
CHARLES CHRISTIAN's

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

INSIDER

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT'S HOT (AND WHAT'S NOT) IN LAW OFFICE SYSTEMS

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WORDPERFECT SET FOR JUNE COMEBACK

The legal world's favourite word-processing software WordPerfect is scheduled to make its comeback in June with the launch of the new 32-bit Windows 95 compliant Version 7.0. At the same time WordPerfect's new owners Corel will also be launching PerfectOffice 7.0, the latest upgrade to the company's all-in-one office automation suite.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER has recently been looking at the pre-release Beta 2 version of the software and while there remains the possibility of further changes being made to the final version, it is clear Corel is pulling out all the stops to ensure WordPerfect's second coming returns the product to its former glory as a market leader.

LTI has the Professional edition of PerfectOffice 7.0. Along with WordPerfect 7.0, this includes new versions of the Quattro Pro spreadsheet, Presentations graphics package (Corel's answer to PowerPoint), InfoCentral personal information manager (PIM), Paradox relational database and Envoy workgroup and Internet publishing tool (Corel's answer to Lotus Notes). The suite also includes Netscape's Internet browser and a client licence for Novell's GroupWise email and scheduling system for networks.

The Standard version comes minus GroupWise and Paradox, while Professional also includes a PerfectOffice software developers kit (using Delphi rather than Visual Basic or C++). All this adds up to an attractive network and ➤

➤ workgroup friendly office automation suite that should find a ready place in law firm and IT suppliers' fee earner desktop development strategies.

For advanced users, the suite has Internet and multimedia enhancements. While more traditional wordprocessor users should find the new "as you go" features in WordPerfect 7 improve productivity by allowing greater flexibility over checking spelling, reformatting documents and changing numbering.

In addition, the suite contains a copy of IBM's VoiceType Control software so users can actually control applications by spoken commands, such as "open file", "print document" etc.

☞ **Comment...** A lot can happen in the two months between now and the provisional 6th June launch date but on first impressions it seems Corel has devised a wordprocessing/office suite that is more than a match for Microsoft's Word for Windows 95 and Office 95 offerings.

Pricing policy will be important. Can Corel get PerfectOffice 7.0 bundled in with sales of new PC hardware – a tactic both Microsoft and Lotus with its SmartSuite product are benefiting from. And, what sort of upgrade deal can be offered to existing WordPerfect users given the "recommended" hardware specification for the new software is a 486 processor running at 66MHz with 16Mb of RAM.

The Internet integration will attract some users and the GroupWise link is also likely to be a strong selling point for firms with Novell networks. However, given the legal profession's fascination with speech recognition technology, the inclusion of the VoiceType software could be an inspired move. ☐

KEEPING TIME UNDER CONTROL

Software house PMD Technology Services (☎ 01462 480297) has launched a new project management program which it says is suitable for all professionals and consultants who charge on the basis of time plus disbursements.

EAGLE TURNS TURKEY

With only £300 in cash at the bank and debts in excess of £500,000, Stratton Publications, publishers of *The Eagle* legal magazine, have commenced a creditors voluntary liquidation.

MICROSOFT EXCHANGE NOW AVAILABLE

After two years of testing, Microsoft last week announced the availability of its new Microsoft Exchange Server system - its replacement for the old MS Mail messaging product, as well as its answer to the Novell GroupWise and Lotus Notes groupware systems.

Reflecting the changes in technology during the intervening period, as well as containing email and groupware facilities such as scheduling, discussion databases and document sharing, the new system also provides full Internet mail connectivity with MIME and UUCODE support for attachments and an electronic forms design application.

Exchange Server is part of Microsoft's BackOffice family of applications and although based on the Windows NT platform, the system will support a variety of 16-bit and 32-bit operating systems - Windows 3.1, Windows for Workgroups 3.1.1, Windows 95, Windows NT Workstation and MS-DOS - for mixed environments. Clients for these are already available while a Macintosh client is currently undergoing beta testing and scheduled for release this summer.

Microsoft is also providing special tools to help customers migrate to Exchange Server from other messaging systems, such as Lotus cc:Mail, Microsoft Mail, IBM Profs, and DEC All-in-1.

The basic Microsoft Exchange Server (messaging server with integrated groupware and 5 client access licences) will sell for approximately £820. A single client access licence (which provides email and group scheduling) costs £60. The full-featured Microsoft Exchange Server Enterprise Edition (which also includes X.400 and Internet mail connectors, as well as 25 client access licences) costs approximately £3,325. Microsoft also offers upgrades discounts for customers migrating from Microsoft Mail for PC and AppleTalk networks. □

BEAVER SUES MILES

Debt collection software specialist The Beaver Corporation has taken out a High Court writ against another legal systems supplier for unpaid bills relating to the supply of software and services to two solicitors practices - Lightfoots and Travell Horner - in 1994 and 1995.

The defendant named in the writ (1996 B-No.662, dated 2nd April) is Milesco 1 Ltd (company no. 1276966) which is part of the Miles 33 group. The sum claimed is £12,215.30 plus contractual interest of £2,228.69. □

MOUNTAIN CELEBRATES 20 YEARS IN BUSINESS

Grantham-based Mountain Software (☎ 01476 73718) this year celebrates its twentieth anniversary in the legal IT systems market.

Mountain director Steve Kendrick says one of the major enhancements to the company's software over the last 12 months has been the introduction of an extended client/matter database.

Features include: an email facility, a *fee earner desktop* and calendar, links to Laserforms and Microsoft Word (in addition to DOS and Windows versions of WordPerfect), default legal aid charge out rates, a telephone auto-dialler plus extra database fields for separate billing addresses, "corporate entertainment" records, client biographical notes and partnership/sole trader client details. □

STRIKE SET TO CONTINUE

Staff at the Courts Agency Computer Centre in Northampton, who began industrial action on 21st March over plans for privatisation, have announced they are extending their strike action by another fortnight until 23rd April.

The Northampton facility houses the County Court Bulk Centre which normally processes around 50% of the debt recovery summonses for England & Wales at an average rate of 5000 a day. □

SOS SIGNAL 15 WINS FROM 15 PITCHES

On 1st December 1995 Solicitors Own Software Ltd (SOS) formerly began shipping its new all-Windows accounts and time recording system. In the following 16 weeks the company won 15 new orders.

According to SOS sales director David McNamara, the software has a number of attractions to buyers: it is an all-new Windows system. (☞ As distinct from being a Windows front end bolted onto older technology ...Ed.) It contains advanced features such as a *Fee Earner Desktop* and an executive information system (EIS) that are only available as extras on other systems. And, the joint development project with Solicitec means users have the option of adding a fully integrated Windows case management system.

According to McNamara, the 15 new orders were all won as a result of presentations in competition with other suppliers.

SOS (☎ 01225 448664) is now expanding its installation and training teams "to cope with demand" as well as beefing up the support department "in order to maintain a high level support-to-user ratio".

☞ **Comment...** Along with the features mentioned by David McNamara, the SOS system is also very competitively priced, with a single user/entry level version of the Practice Manager for Windows product starting at £1500 - or £2000 if the optional time recording module is included. This system can be upgraded to a full multiuser network version.

The latest order to be placed comes from Gregory Rowcliffe & Milners in central London, who are implementing an office wide accounts and time recording installation with a network of Pentium PCs on the desk of every fee earner and secretary. The firm is also installing Solicitec's case management system. □

SHAKESPEARE LOOKING FOR CO-AUTHORS

Voice technology specialists Shakespeare SpeechWriter UK are looking for law firms who will collaborate with them on the development of special dictionaries - called *VocabSets* - of words and phrases that could then be used by other members of the legal profession working with the company's OfficeSpeak speech recognition system.

The deal Shakespeare are offering is a 35% discount off the usual RRP of £399 for the OfficeSpeak software *plus* a royalty of 20% of the net RRP of any subsequent sales if Shakespeare decide to market the *VocabSet* the lawyer helped develop. So, if a *Wills VocabSet* were to sell for £100 + VAT, the lawyer would receive a £20 royalty on each sale.

Shakespeare marketing manager Clara Stafford has already identified: litigation, company/commercial, wills, conveyancing, probate, divorce and family law as areas of practice where *VocabSets* could be useful and is willing to discuss other ideas with prospective "Professional Shakespeare Developers".

To qualify, the professional must have been in practice for at least two years and Shakespeare envisage the average *VocabSet* containing 40 separate vocabularies, each of which can hold up to 900 words, phrases or commands - so it could encompass the wording of standard letters or precedents for clauses in commercial leases and contracts etc.

For further details contact Clara Stafford on ☎ 01342 316456. □

A TEAM EFFORT

Case management software developers Alternative Team Ltd (☎ 0171 359 3595) report record results for 1995 with sales up by over a third on the previous year. As a large percentage of Alternative's business comes from existing clients and through recommendations, the company attributes this growth to "their dedication to customer service". □

COSTS SOFTWARE ENHANCED

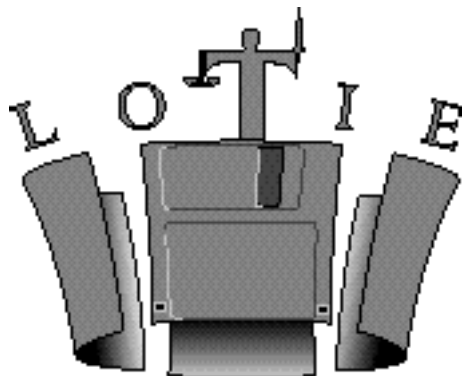
Wordwright Associates (☎ 01473 212752) has announced major enhancements to its Costs Plus software for handling legal costing. The latest version - Level 3 - now compiles taxation bills automatically from data files. The DOS software will run on most PCs, can be used in all areas of civil litigation and Wordwright say its ease of use means it can be operated by secretarial staff.

☞ **Until 31st July this year Cost Plus Level 3 is available at the introductory price of £900. It will then go up to £1100. A demonstration disk with full instructions is available for £10.**

COURT REPORTING GOES GLOBAL

Litigation support specialist Smith Bernal International (☎ 0171 404 1400) is extending its operations by the opening of a global support network operated through principal offices in London, Hong Kong and Philadelphia and 75 service providers in the USA.

☞ Although it began life as a court stenography agency, Smith Bernal is now best known for its pioneering of CAT (computer aided transcription) technology which led to the development of the LiveNote system used in the OJ Simpson and Maxwell trials. Ironically the Robert Maxwell group was another early pioneer of CAT technology.



THE LOTIES LATEST

The response of readers and the legal IT industry to the LOTIES - the Law Office Technology Innovation Awards - has taken the publishers of the two publications promoting the awards (LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER and *In Brief* magazine) by surprise. But, it has been a pleasant surprise!

Our original concern that the first year of running a new awards scheme might be a little slow in getting off the ground has proved totally unfounded.

Nominations are flowing in from far and wide. The first - incidentally for the Best Legal World Wide Web/Internet Site - was submitted by email within hours of the nomination form in **LTi** hitting readers' desks. Last week saw a nomination arriving by airmail from a user in Gibraltar.

There has also been an equally enthusiastic response from organisations wanting to take up the opportunity to sponsor the eight product and service categories that go to make up the awards. We will shortly be announcing details of the awards ceremony, which is scheduled for a date in early June in London.

So, who is being nominated? To find out the definitive list, you will have to wait until after the nominations period closes later this month. However, while it is no surprise to find some of the "big name" legal technology suppliers have been nominated, we are also receiving many nominations for less well-known products, services and suppliers. ➔

➔ While the nominations list still remains open, can we also take the opportunity to clarify one section of the rules that has been causing some confusion. When it comes to making a nomination, *anyone* is free to nominate any product or company for any category - although the publishers do scrutinise entries to ensure there is no impropriety.

Don't worry about finding referees, just fill in the nomination form and send it off. Remember, this is a two-stage awards scheme - what really counts are the readers' votes for the short-listed nominations when the second round takes place later this Spring. □

KODAK LAUNCH NEW ENTRY LEVEL DIP SYSTEM

Kodak's Office Imaging division has launched a new entry-level document storage and retrieval system which offers users the facility to access document images whether they are held on computer hard disk or digital media such as Writable Compact Disk.

Called Document Manager, the Windows-based system can store and index computer files (ASCII, WP, spreadsheets etc), photographic images (Photo CD, JPEG etc) and voice files, as well as scanned or microfilmed document image (TIFF) files, making them all accessible through a single index regardless of the medium on which they are held. Retrieved files can be output to printer, disk, Writable CD or any screen on a network.

Prices start at £7,500 for a retrieval only version or £11,500 for the capture and retrieval version. According to Kodak, Document Manager's inherent flexibility gives users the option of starting with a single-user system employing economic storage media like microfilm or Writable CD, but which can then be expanded to handle larger applications within a practice or to incorporate a virtually instantaneous access medium, such as computer hard disk, for projects where greater access speeds are needed. □

HELP !

The technical section for buyers and users of legal IT, whether novice or advanced. If you need help with an IT problem or if you have views on a technology issue, advice or a hot tip you would like to share with readers, send it direct to **LTI** via post, fax, DX or email. The contact details are on the back page.

ROLL YOUR OWN SOHO JOINT **Solicitor John Waldron explains how SoHo (Small Office/Home Office) practitioners can produce their own client database linked to a time recording and billing system, add a contact database and even ledgers for free...**

Microsoft Office 95 Professional includes Access 95, the 32-bit version of their database product. Be aware that Access 95 needs a powerful machine to run satisfactorily; a Pentium with a big disk drive and at least 16MB of memory (24MB if to be used in conjunction with Word 7) seems to be the realistic minimum requirement.

Armed with such a machine, Access 95 and a basic familiarity with Windows 95 style software, SoHo Practitioners can start "rolling their own" software. The initial steps will take only a few minutes, as follows:

☛ Fire up Access and select *Create a New Database using a Database "Wizard"*.

☛ Select the *Databases tab* and from within that screen select the *Time & Billing Database Wizard*.

☛ Answer the few simple questions the Wizard asks you, and, for the first time round at least, generate example data automatically. Then watch while the Wizard creates the database for you.

☛ Go into the application's main "switchboard" and have a look at what you've got. You can set up clients and their projects (matters), record time and expenses against them, bill the time and record payments. There are certain ➡

➡ transatlantic elements such as the "masks" on the post code and telephone number fields and the *State/Province* field, but all these can be changed easily later.

There are also obvious restrictions in that there is no legal aid, no VAT and the billing process assumes you are going to bill precisely the recorded charge for the time. A commercial product such as Timeslips (☞ *This has now been acquired by Sage and a new version for Windows is under development.*) is similar in functionality. Tips are (a) to number or name your projects in a logical manner and (b) record disbursements (or outlays) as a category of expenses.

☛ Every practitioner has contacts and it is useful to be able to record their details as well as items such as conversations with them, referrals of work etc. The *Contacts Database Wizard* will generate such a database for you in minutes.

☛ Want to keep track of the expenses of running your business? The *Ledger Database Wizard* will do the trick for you. It generates a database which allows you to record and analyse payments out of your bank account. Again, VAT is not handled but it is possible to record taxable items.

☛ What about one or more client accounts? Not every SoHo practitioner wants (or has a practising certificate authorising them) to hold client funds but it is possible to use the *Ledger database* for this purpose.

Generate a second copy of the *Ledger database* and call it something like *Client Ledger*. Use it only for recording client account transactions and specify one account type eg *Client Matter Ledger*. When you set up accounts use the project name/number from the *Time & Billing database* for consistency, as later on you might wish to link the projects database with this ledger.

So there you have a basic but working suite of programs slightly transatlantic in flavour yet still preferable to keeping records on bits of paper and/or various spreadsheets and wordprocessor documents. ...continued on page 6 ➡

HOT TIP

From Ian Wimbush of Peapod Professional Solutions comes the recommendation that smaller firms should not overlook peer-to-peer systems as a way of implementing networks without the overhead of server hardware and network management software. He reckons the advent of Windows 95 has made peer-to-peer networking faster, more stable and more powerful.

He also suggests a product like DPS can be of added benefit in this scenario as "one of the strengths of DPS is its document management and filing system, as this saves new users from having to understand filing structures".

HELLO PRINTER

Mannesmann Tally (☎ 01734 788711) has extended its T9000 laser printer series with the launch of the T9108 model. This is an 8 pages per minute machine with an RRP of £449 and features the Microsoft Windows Printing System (WPS) to simplify both installation and usage. The printer is compatible with Windows NT, Windows 95 and Unix operating systems and can easily be networked for a group of users.

GOODBYE VIRUS

Data security specialist Sophos plc (☎ 01235 559933) has launched a new version of its virus detection software SWEEP for use on Banyan Vines local area networks.

UNIPLEX GET SMART

Uniplex Ltd has launched a major upgrade to its onGO Document Management System.

Called onGO DMS version 2.0, it is described as an "intelligent" document control system in which each document is "smart" - it knows when it has been amended, by whom and immediately notifies the relevant individuals of that change. Uniplex say its features, which include automatic tracking and version control, make it ideal for organisations that need to work on documents and review drafts collaboratively.

☞ **Technical Note...** Best known as a supplier of office automation products for Unix platforms, Uniplex (☎ 01442 230330) has 2.2 million users worldwide running the company's server-based workgroup (email, scheduling etc) software. The new product will be available for Windows 3x, 95 and NT clients. □

ROLL YOUR OWN SOHO JOINT

➡ *continued from page 5...* Furthermore the data can be utilised directly throughout the Office 95 package, for example names and addresses can be accessed by Word, financial data analysed by Excel, while Access itself is an excellent reporting tool.

For this reason, time spent on becoming familiar with Access 95 and the remainder of Office 95 will be well rewarded. It is entirely feasible to "tweak" the databases to match more closely your requirements but be wary of trying to do too much major surgery at the outset. It is also entirely feasible to drag transactions into an Excel spreadsheet where they can be used as the basis of a completion statement or even a deposit interest calculation.

But, why is a supplier of legal systems (☞ John Waldron is also the managing director of Curat Lex) telling lawyers how they can "roll their own" software? Readers are entitled to be suspicious, ➡

➡ if nothing else on the "beware of Greeks bearing gifts" principle.

The answer is to demonstrate this supplier at least lives in the real world and recognises the power of modern (particularly 32-bit) PC based software but is also aware of its limitations.

It is in fact the amendability, flexibility and integration with Office 95 that is both its greatest strength and greatest weakness - and why it is very much only for the computer literate SoHo practitioner working on his or her own.

Quite apart from not being a proper office and client accounting system (double entry book-keeping and control accounts are nowhere to be seen) it has the fundamental drawback of not being secure or auditable. Not only can the data be changed but the database layout and structure can be amended at will.

Furthermore like most database software for personal computers it relies very much on "filtering" transactions from flat files in order to display them on screen or generate balances. This is fine with small amounts of data but becomes a serious problem as the quantity of data increases.

Even small firms generate a surprising volume of data. For example, a four fee earner High Street practice can expect to have 800 open files giving rise to 32,000 time transactions at any one time - and solicitors are reluctant to delete anything from a system. Indeed, why should they? It is therefore not difficult to envisage that response times could slow to a snail's pace for even such a relatively small firm.

Accordingly what is needed for law firms is software specifically designed to handle large amounts of transaction based data in a secure and structured manner within a multiuser environment without any appreciable deterioration in performance. The ideal solution is software which combines this with the ability to be read directly by Office 95 applications for reporting, analysis and word-processing etc purposes. □

@work.co

Web site operators are welcome to create hyperlink *jumps* from their pages to the recently redesigned **LTi** site home page at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/cloudnine/>

THE INTERNET WORKS SAY GERMANS

We start our regular look at developments on the Internet with two items of news which only serve to highlight the confusion currently surrounding the opportunities and challenges presented by the new electronic and digital media.

At the opening of its new *Cyber-Club* Internet facility at its offices in London's Shaftsbury Avenue, systems house Hoskyns (probably best known in the legal market for its work with Herbert Smith) uncovered a statistic which said that by the end of the century 94% of US businesses would be on the Internet but only 12% would know the reason why.

Pause for laughter. But, they are not laughing in Germany where Michael Fuchs, the president of the German wholesale and foreign trade association, is currently blaming the Internet for a decline in that country's export trade.

According to Herr Fuchs, because the Net makes it easier for foreign buyers to compare prices from competitors on a worldwide basis, this "global sourcing culture" means that to win orders today, German businesses are having to offer far more generous trading terms.

☞ **Comment...** These views on the transnational nature of the Web echo the sentiments of Jeffrey Green Russell senior partner Clive Whitfield-Jones, when he told the recent *Information Systems for Lawyers* conference that law firms should regard their Internet sites as "a shop window on the world". The inherent drawback is everyone can look in – and some might not like what they see. ☐

WEB VERDICT

LTi continues its review of new "legal" Web sites so readers can see at-a-glance if they are worth visiting. The review takes into account a site's style, technical merits and content with pages awarded an appropriate *Smiley Rating*:

☺☺☺☺ **Great - definitely visit**
☺☺☺ **Good - worth looking**
☺☺ **So-So - must try harder**
☺ **Sad - don't even bother**

Elliott Slone Ltd (☎ 0171 929 5252) is a new City of London-based face in the legal market offering a broad range of support services, including the provision of paralegal staff to assist with major litigation support projects. The company's Web site at <http://www.elliottslone.co.uk> is, however, slow – the funereal corporate logo takes an age to load, the contents of many of the pages are stale and the lack of response to a request for further information suggests they do not check their email regularly. Hence an indifferent ☺☺ *Smiley Rating*.

Wandsworth London Borough Council has opened an ambitious Web site at <http://www.wandsworth.gov.co.uk/search/> which is intended to make the whole of its Register of Planning Applications available across the Internet. The council say that after creating a database of planning documents that could be searched through terminals at the Town Hall, it seemed logical to make the data more accessible to people who could not get to the council offices by putting it on the Internet.

The development work was carried out by Lombard Document Systems (☎ 0171 353 5008) who also produced a free downloadable image viewer so drawings up to full AO size can be inspected with zoom facilities. Downloading takes about 15 minutes but is worth it as it means the .TIF files traditionally used in document image processing (DIP) systems can be viewed by Netscape browser software. *Smiley Rating* ☺☺☺. ☐

DEMON EXPANDS

Dial-up Internet Service Provider (ISP) Demon Internet (☎ 0181 371 1234) is expanding its UK operations with the installation of 700 additional modems at a new network facility centre in London.

NOVELL EXPANDS NET OFFERING

Novell (☎ 01344 724000) is seeking to make its NetWare Web Server system even more competitive by including a runtime version of NetWare 4.1 free with the server software.

AND 27,000 CHOOSE

MICROSOFT Microsoft report that in a period of one month 27,000 people have downloaded copies of Microsoft's web server software IIS free from <http://www.microsoft.com>

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**Alexis Byter's
 COMPUTER LORE**

Although I admit I may sometimes be harsh in my criticism of law firms and their attitude towards technology, it would be wrong to say I enjoy lawyer-bashing. Some lawyers never cease to amaze me by their enthusiasm for computing.

In fact there is a rumour going around at the moment about a law firm in London that could not understand why its new "a PC on every fee earner's desk" network was already running short of disk space - until it was discovered just how many fee earners were following the example of lawyer-turned best selling author John Grisholm and writing their novels on the wordprocessing system.

Besides, if we are going to be critical, then a fair amount of opprobrium must also fall on the shoulders of so-called IT professionals, such as systems suppliers and computer consultants.

They may preach the benefits of the state-of-the-art but inside their offices many of them are still using technology the likes of which is nowadays only found inside the Computer Gallery at the Kensington Science Museum.

Networked office diaries and appointments schedulers? I think not. If you want to book to see one of these characters, you had better make sure ➔

➔ they have their Filofax or Letts Pocket Diary with them when you phone.

Want to send a fax? No problem, providing your fax can make any sense of the gibberish coming out of their multi-function fax/telephone answering machine. And, we are also assuming they have remembered to put a new roll of paper in the machine.

Recently I had to resort to the post - or snail mail - to deliver a document after both the fax numbers I had been given proved defective. Ironically, I was trying to send the fax to the principal of a law school that specialises in MBA courses in legal practice administration.

My own personal bugbear is electronic mail. More and more organisations now quote email addresses either directly or through email facilities linked to an Internet World Wide Web site. Yet, they never seem to bother to regularly check the mailbox for incoming messages.

For example, there is one supplier who has not responded to a message sent over three weeks ago. What am I supposed to do now, send a letter suggesting they check for email? (☞ See also page 7.)

Bearing in mind many of these companies set internal targets for the maximum number of times a phone should be allowed to ring before it is answered, how come they let their email boxes effectively go on ringing unanswered for the best part of a month? ☐

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