



Pinsent Masons settle on Interwoven

The ink may barely be dry on the agreement by the partners at Pinsents and Masons to merge the practices in December this year to create a new 240 partner, 900 lawyer mega-firm but already the IT pieces of the post-merger jigsaw are starting to fall into place.

The first step has been to agree the new document management platform. Pinsents currently run Hummingbird Docs Open and Masons have Interwoven WorkSite however from December the new firm of Pinsent Masons will standardise on WorkSite as DMS. Masons' IT director Kevin Connell said the "email management solution and excellent client facing portal technology meant we could unreservedly recommend Interwoven as the leading DMS in its class."

Other IT issues still to be resolved include: choice of practice management system – Pinsents run Aderant CMS while Masons have Aderant Keystone; choice of CRM – Pinsents have e1 Metis whereas Masons use Keystone; and choice of digital dictation system – Pinsents have Bigband, Masons have Nflow. Both firms use Visualfiles in case management applications.

In other DMS news, Ince & Co has also selected Interwoven WorkSite.

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Chadwick go matter centric with .NET

Leading West-Yorkshire firm Chadwick Lawrence has selected a 'matter-centric' practice management solution that uses the OMS Matter-Centre system from FWBS and Aderant's CMS.Net to create a fully integrated solution for front and back offices. This includes giving fee earners the ability to do their case handling from within a familiar and easy to use Microsoft Office 2003 environment. As both companies' products are built around Microsoft's .NET Framework technologies, the combination of a 'rich' application programming interface (API) and the modular design of CMS.Net simplified the integration of the two systems.

"We wanted to implement the latest OMS Matter-Centre software for our fee earners and ensure that it could be easily integrated into an overall practice management solution," said Chadwick Lawrence managing partner Jeremy Garside. "After looking at a number of PMS products, CMS.Net came out as the clear choice for us because of its robust accounting and reporting capabilities, ease-of-use and .NET technology platform."

As well as marking the first move by FWBS to take OMS up market, the Chadwick Lawrence deal (the firm previously ran Curat Lex) comes only weeks after Aderant's win at Thompsons. This is one of the largest PMS contracts to go through in the UK since Simmons & Simmons ordered CMS.Net last year. (At Thompsons, CMS is replacing a bespoke Roan PMS although the firm's employment department is currently retaining its Axxia accounts and case management systems. FWBS will continue to sell OMS into the mid-market through reseller Pericom, who are also delivering the OMS side of the Chadwick's deal.)

In other Microsoft/PMS news, the Insider has learned that a top 200 firm in the West Country is planning to replace its current practice management system with a combination of Microsoft Great Plains software and a bespoke legal front end.

TSB to stay with Timeslice

Travers Smith Braithwaite has just exchanged contracts with Timeslice in a deal that will see the top 100 firm (by turnover they are just outside the top 40) implementing Timeslice's Lawman practice management system. TSB is a long-time user of Timeslice's previous generation of PMS and now becomes the first big firm to commit to the company's latest generation of software. The 366 user system is due to go live in February.

In other Timeslice news, the company is continuing its progress into the Microsoft .NET arena and has just completed development work on an integrated document management system for Lawman users based around Microsoft's Webservice, .NET and SharePoint Server technologies.

Timeslice has also formed a technical services company called Minervia (020 7231 8526) to provide network design, thin client and VoIP implementation, offsite storage, ASP hosting and disaster recovery services to law firms. www.minervia.com

NEWS IN BRIEF**■ SOLCARA KM AT MACFARLANES**

Macfarlanes is to implement Solcara's SolSearch content search system, as part of a project to improve the firm's access to internal and online information resources.

■ MORE SIGN IN FOR BOOKING IT

Five more UK law firms – Addleshaw Goddard, Burges Salmon, Eversheds, TLT and Wragge & Co – plus the Manhattan offices of Clifford Chance have installed the Rendezvous browser-based meeting room booking software from NFS Hospitality (01920 485725). www.nfs-hospitality.com

■ GEPP & SONS UPGRADE WITH AIM

Essex-based Gepp & Sons has invested £150k with AIM Technical Services on a major overhaul of its IT infrastructure. This has included moving from predominantly NT4 servers and Novell to a Windows 2003 server cluster, SAN storage and SQL server.

■ SCAMS NOW SUPPORTING LEXCEL

Solicitors Case Management Systems (01747 855865) has released an upgrade to its Files software that takes into account the requirements of the latest Lexcel quality standard, including risk management and client care. The new version will be supplied as a free upgrade for new and existing users and there is also a 30-day interactive demo available on CD. www.scams-law.com

■ OMBUDSMAN SELECTS VISUALFILES

The Office of the Parliamentary & Health Services Ombudsman (OPHSO) is to use Visualfiles for its central complaints management system. The new system will become the central repository for processing and tracking all complaints from inception to resolution, and is also intended to help staff retrieve information more easily and identify emerging issues.

■ INTRODUCING DIGITAL RIGHTS

DespatchBox (020 7520 9310) can now offer law firms access to the US GigaTrust range of digital rights management and content security systems. This means firms can be certain their email and web portal services comply with internal and regulatory privacy policies and that documents are not used or shared beyond the author's intentions.

Three more sign up for Practice hosted model

Three more law firms – 200 user immigration practice Duncan Lewis in London, plus general practice Brewer Harding & Rowe, who have four offices across North Devon, and TA Matthews in Hereford – have signed up for the new Osprey.TM case and practice management system from Practtice (0870 443 6300).

The common element with all three firms, including TA Matthews who are replacing a conventional AIM system, is that they have all opted for a hosted solution, with Practtice hosting the servers, databases and mirrored backup to a secure data centre and the firms requiring nothing more than a broadband connection and PCs capable of running an Internet Explorer 6.0 browser. Since its launch earlier this year the Osprey.TM system, which is based on Microsoft's ASP.NET platform, has won orders for over 1000 seats – all of them running on a hosted basis.

Content + ISP alliance formed

Conscious Solutions (0117 904 0801) and the internet services provider Lawyers Online (0870 777 8980) have formed a strategic alliance. This will see Conscious offering the ISP services of Lawyers Online to its customers and in return Lawyers Online will offer the ConsciousLaw web design service to its users.

It sounds like a good idea as most ISPs do not offer design services and a lot of designers can be decidedly vague on technical and infrastructure issues. However there are other companies out there with similar services including Legal & Financial (01202 587787), a developer of template-based sites, which has just launched a case status reporting module offering law firm clients extranet access to matter progress reports.

E-conveyancing link-up

Legal software supplier Videss and NLIS Searchflow, the online search provider, have announced a link-up between their respective systems that will allow them to automatically exchange data and instructions via the PISCES XML standard.

In practical terms this means users of the Videss conveyancing case management system will now be able to order and monitor the progress of searches directly from within the case management application, which will also automatically record the billing and disbursements sides of the transactions.

Unfortunately, although both Videss and Searchflow would like to take the process a stage further, because the majority of local authorities still return their search results in a hard copy format (there is also still no agreement by government agencies on how results data should be formatted electronically so PDFs of hard copy documents are the default) at the moment the system can do no more than attach email notifications of returns to the appropriate document management files. www.videss.co.uk

Linetime join the .NET set

Linetime has become the latest UK legal systems supplier to nail its colours to the mast of Microsoft's .NET technology. The company moved over to a SQL Server platform some years ago and, more recently, shifted its development work into a VB.NET environment. Now, this month, the company has launched MyView.NET, which it describes as a user access portal.

"The objective," says Linetime director Philip Snee, "is to give practice managers and department heads first thing in the morning access to information on all those things that keep them awake at night." MyView.NET does this by delivering a selectable and customisable series of key performance indicators directly to the desktop. Snee adds that because the Linetime Liberate system is an integrated case and practice management system that uses a common database, the KPIs can relate to anything from matter handling to financial reports. "Because this is a real-time feed (users can opt to have data refreshed as frequently as every minute) we are giving firms the tools to proactively run their firms, so managers no longer have to wait until month end to have a problem brought to their attention."

In other Linetime news... Mason Baggott & Garton in North Lincolnshire is now up and running Liberate practice and case management software (including a STARS interface for volume conveyancing) across four offices; and, after its recent merger with AIM Evolution users Cohens, Hewitts in the North-East has standardised on Liberate across the firm. Practice manager John Elmes said the firm voted 5-0 in favour of Linetime, with better management reporting cited as a crunch factor. The Insider web site's KM section also carries a new case study on Clarke Willmott's use of Linetime debt recovery software.

The UK legal web is 10 years old

It was ten years ago this month, in October 1994, that the UK legal community entered the internet era with the launch of the first law firm web site – the honour went to Jeffrey Green Russell in New Bond Street. You can see more about the pioneering days of the legal web, including facsimiles of some of the earlier sites (including the Insider) on the Information for Lawyers blog at www.infolaw.co.uk/blog/2004/09/uk-legal-web-is-10-years-old.htm

Cutting expenses admin costs

It is estimated that workflow automation could reduce the amount of time fee earners spend completing expense claims forms by as much as 50%. To address this problem, Emis IT (0113 297 4587) has added an expense management module to its Seneca CM software. Available as a free enhancement, this allows expenses (including mileage) to be added to billable and non-billable files, with claims submitted to accounts in a hard copy or electronic format. The system also produces extensive reports for clients and for use by firms to negotiate better rates.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ HEATONS GO WITH NORWEL

Heatons, one of the recent *Lawyer Awards* niche law firms of the year, is ordering a Norwel practice management system to support operations in its Birmingham, Manchester and Stoke offices. The system, which will run on a Windows Server 2003/Citrix platform, will also provide Heatons clients with extranet access through Norwel's Desktop Online facility. Network Si provided the IT infrastructure, while Brian Blackwell of Practical Solutions provided project and procurement consultancy.

■ LASERFORM AT OLE HANSEN

Ole Hansen & Partners in London is the latest firm to have ordered Laserform's Partnership Suite of accounts and case management software. And four of the larger northern firms – Atteys, Berg & Co, Hill Dickinson and Keoghs – have signed up for Laserform's LFM8 SP5 electronic forms product, which includes expandable forms, PDF emailing and complex calculations.

■ AIM RESULTS UP 19.5% ON YEAR

AIM Group Holdings, the parent of the legal systems supplier AIM Professional, has reported a 19.5% increase in turnover to £10.3million for its trading year to 30th April 2004 (2003 - £8.6million). Audited trading profits were down to £866k (2003 - 948k) but this reflects the £188k spent last year on the TeamFlo and SharpOWL acquisitions.

■ MSS ALPHALAW SALES UP 35%

Further evidence that the post-Y2K boom is underway comes from MSS which reports a 35% increase in sales of its AlphaLaw software during the first six months of its current trading year. This includes new orders worth £485k taken during the traditionally quiet summer months.

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New legal IT consultant on the block

Sarah Hillier, most recently working in legal IT with Clifford Chance, has formed a new consultancy offering knowledge and change management services to law firms. With over 15 years' experience of legal practice management, CRM and financial systems implementation, including Elite, Keystone, Oracle, CMS and Great Plains projects, Hillier has particular expertise in the fields of working practice review, 'project rescue' and securing maximum RoI on IT systems.

She also specialises in 'global data map' projects to identify duplicated data and input inconsistencies that can block cross system reporting and analysis. Hillier is available for ad-hoc and ongoing projects and can be contacted on 020 8876 8012 or sarah@knowledgeunlocked.com

PEOPLE & PLACES

■ BIGHAND GETS NEW COO

BigHand, the digital dictation workflow systems market leader, has appointed David Fryer as its chief operating officer. Fryer, who for the past eight years served as the managing partner of Home Counties law firm Taylor Walton, will head up BigHand's customer facing departments, together with finance and general management.

■ GAVEL & GOWN MOVES

Gavel & Gown, the UK distributor of the Amicus Attorney case and practice management system, and its sister company PCLaw have relocated from Stamford to new offices at 8 Victoria Square, Droitwich, Worcs WR9 8DS. The new phone number is 01905 798096/7.

■ NEW APPOINTMENTS AT TYCOM

Tycom (01224 321545), the Scottish systems integrator, has made three new appointments as part of the company's strategy for future development and growth. The three are: John Walden, who has joined the company as technical account manager, ex-IBMer Alastair Henderson, who joins as software account manager, and Karen Mackie who has joined Tycom as market support analyst. The company also has a new look web site at www.tycom.co.uk

Data protection and lit support added to KM site

The Insider has added three new documents to the know-how and white papers section on its web site. All can be accessed free of charge at www.legaltechnology.com/casestudies.htm

■ **Litigation Support (10.04)** contains LiST's (the Litigation Support Technology Group) revised and expanded draft practice direction on the use of IT in civil proceedings. The closing date for consultations is 22nd October.

■ **CRM & Data Protection (10.04)** is a white paper by Interface Software and Good Consulting looking at the obligations of professional service organizations under the Data Protect Act and how CRM technology can facilitate compliance.

■ **Outsourcing & Data Protection (10.04)** by Elizabeth Weir of Shaw Pittman looks at the data protection issues associated with outsourcing IT and back office services to the Third World. (The two DPA papers are filed in the Law Firm Management section.)

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ EAST ANGLIA GIVES BIGHAND TO DDS

Five of East Anglia's biggest independent law firms have announced digital dictation projects and initiatives, all involving the BigHand TotalSpeech system. The five are: Ashton Graham, based in Bury St Edmunds, Fosters in Norwich, Howes Percival, which has offices across the Eastern Counties, personal injury specialists Kester Cunningham John in Theford and Prettys in Ipswich. To meet the demand, BigHand have set up a team of project managers, support staff and trainers, headed by regional sales manager James Kippenberger, to focus on the region.

■ CALVIS LAUNCHES PISCES USER GROUP

The real estate software company Calvis has launched a PISCES user group which is planning to hold its first meeting this autumn. Members of the group's interim committee include Wragge & Co partner David Pettingale and Simon Earnshaw from Dickinson Dees. In a related development Calvis, in conjunction with Hummingbird, is holding a free seminar on the lifecycle of documents on the 26th October. The event, which takes place at the Montague Gardens Hotel opposite the British Museum, starts at 9:30am and ends with a buffet lunch. For more details about the user group or the event, call Claire Kneller of Calvis on 01748 813916 or email claire.kneller@calvis.com

■ PHOENIX FEATURING DDS AT IT SEMINAR

Phoenix Business Solutions, which has recently entered the digital dictation market, will be showing the DictaNet DDS workflow system at the Legal Technology Showcase event it is holding at the Law Society on the afternoon of 28th October. There will also be presentations on Interwoven's DMS, the Cole Valley ContactEase marketing and CRM system and Recommind's MindServer Legal search and KM system. For more information call 08707 351426 or visit www.phoenixbs.com

LATEST PRODUCT LAUNCHES

■ TRACK YOUR MOVES

TrackYourMove.com (01423 505654) is an online conveyancing network that aims both to help generate new business for its panel member firms via referrals and provide the clients of those firms with access to the type of online case tracking and progress reporting information usually associated with web-enabled case management systems and bespoke extranets. Typically TYM is delivered as a hosted ASP service but some larger organisations have now bought it for inhouse deployment and the service has already won some larger users, including Simpson Millar.

The system can handle different types of user (clients, solicitors, IFAs and estate agents) and, unlike some of the early referral/case tracking portals, there is some industrial strength security technology (firewalls, anti-virus measures) and best practice in evidence, including extensive audit trails and storage of data for seven years for compliance purposes.

TrackYourMove managing director Craig Pollard says the objective is to help smaller firms "punch above their weight" and here the pay-as-you-go pricing policy of £2.50 per matter, with no set-up fees, minimum terms or monthly service charges may be just what the market needs to get High Street firms offering these services. It is also worth noting that firms can use the service for all conveyancing work, not just that generated by referral, and TrackYourMove will work with firms on branding, web hosting and integration issues. www.trackyourmove.com

■ CANON BRING SHARESCAN & MEAP TO EUROPE

Canon Europe and eCopy have announced the availability of eCopy's ShareScan OP document distribution and integration software on Canon's latest MEAP-enabled multifunctional printers (MFPs). Cutting through the jargon, what this means is any MFP with MEAP (Java-based multifunctional embedded application platform) is now a smart device, or virtual terminal, in its own right rather than just another dumb copier or scanner.

It therefore becomes possible to scan a document into a document management system directly from the scanner, whereas previously it would first be scanned to a PC and then filed to the DMS. Another benefit of MEAP-enabled MFPs is because they are now terminals operating on a client/server network, they can be managed remotely by IT departments. eCopy ShareScan OP is distributed in Europe via Canon and the first evaluation systems went into law firms in the UK and Europe this month. www.canon-europa.com + www.ecopy.com

■ PREVIEWING A NEW VIRTUAL DATA ROOM

Preview Services (020 8755 5704) has launched a new virtual data room service for firms wanting to provide interested parties with secure, online access to the documentation used in M&A due diligence work. The materials are uploaded to a secure Preview site and can be viewed via a web browser however Preview can control access and restrict user rights (for example, can documents be printed off?) at the customer's discretion. Material not already held in a digital format can also be scanned, indexed and arranged by Preview. www.previewservices.com

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

■ THREE OUT OF FOUR IN SPAIN

Gomez Acebo & Pombo, the fourth largest law firm in Spain, is to use Interwoven's WorkSite as the foundation for its document management infrastructure. The firm, which has 250 users across 12 offices (seven in Spain, one in Portugal, one in Brussels and three in Brazil) will run the whole DMS network on a Citrix thin client platform.

The Gomez deal means three of the four largest firms in Spain (Gomez plus Garrigues and Uria & Menendez) now run Interwoven. The odd one out – Spain's second largest firm Cuatrecasas – runs a Hummingbird DMS. The Gomez order was won by Tikit, which recently opened a Madrid office to support its growing Iberian business.

■ MOP GO LIVE WITH CRM

Ireland's largest law firm Matheson Ormsby Prentice has completed the implementation of its Interface InterAction client relationship management system. The CRM system is now being integrated with the firm's Axxia practice management software to offer fee earners, in the words of marketing manager Julie Wienmann, "instant access to client billings, industry types and other data that will provide a more complete picture of the client relationship and allow us to segment and analyse the market more effectively and efficiently."

■ IRWIN OF KHARTOUM

Graham Irwin, the man behind the Virgo low cost legal accounts system, has recently won orders for the software from the firm of Tsui & Co in Hong Kong and Wann & Wann in Khartoum. The application, which Irwin (0870 747 2514) describes as "still essentially a DOS prog," is supplied to overseas sites via email. As Irwin points out "another benefit of DOS applications is the size of the software – Virgo is only 605k." Virgo is still available in the UK from £199 + VAT.

www.virgoaccounts.co.uk

■ FAST GROWER GOES WITH ELITE

After a three month evaluation of the competition, fast growing Australian Top 20 firm Sparke Helmore – the firm has doubled its size in the last four years – has selected Thomson Elite to supply and implement its new practice management system.

LEGAL IT EVENTS NEWS

■ INHOUSE LEGAL IT SEMINAR

Recognising the fact IT has the potential to change the balance in the relationship between inhouse legal departments and their external legal advisers, Ascertus is hosting a free half-day seminar at the Law Society (9:00am - 1:00pm followed by lunch) on 21st October on the subject of how technology can assist corporate counsel to reduce expense and risk, and increase productivity when dealing with external law firms. The event, which qualifies for 2.25 CPD hours, is chaired by Insider editor Charles Christian and includes presentations by Interwoven, CorpraSoft, DataCert and Workshare. You can register online at www.ascertus.com/Events/Home.htm

■ RECORD NUMBERS AT LAWNET

This year's LawNet US conference in Phoenix, Arizona attracted a record number of 1700 delegates. The event returns to Phoenix next year, for the 28th annual conference, on 22nd to 25th August 2005.

Meanwhile LawNet Inc's European arm, (called PeertoPeer.org to avoid confusion with Lawnet Ltd, an entirely separate UK organisation) is holding an informal introductory meeting in London later this month to allow IT professionals at UK law firms with a US presence to exchange experiences with their counterparts at US firms with a UK presence. The event takes place on the morning of 27th October at the London offices of McDermott Will & Emery. For details call Sherry Bevan on 020 7575 0311 or email sbevan@europe.mwe.com

■ NETWORKING WITH RUPERT

Rupert Murray (now with Ikon) is holding another of his informal legal IT industry networking evenings from 6:00pm on 4th November. The venue is the Royal Ocean Racing Club at 20 St James Place, SW1. The price, to cover drinks and supper, is £20. For details email rupertmurray@ikon.com

■ FULL IT EVENTS DIARY ONLINE

The Legal Technology Insider web site carries a comprehensive listing of every UK and international legal IT event, conference, exhibition and seminar worth attending between now and next summer. For the full list visit www.legaltechnology.com

By Legal for Legal - the future of legal networking

Last month's By Legal For Legal conference at the Castle Combe Manor House Hotel probably came the closest a UK event has ever managed to the spirit of informal, peer-to-peer networking that takes place at the annual LawNet conference in the US.

For those unfamiliar with By Legal, the format is simple: the sponsors pay for everything (including a titanic bar bill) and get the opportunity to mix with delegates, which this year included over 30 heads of IT from top 200 firms over a two day period. There are no interminable, death by PowerPoint presentations, and the conference sessions (taking the form of round table discussions, this year chaired by consultant Neil Cameron, Derek Southall of Wragge & Co and Insider editor Charles Christian) covered a broad range of topics under the headings of matter management, document and email management, security, mobile working, Chinese walls and metadata, disaster recovery and business continuity.

What was immediately apparent is because the cold hand of commercialism was absent, not only were delegates more relaxed and willing to openly discuss the issues that genuinely concerned them but there was also none of the 'our firm has a bigger DMS than your firm' posturing and marketing spin that make so many conferences about as stimulating as watching paint dry. Indeed one of the more long lasting outcomes of this year's By Legal is likely to be a greater willingness of IT directors to share experiences and intelligence with their counterparts in other firms, particularly as so many are clearly having to address exactly the same issues.

The event, including a memorable spoof awards dinner, was organised on a voluntary basis by Julie Berry, Jan Durant, Ann Elia and Tim Hyman, respectively the heads of IT at Reynolds Porter Chamberlain, Lewis Silkin, Travers Smith Braithwaite and Taylor Wessing. The sponsors were BigHand, Blackberry, Datashare Solutions, DespatchBox (who provided the most sought-after freebie: a hangover recovery kit), eCopy, Hummingbird, ITS at Law, the Legal Partnership.co.uk, Perfect Access Speer, Star Internet, Symantec, Tikit and Workshare. The non-profit making event also raised £1000 for charity.

Do you really know your clients ?

Did you know 75% of firms have no idea why they lose clients? But as research has found that in 90% of businesses, the people responsible for talking to clients cannot articulate any reason why clients should use their services, is this surprising? Carnegie Information Systems is holding an early evening (5:00-7:00pm) seminar at the Waldorf Hilton London, on 21st October, to look at these and other aspects of client relationship management, including the impact even a small increase in client retention can have on profitability. For details call Carol Shuttleworth of Carnegie on 0141 427 8337 or email carolshuttleworth@relatis.com

E-PUBLISHING NEWS

■ NEW DATA FEED FOR LAWYERS

Infolaw, the publisher of the Lawfinder web portal, has launched an XML-based data feed that can deliver online legal information directly to the lawyer’s desktop. Lawfinder already holds a catalogue of more than 95,000 UK legal documents and resources on the public web and the new data feed is intended to make it easier for users to keep track of the 1000+ new records being added every month. The new feed delivers dynamically updated XML data in standard RSS 1.0 format, including full metadata using standard Dublin Core tags, which will also enable firms to integrate the data into their KM systems.

For more details call Nick Holmes of Infolaw on 020 8878 3033 – existing Lawfinder subscribers can try the new data feeds on a free trial basis by visiting www.infolaw.co.uk/feeds/

■ LEXIS WINS LION’S SHARE OF GOVERNMENT DEAL

LexisNexis is to provide online legal information resources to lawyers working within a total of 39 different UK government departments and agencies, as part of a new scheme – called the Legal Information Online Network (LION) – developed by the Government Legal Service. LION will give government lawyers 24/7 access to an intranet containing the full range of LexisNexis online legal titles, including *Halsbury’s Law Direct*, *All England Direct* and *Employment Law Online*. In addition lawyers can subscribe to a current awareness service alerting them by email to any new case decisions, legislation, regulations, guidance notes and white papers in their particular specialist field.

SECURITY NEWS IN BRIEF

■ BS 7799 CONFERENCE LATER THIS YEAR

Following our coverage of the BS 7799 information security standard in our last issue, UK readers might like to note that the British Standards Institution is holding a three day conference, plus tutorial sessions, on this topic at the Mayfair Conference Centre in London. Keynote speakers include Stuart Broderick of Symantec and Professor Brian Collins from Cranfield University. The event – called *7799 Goes Global* – runs from 29th November to 1st December, with prices running from £899 + VAT. For details call 020 8996 9001 or visit www.bsi-global.com/seminars

■ DEADMAN’S HANDLE FOR LAPTOP SECURITY

With over three percent of laptop computers lost or stolen every year, new UK software security company DeadMan’s Handle Ltd (01403 275445) believes it has an answer to the problem of protecting the information held on those lost machines. Taking its name from the old safety device that automatically stopped a train if the driver was injured or incapacitated, the software DeadMan’s Handle is automatically triggered when a thief starts looking through the files of a stolen laptop. DeadMan will then delete all predefined confidential information – and itself – so a thief is left with a working computer but no indication it ever contained anything of interest. A free, time limited evaluation version can be downloaded from www.deadmanshandle.com

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Hummingbird forms EMEA legal solutions division

Hummingbird this week formally launched its EMEA legal solutions division (HLS) to co-ordinate the delivery of its products and services in the UK and Continental Europe. The division includes the KLA business (Earnie Kramer will continue to be involved in a strategic role) and will be managed on a day to day basis by Andy Eden, when he returns to work next month. Hummingbird EMEA vice president Tony Heywood told the Insider the reorganisation reflected the special needs of law firms plus the fact they increasingly require cross border support.

Heywood added that a lot of consultations had been taking place behind the scenes between Hummingbird and its legal CIOs advisory council and that one consequence would be the release of a dedicated product set for the legal market. These would be part of the Enterprise Suite and address such issues as matter-centric computing, document life cycle management, collaboration, instant messaging support and mobility, including Blackberry integration.

Hummingbird will be holding its annual user conference – Summit 2005 – in Miami (7th-to-9th February) when it is expected that some of the new products will be launched.

■ Congratulations to Hummingbird which last week celebrated the 20th anniversary of its creation in Toronto in 1984 by co-founders Fred Sorkin and Barry Litwin. Both are still with the company as, respectively, chairman/CEO and president.

Cripps Harries Hall opt for Elite

Cripps Harries Hall has selected Thomson Elite to replace its current AIM (originally Usher) practice management system. The 38 partner, 300+ staff firm, was an early adopter of intranet and extranet technology and head of IT Mike Burton said he believed Elite's own browser-based platform WebView would help the firm retain its competitive edge and "facilitate our desire to continually improve levels of client service." Cripps Harries Hall will also be implementing Elite's WorkFlow module to automate aspects of such tasks as new client inception.

Dumb and dumber - 2

Falling into the category of legal IT 'war stories' that are just so bizarre that we could not make them up, this week's dumb and dumbest award goes to the lawyer who found a schoolboy's essay on Anne Boleyn sitting on his firm's document management system in the place where a client's contract should have been. It transpired he had accessed the DMS from home and left the extranet connection open when he had gone out to dinner. In the meantime his son had used the PC to type up his history homework and, in the process, overwritten the contract and saved the essay to the DMS.

Nflow throws down challenge on standards

Responding to claims by certain digital dictation systems suppliers that their technologies were becoming the market standard for audio data storage, Nflow Software's chairman Jim Park has warned law firms to "think seriously about such claims and ask themselves if they really want their intellectual property locked up in a format that is proprietary to a supplier."

Nflow say firms must realise buying a DDS that is insufficiently 'open' could restrict their opportunity to exploit digital dictation in the future. According to Nflow, a number of outsourcing service providers have already complained that the proprietary audio format of one developer effectively means they cannot accept dictation from the system, thus limiting the choice available to firms wanting to outsource transcription work. Nflow's own policy is to continue to use audio formats that are within the public domain or part of the standard Microsoft Windows install and, wherever possible, to extend the use of XML standards within their DDS system for data exchange.

South African DMS win

Interwoven last week signed contracts with Webber Wentzel Bowens, a 400 user South African firm, who are going to create a matter centric document and email management system based on WorkSite 8.

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