .wav formats. BigHand say attractions of .bhf include its security for archiving, a network traffic friendly small file size, the ability to carry metadata for profiling purposes and, for mobile dictation, its efficient correction of background noise or 'chatter'.

■ LEXACOM UPGRADES

Lexacom has released version 2.2 of its Talk & Type DDS (changes include improved administration for larger firms and reduced bandwidth overheads) and version 2.1 of its mobile system for PDA users. The latter is available as a free 28 day evaluation download at www.lexacom.co.uk/mobile

■ ALL CHANGE IN THE DDS WORLD

This summer has also seen some interesting changes on the corporate and people front. Voice Recognition Holdings (VRH) has sold its hosted speech recognition division SRC Telecom to Fluency Voice Technology. The deal will have no impact on VHF's other division, SRC Dictation Systems, which will continue its activities as a WinScribe distributor in the law firms digital dictation market. Over at G2 Speech, Joe Murphy has now left the company and Ipswich-based Wildings Professional Systems (01473 219819) has been appointed as a sales partner for G2's digital dictation systems. And, finally, Jayne Dixon has left WinScribe distributor Berrys for a new venture.

LITIGATION SUPPORT NEWS

■ NEW SCAN TO PDF SERVICE

The litigation support and copy bureau Legastat is now running a new PDF service offering scan-to-fully searchable PDFs.

www.legastat.co.uk

■ LINGUISTIC PATTERN MATCHING

Both the Concordance 8 and iConect 4.1 litigation support applications can now be integrated with Syngence's Synthetix 'linguistic pattern matching' system. LPM is a new way to analyse databases of scanned discovery documents by highlighting blocks of text and then finding the pages in the database that contain the linguistic patterns most closely matching the highlighted text. Basically this means making the search process more lawyer friendly, as users do not have to use any specific search syntax, such as Boolean and proximity operators or wildcards. Syngence say Synthetix is already proving useful in such tasks as: checking that redaction and privilege waiver has been handled consistently; identifying near dupes in email chains and clusters – where parties have tried after the event to doctor email files by creating bogus 'to', 'cc' and 'bcc' records (also known as 'e-lying'); and finding 'lost' documents that a witness or lawyer knows they have seen before.

www.syngence.com/synthetix.asp

■ ELLIOTT'S NEW OYSTER CULT

Josef Elliott, one of the co-founders of the old Elliott Slone litigation support services bureau which was subsequently acquired by Williams Lea, is back with a new business. Based in Docklands and called Oyster IMS (07973 355767), the company will be focussing on information management solutions. www.oyster-ims.com

New role for Insider ed

In addition to his publishing and related activities, Insider editor Charles Christian has joined the core faculty of Nottingham Law School's Department of Professional & Legal Studies, where he will be responsible for redeveloping the IT related content, as well as acting as a tutor, for the school's internationally renowned postgraduate diploma and MBA in legal practice courses.

Fresh on the radar...

Some of you may have been able to take it easier this summer but in the world of legal IT there has been a steady stream of new product launches, major upgrades, new services and new entrants to the market.

■ INDEXING AND RETRIEVAL NOW A WIZ

WizSoft, whose parent company has been described as Israel's answer to the Sage software group, is now talking to law firms in Europe and the UK about its WizDoc for Office search engine. The company says this is an ideal tool for indexing and retrieving information from unstructured data, including Microsoft Office documents, PDF files and Outlook email messages – and can do "just about everything Verity and Autonomy can do but for a fraction of the price". Certainly the pricing is very attractive, starting at \$150 per seat for up to 10 users but falling to just \$30 per seat for 100+ users. You also need a dedicated SQL Server or MSDE in smaller firms. Free demo CDs are available from European business development manager Daniel Berger, email daniel.berger@wizsoft.com

■ PC LAW NOW INCLUDES CASE MANAGEMENT

Gavel & Gown (01780 480744) this month releases Version 7 of the PCLaw practice management system into the UK legal market. The most significant enhancement is the addition of a general purpose case and matter management module to the accounts software. With the price for a complete entry level system starting at £990, PCLaw could be the ideal solution for sole practitioners and very small firms. www.pclaw.co.uk

■ CEZANNE CREATES IMPRESSION IN HR SECTOR

Despite the fact people are a law firm's most valuable asset, when it comes to IT most HR departments are still in the Dark Ages. A firm may have excellent billing and document production systems but in HR, the prevailing technology is still payroll software, spreadsheets and a large wall chart covered in coloured stickers. One supplier hoping to change this situation is Cezanne Software (01252 706880 - call Stewart Hadley) with its range of 'human capital management' applications. These include a Compensation Planning system which looks after salary analysis, budgeting and team planning, and People Management which handles selection, training, career planning and evaluation processes. Both systems work in a web browser environment and can provide different levels of access, including a self-service area for staff to access and update their own personnel records. www.cezannesw.com

■ LOTUS NOTES UPGRADE FOR INTERACTION

Interface Software has released an upgrade to its InterAction for Lotus Notes synchronisation utility. This will allow users to link individual users' Lotus Notes address books to InterAction's centralised CRM repository, using a fully automated, server based 'intelligent' synchronisation process that minimises the risk of bad and inconsistent data contaminating the system.

...and there's more

■ ACORN LEGAL OFFERS A VIRTUAL CASHIER

Acorn Legal (0870 116 0870) is a new outsourced legal accounts bureau and consultancy set up by Tim Bath (ex-Laserform and Mountain) and Tracey-Anne Anderson (who has worked both for IT suppliers and law firms) that aims to provide smaller law firms with a 'more than accounts and payroll' service. By 'more than,' Acorn mean that along with outsourced accounts and payroll work, they can also offer IT consultancy, accounts management consultancy on such things as financial reporting, training and even a virtual cashier service whereby Acorn's staff can post transactions to a firm's accounts system remotely.

In terms of RoI, using the accounts bureau services will cost a sole practitioner about £4500 a year but Acorn reckon this is still over £6000 less than a firm would pay if it was running its own inhouse system and employing a part-time cashier – and that is without going into such complications as holidays, sickness cover and training. www.acornlegal.co.uk

■ YOU CAN RING MY PHONE

Ring2 Communications (020 7968 4884 - call Robert Baugh) has launched a new, minimal cost computer integrated telephony service called Ring2phone. As a concept, the service is initially a little hard to grasp as this is not VoIP but a combination of separate telephony and IT systems. It comes alive best with a demonstration (there is a Flash demo available on the Ring2 web site) but in a nutshell you start with an onscreen (the interface is similar to a mobile phone) telephone management system. This contains all the features you would expect from a smart-phone, including the ability to set up conference calls, plus easily allocate client/matter file numbers against a call. In addition, the system lets you commence a call from any number appearing on your screen, whether in an email signature, CRM database, Outlook or any other Windows application.

Once you click on a number, the first step is a call initiation request sent over the internet from your Windows PC to the Ring2 data centre. This handles all the billing admin associated with the call and then, within 1-to-2 seconds, connects up with the caller's existing handset over a standard PSTN phone line (rather like a ringback service) and starts ringing the party you want to call. The call then proceeds in the conventional way but all the while having the ability to bring in or drop other parties through the onscreen management system. Ring2 suggest the two major benefits of the service are the ability to recover more call costs more efficiently and access to advanced telephony functions through your plain old telephone system (POTS) without having to invest in VoIP. www.ring2.com

■ CASTING A LONG SHADOW

Finally, XRSolutions (+603 627 9770) in New Hampshire has launched a suite of Microsoft .NET/SharePoint-based document collaboration applications called CAST. The CAST products (iCAST and TeamCAST) whose nearest competitor is probably Workshare's Synergy system, are fully integrated with Microsoft Word 2000, XP and 2003. www.xrsolutions.com

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

■ WORDWAVE LAUNCHES IN PARIS

Stenography, transcription and law reporting specialist WordWave International has opened a new European office – called Reportage Integral – at 54-56 avenue Hoche, Paris 75008 (+33 (0) 1 56 60 54 43).

Reportage's European business manager Shamila Pilendiram says the company will be the only reporting firm in Continental Europe to be able to offer LiveNote realtime software as part of its services. WordWave now has offices in London, Sydney, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Christchurch and Singapore, as well as across the US through the LegaLink network. www.wordwave.co.uk

■ KNOW WHERE NOW SOMEWHERE

Know Where, the New Zealand-based knowledge management consultancy, has moved to new offices at Unit 11, 22a Kalmia Street, Ellerslie, PO Box 28-585, Auckland 1136. The phone number is +64 9 969 1440.

www.knowwhere.co.uk

■ GRIERSONS IN NIGERIAN MOVE

Griersons (0191 215 0075) the Newcastle-based legal systems developer, has secured its first sales in the Nigerian law firms' market after signing a reseller deal with Krystal Digitals in Lagos. The deal follows a decision to attend an International Bar Association conference in Nigeria earlier this year, where Griersons was the only IT company present. Griersons is also continuing to expand its sales operations in China. www.griersons.com

■ PORTAL RESOURCES ONLINE

The New Jersey-based Xerdict Group (US 973 286 4350) is now providing a range of extranet and portal systems to law firms and corporate legal departments. In addition to the usual corporate and product information, the company has also launched a couple of educationally oriented blogs to provide more information about these type of systems.

<http://lawfirmportal.blogspot.com>

<http://legalextranet.blogspot.com>

www.xerdict.com/education.php

■ ONLINE PRECEDENTS FOR NDA

Document automation specialist SpeedLegal is now hosting an online facility for drafting NDAs at www.smartprecedent.net/NDA.html

EMAIL & SECURITY NEWS

■ GROUPWISE FIRST FOR DDX

Wedlake Bell has become the first UK law firm running GroupWise to implement the DDX system from DespatchBox (0207 520 9310) to create an encrypted email platform.

■ FRESHFIELDS USE INTERWOVEN

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, which currently has to deal with about three million emails and documents per year, has implemented the Interwoven WorkSite system to create a single, firm-wide email management system. Describing email management as a “must-have” technology, Freshfields’ IT director David Hamilton said the InterWoven approach would provide the firm with a “complete solution which enables us to create a true electronic file of client matters” with email captured and managed in the context of related content.

■ RED LETTER DAY AT CUMBERLAND

Cumberland Ellis Peirs is installing the Red Letter secure email system from Meticulus Solutions (01249 700555) to ensure client confidentiality and proof of delivery.

■ HERBERT SMITH OPTIMISE

Herbert Smith is using NetIQ’s AppManager Suite to monitor the performance and improve the management of its Windows infrastructure, which currently consists of more than 200 servers running different versions of Microsoft Windows and over 2000 workstations in offices in the UK, Europe and Asia. For further details about the NetIQ product range, which also supports Unix and Linux platforms, contact Helen Freestone of NetIQ partners Ultima Business Solutions on 0118 902 7208.

www.netiq.com

■ VERITAS TO ACQUIRE KVS

Veritas Software has entered into a definitive agreement to purchase KVault Software, the company behind the KVS Enterprise Vault email archiving and Microsoft Exchange back-up system, for \$225 million. Veritas say the KVS deal will allow them to provide a comprehensive solution for storing, managing, backing up and archiving all types of information. Veritas expects to complete the acquisition by the end of September.

Information security now on the agenda

When it comes to risk management, most law firms still display a disjointed approach to the problem of security, with lawyers focussing on the ‘traditional’ areas of legal risk that lead to professional indemnity claims, while the IT department deals with ‘e-risks’ such as computer viruses.

Unfortunately when it comes to the broader issue of information security, particularly to comply with section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX), the area of risk extends far beyond the IT department and into the realms of perimeter security, Chinese Walls – both procedural and technical, the separation of responsibilities and corporate governance – all areas that can fall through the gap if there is not a comprehensive security management strategy in place.

A definition of what constitutes good information security management can be found in **British Standard 7799**, which includes the provision that documents should address the key issues of C-I-A: confidentiality, integrity and availability.

Worryingly, to-date only one UK law firm – **Kennedys** – has achieved BS 7799 accreditation, and that involved them rewriting their data security procedures, as well as running a general awareness programme to ensure that staff were sufficiently ‘safety conscious’. But, with SOX becoming a more widely encountered issue and, closer to home, insurers warning that premiums for business interruption cover were set to increase for organisations that did not have adequate risk management measures in place, information security is now earning a higher place on the boardroom agenda.

One of the first initiatives to help law firms in this area was the launch of the **Legal Security Forum** in July. This is sponsored by **Ultima Business Solutions** and **Symantec UK** (call Shannon Pitchford on 01628 641841) and aims to provide law firm managers and IT directors with an opportunity, in an informal environment, to learn about and discuss the current security threats facing law firms.

The forum plans to hold its next lunch on 4th November, for more details contact Helen Freestone of Ultima on 0118 902 7208 or email helen.freestone@ultimabusiness.com

The second development has been the launch by Ed Hodgson, who readers may recall from his days with Ramesys, of a new consultancy specialising exclusively on BS 7799, information security and the related fields of risk assessment and business continuity management. Called **Seven Nine** (01332 551219) one of the consultancy’s main objectives is to get law firms to see the bigger picture and realise that security issues require partnership or executive committee sponsorship.

Hodgson says practices need to seriously assess their appetite for risk as “a lot of firms think they are risk averse but do they really have a handle on security? Or is it just ignorance and blind faith that it will never happen?”

For the record, the name Seven Nine is derived from BS 7799 rather than the glamorous Borg in *StarTrek*. www.sevennine.co.uk

OFT launches study into property search industry

The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) is to carry out a study of the property search market after receiving allegations that some local authorities are abusing their position and behaving in an anti-competitive way by blocking private search companies' right to access search data and provide a quicker, cheaper service. One search company told the Insider they knew of councils charging conveyancers as much as £250 for searches and others that still took as long as six weeks to deliver results.

The OFT announced the study following its response to a complaint from the online search provider TM Property Service that one of its competitors, Transaction Online, and its parent company MacDonald Dettwiler (which is also the hub operator for NLIS - the National Land Information Service) were abusing their dominant position by adopting pricing policies designed to force TM out of the market. Although TM's complaint was subsequently rejected, the OFT said there were "clearly issues in the market as a whole which require further examination".

E-CONVEYANCING NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **LINK HELPS COMPLETE OVER 35,000 REMORTGAGES**
Enact, the independent remortgage service provider, and TM Property Service (0870 740 5007) report that in the 12 months since August 2003, when they first launched a fully integrated search ordering facility, more than 35,000 remortgage related transactions have been processed by the service. Currently about 30% of residential mortgages are remortgages, with more than 800,000 completed annually.

■ **INSTANT QUOTES FROM DPS**
DPS Software (020 8804 1022) has launched Team Quoter, a new web-based application that allows prospective clients visiting a law firm web site to obtain an instant quotation for a conveyance, including stamp duty, search charges and the firm's own fees. In a related development, DPS has now integrated its conveyancing software with the Transaction Online local search service. The link includes automatic logins and automatic notification when a search has been returned.

■ **OPD TO SHARE OCCUPANCY CODE WITH PISCES**
The Investment Property Databank has signed a licence agreement on behalf of its operating division OPD (Occupiers Property Databank) to permit its International Total Occupancy Cost Code (ITOCC) to be made available to users of the PISCES property data exchange standard. www.opd.co.uk

■ **TITLE REQUISITIONS VIA EMAIL**
With effect from this month, the Land Registry has introduced a new service allowing title requisitions to be sent by email. Full details, including *Practice Guide 59 - Receiving and replying to requisitions* by email can be found at www.landregistry.gov.uk

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Australians aim to create common software platform

There have been proposals for universal 'hubs' and for sub-committees to draw up internationally agreed standards but to-date nobody has come up with an effective solution to the problem that if every major law firm is offering its clients online access to matter and billing information, some major commercial clients face the prospect of logging onto dozens of different extranets – each with their own different passwords and user interfaces – to keep track of their legal advisers' activities.

One organisation that approached this problem from a different direction is Telstra, the largest company in Australia, which four years ago developed myLeOn (my Legal Online) to provide a standard platform for managing its panel firms. Since then the system has been regularly enhanced and more recently a separate company – nSynergy – has been created to introduce the system, now called LegalNet, to a wider market, which now includes the inhouse legal departments of 45 of Australia's top 200 largest companies, as well as three of its largest law firms.

Three weeks' ago nSynergy (020 7060 1310) opened for business in the UK and is already involved in constructive talks with several major firms, including some from the magic circle, as well as a number of corporates.

Now based on Microsoft's ASP.NET and Webservice technologies (it also includes a free document management system called myDoc) LegalNet offers what European business development director Karl Redenbach describes as a "second generation extranet" peer-to-peer system that allows corporate counsel and law firms to share and collaborate on workflow and ebilling information on a common platform without the inherent security issues of old style virtual dealrooms.

nSynergy also has a business model that gives it an edge on other suppliers, namely LegalNet is being offered effectively free of charge to inhouse legal departments. The result in Australia, and Redenbach expects it be followed in the UK, is that corporate counsel are now starting to demand that their panel firms start using LegalNet. www.nsynergy.com

Cummings back at Pilgrim helm

After spending much of the last couple of years developing other business interests, Pilgrim Systems' founder and chairman Jim Cummings has resumed day-to-day control of the company as CEO. He succeeds Benny Placido, who has been the CEO since 2001 and remains on the board as a non-executive director. Placido is also being retained by the company as a consultant on sales matters. Cummings said "Benny has been a great help to myself and Pilgrim over the past few years and, now that the new ventures which required my attention are successfully up and running, I'm keen to concentrate my efforts fully on Pilgrim again." For the time being Cummings will also continue in the role as chairman.

All change for law librarians

New research by Sweet & Maxwell suggests the growing take-up of online information sources and knowledge management within larger law firms is having a knock-on effect on law librarians. In fact nearly half the people holding the traditional head legal librarian role within their firms no longer even have the terms 'librarian' or 'library' in their job titles, with 'Head of Knowledge Management' and 'Head of Information Services' becoming more common titles in recent years.

With this comes far greater responsibility. Over 90% have seen their responsibilities grow over the past five years, with 20% of senior librarians now reporting directly to the managing partner/CEO or sitting on their firm's senior management boards. They also have greater budgets: nearly 90% of the firms in the S&M survey reported increases in their share of internal budgets, with almost all identifying the introduction of IT as the reason for this increased spend.

But this also means that instead of spending their days among books, some head librarians now spend much of their time on management issues, including negotiating online service contracts. They do however have one consolation: they have greater salaries. The average salary for a head librarian in a top 100 firm is now around £45k, compared with £35k in 2000 although some magic circle heads of KM are reported to be earning in excess of £100k.

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■ Publisher & Editor: Charles Christian
Tel: 01379 687518 - Fax: 01379 687704
Email: news@legaltechnology.com

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