
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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NEW SPEECH RECOGNITION INITIATIVE

Two of the major players in the UK legal technology market - Philips Speech Processing and Legalease, who publish *The Legal 500* and run the LINK network - are to work together to develop what they believe will be the first truly viable speech recognition system for the legal profession.

A formal announcement will be made within the next few weeks but **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** has learned that Legalease will be developing the legal "contexts" for Philips. These are the application specific language files that contain the vocabularies of words and phrases that lawyers are likely to use in their everyday practice and which should greatly reduce the time it takes users to get up to speed working with the system.

Legalease will also be recruiting additional staff to develop a suite of these legal contexts, which will subsequently be sold to users of the Philips system.

☞ **Comment...** Combining a digital dictation capability across a PC network with the promise of continuous voice-to-text speech recognition has always made the Philips offering potentially the most interesting on the market.

Similarly, the availability of a familiar looking handheld dictation microphone and the complementary SpeechPad "digital pocket memo" system to add a portable element, shows that Philips fully appreciate the way most lawyers have always worked - and would ideally like to continue working. ➔

➔ This is in contrast to most of the competition, which still require users to also become adept at using PCs before they can get on with their dictation. If Philips and Legalease can deliver viable contexts, we may finally see the speech recognition technology that lawyers have been promised for so long. ☐

MORE CMS WINS ON WAY ?

Quintec International, which is now part of the PC Docs Group, is close to winning three more orders for its CMS Open accounts and practice management system. Contracts are expected to be signed at the end of January. A fourth firm - a large City of London practice - is understood to be down to a final choice between CMS Open and Keystone. ☐

THE 1997 LOTIES

The nominations have closed for the 1997 Law Office Technology Innovation Awards - the LOTIES. On page 4 we carry details of the short-listed nominations in each of the ten categories.

Although traditional UK legal suppliers (including Axxia, Quill and MSS) are well represented, this year has also seen an increase in the number of US products (Carpe Diem, Elite, OnLine Look-Up and Hot Docs) making it through to the finals.

In most categories the response has been excellent - the one exception being for the Best Legal Publication on CD-Rom, where valid nominations were received for just two titles. There again, given the criticisms of legal CD publishing reported on page 6 of this issue, perhaps this was to be expected. ☐

Technology news

☞ Microsoft has announced it will no longer support the MIPS platform for future versions of its Windows NT operating system. NT 4.0 will remain available on MIPS but forthcoming NT 5.0 will be limited to Intel x86, Dec Alpha and PowerPC hardware.

☞ Olivetti is selling its technically highly rated but commercially loss making PC arm to the Italian venture capital group Centenary.

☞ Logicraft (☎ 01793 610987) has launched a CD management system for the Windows NT market. Called CDexecutive 2.0, the company claims the system can improve the way extensive CD-Rom libraries are shared across NT networks.

QUILL WARN OF RISING COSTS

Speaking at a recent user group meeting for solicitors practices, the managing director of Quill Computers Tony Landes warned that the cost of legal technology was once more on the increase.

After pointing out that Windows software costs more to develop than older character-based applications, Mr Landes added that firms should budget for the fact Windows-based networks "cost a lot more to install and require significantly more training".

"Windows installations," he said, are now so sophisticated that the Law Society recommends practices have one full time employee per 20 users acting as a system supervisor. Whether or not that is practical is for firms to judge but either way there will be costs. Either we train a systems supervisor to train the rest of the firm - or we train everyone ourselves with higher costs as a result."

Landes is also keen to ensure firms appreciate the real cost of general office automation products, such as network faxing, email and diary facilities, for although relatively inexpensive to buy, training, configuration and support for them is vital and costs money.

Turning to equipment, Landes believes total hardware costs are rising again because of the high technical specifications required to run the latest software ie Pentium chips, lots of RAM, colour screens and large hard disks.

However it is the increased "cost of selling" that most concerns Landes. "Our role as a supplier has changed significantly in recent times, because firms' requirements are so much more sophisticated."

"Each sale requires more visits and more consultancy work. For example, where our advice is requested and we have to investigate the options before recommendations can be given. As for telecommunications links between ➡

➡ branches, that has become a science in itself."

Landes says companies like Quill are willing to undertake this extra work but users must realise supplier pricing structures have to reflect the true costs of selling. Otherwise, there is a danger margins will be squeezed to a point where trading ceases to be profitable. ☐

FIRST MMX PCs AVAILABLE

Last Wednesday saw the microprocessor manufacturer Intel formally launch its new MMX (multimedia extension) range of Pentium chips.

These are said to offer a 10-20% performance increase for conventional PC business applications and as much as a 60% improvement in the performance of multimedia applications (such as video conferencing and speech recognition) that incorporate MMX instructions.

In the UK the first MMX PCs are already commercially available from Tiny, Viglen and Dell. Ready to run models with a 166MHz Pentium MMX chip are retailing for £1249 to £1299 (+ VAT), with a faster 200MHz model for £1349 (+ VAT).

A Pentium Pro MMX chip will be launched later this year, as will an upgrade chip allowing existing Pentium PC users to upgrade to MMX. ☐

LEXOLOGY WHO ?

In the last edition we mentioned one of the short-listed entries for the Society for Computers & Law award was a legal aid franchise management system called FranSys, developed by Lexology (☎ 01642 489800). But who are they?

The answer is Lexology is a Redcar based company set up by two local solicitors after their own software supplier Hay Logic folded. Rather than buy a third-party product, they decided to develop their own system with assistance from a friend (and now co-director) John Benson, previously the technical manager for the Legalease LINK service. ☐

LASERFORM WIN MAJOR SCOTTISH REGISTERS DEAL

Electronic forms publisher Laserform Law has secured a major order from the Registers of Scotland to provide electronic legal forms for the benefit of the Scottish property market.

The Registers (the Scottish equivalent of the English Land Registry) is currently in the middle of a major computerisation project which includes the ScotLIS land and property information service, scheduled to begin public trials in Glasgow later this year.

As part of this larger scale scheme to move the whole property market into the digital era, Laserform has been selected as the exclusive supplier of electronic property related forms to the Scottish legal profession. The forms run under Windows and demonstration disks will be available from Laserform (☎ 01565 755154) from 1st February.

Laserform, who already produce forms for the Scottish Sheriff's Court and company law sectors, are now working on producing a version of their CaseControl case management system specifically tailored to the Scottish property market. (LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER will be looking at this in more detail in the next issue.)

☞ **Related Developments...** Legal systems supplier Technology for Business (TFB) has signed up with the Solicitors' Law Stationery Society to sell the Oyez-Forms range of legal forms on disk, as a complementary product to TFB's own software, including the *Managing Partner* case management system. Last summer Avenue Legal Systems also became a distributor for OyezForms.

☞ Peapod Solutions' 32-bit version of its PrintaForm electronic forms software, which will run under Windows NT, 95 and 3.1, has completed beta testing and is now commercially available. ➡

☞ North London solicitors' practice Kaye Tesler & Co has launched a £40 (+ VAT) a time "Electronic Will Writer" service.

Members of the public can freely access the firm's Web site (<http://www.cybersoft.co.uk/kayetesler&co/>) where they will find comprehensive guidance about making a will, along with an accompanying on-screen questionnaire so they can actually supply all the information needed to create a will while they are online.

The Web site uses CGI fill-in forms, so data can be transmitted direct to the firm for processing. Kaye Tesler will then prepare a draft will which can be sent to the client for approval by email, fax or post. Payment is by credit card and again details can be submitted by email or more conventional means. ☐

LAW FIRM LAUNCHES CONSULTANCY ARM

Bond Street solicitors Jeffrey Green Russell have established an independent corporate consultancy arm to provide consultancy services on IT strategy and implementation to other law firms. Called Techtop Management Ltd (☎ 0171 499 7020) the company is wholly owned by the partnership and headed by the firm's IT Manager Alison Sykes.

Commenting on the initiative Sykes said: "Over the last couple of years JGR have established a reputation for our innovative use of IT - we were the first onto the Internet and more recently we established a practice wide intranet - with the result that we frequently get asked by other lawyers for practical advice and assistance. The new consultancy formalises this situation and we already have a number of projects lined up."

Senior partner Clive Whitfield-Jones added: "I believe that law firms often have more to gain from sensible co-operation rather than the vicious competition we sometimes see. Techtop has been set up with that philosophy in mind." ☐

New face
Martin Siddle has joined Pilgrim Systems with responsibility for sales in the North, Midlands and South West. Martin was previously part of the sales team at Equitrac.

New address
Lawtech Ltd, who provide a range of systems support, integration and consultancy services, have moved to new premises at 21 Whitefriars Street, London EC4Y 8JJ. The phone number is ☎ 0171 583 2345.

New order
Fathom Technologies has won an order to install its credit management system Caseflow at Imperial College, which is part of the University of London.

How to vote

Either cut out or photocopy the voting form, place a tick in the box against just one of the short-listed nominations in each category and return it to **LTi** by post or DX. You can also fax, phone in or email your entries.

Entries to:

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

Ferndale House
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Diss, Norfolk
IP22 2NQ

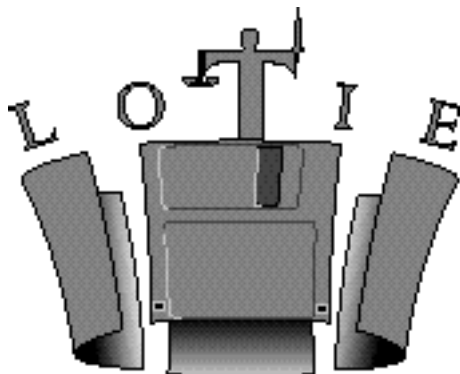
Dx: 42519, Diss

☎ 01379 687518

Fax: 01379 687704

Email: jcxian

@cloudbine.co.uk



THE LOTIES - THE FINAL ROUND

The nominations have closed for the 1997 Law Office Technology Innovation Awards - the LOTIES - and we now move on to the final stage in which the readers of **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** and *In Brief* magazine can vote for their favourites from the short-listed nominations in each of the ten categories. A copy of the voting form will also appear in *In Brief* - voting closes at the end of March.

1. LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR

- ACE INFINITY DIARY PLANNER
- RIGHTFAX - Kommunicate's network fax management system
- CARPE DIEM - ProSoft Corporation's on-screen time tracking software
- ONLINE LOOK-UP - cost monitoring for online services, from Text Systems

2. BEST LEGAL FRONT OFFICE PRODUCT

- IN-CONTROL LEGAL - case & workflow management from Mercury Computing
- AXXIA FEE EARNER DESKTOP
- QUILL CONVEYANCING - residential conveyancing system
- ACE INFINITY DIARY PLANNER

3. BEST LEGAL BACK OFFICE PRODUCT

- ALPHALAW ACCOUNTS - from MSS
- ELITE BILLING SYSTEM
- AXXIA ARISTA
- PRECEDENT - from Miles 33

4. BEST LAW OFFICE AUTOMATION PRODUCT

- WORD 6 FOR WINDOWS
- HOT DOCS - Capsoft's document assembly software
- FAXSWITCH - Hexar's network fax management system
- PRINTAFORM - Peapod's electronic forms system

5. LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY NEWCOMER

- PINPOINT - Quill's legal accounts bureau service
- ACE INFINITY DIARY PLANNER
- ONE STOP SOLUTION - Peapod's low cost accounts system
- ELR - Weekly Law Reports on CD-Rom

6. BEST LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY SUPPLIER

- HEXAR LTD
- AXXIA SYSTEMS LTD
- QUILL COMPUTER SYSTEMS LTD
- MSS MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

7. BEST LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY USER GROUP

- NORWEL Users Group
- AXXIA Systems Solicitors User Group
- QUILL User Group
- ELITE User Group

8. BEST LEGAL WWW/INTERNET SITE

- STAR INTERNET (www.star.co.uk)
- OLSWANG (www.olswang.co.uk)
- INFORMATION FOR LAWYERS (www.infolaw.co.uk/ifl)
- DELIA VENABLES LEGAL RESOURCES (www.venables.co.uk/legal)

9. BEST LEGAL PUBLICATION ON CD-ROM

- ELR - from Context
- THE LEGAL ANGLE - see page 5

10. BEST LEGAL GADGET OR UTILITY

- ONLINE LOOK-UP
- TIMECLERK - from Quill
- ACE INFINITY DIARY PLANNER
- THE FUTURE OF LAW - Richard Susskind's Book !

MILES 33 FEELING BULLISH FOR '97

The tail end of 1996 saw a flurry of rumours surrounding Miles 33, one of the longest established suppliers in the UK legal systems market. **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** spoke to Joe Amerasinghe, who heads Miles' legal division, to find out what had been happening...

Regarding the story that seven of Miles' administrative and support staff had been "let go", Mr Amerasinghe confirmed this was true. However, he also added that far from being a cost cutting exercise, it was actually part of a more fundamental management reorganisation at Miles to ensure the company "invests" in people with the right skill sets to handle the latest technology.

To this end the company has recently been recruiting technical and support staff with Windows NT and Visual Basics skills.

Turning to the the future, Joe Amerasinghe is in a bullish mood and reckons that this year "will see some very exciting developments at Miles 33".

Full details are not being released until later this spring but Amerasinghe says the company has secured "a unique deal" with the database software giant Oracle and hints that the new developments will be in the field of network computing, workflow automation and intranet technology

☞ **Comment...** During the last year Miles has won orders from a number of major firms including: Walker Morris, Bond Pearce and Shepherd & Wedderburn in Edinburgh. □

LAWYERS PLAN TO SHARPEN THE LEGAL ANGLE

One of the less familiar names among the nominations for the 1997 LOTIES is a new publication on disk called *The Legal Angle* (Category 9). This was developed ➔

➔ by Nick Roche of Hardwick & Co and Paul Ranson of Simmons & Simmons as a "self diagnostic tool" for clients that would hopefully help "demystify business law".

Having worked in inhouse legal departments, the authors felt there was a potential demand for a source of information that would help clients clarify legal issues before they had to call in their external legal advisers. (☞ *This concept is also suggested by Richard Susskind in his book "The Future of Law" - another of this year's LOTIE nominations.*)

To this end, Ranson sees *The Legal Angle* as also being a potential marketing tool that law firms could send out to their clients, in the same way that they currently distribute newsletters.

The Legal Angle is available on CD-Rom but because Ranson believes CDs are still the exception rather than the rule, it will initially be sold on floppy disk.

Distribution is being handled by Effective Technology Mail Order (☎ 01472 699027), price £195 and the authors are currently negotiating a deal with one of the UK's major law firm networks. □

AMICUS ATTORNEY PRO LAUNCHED

On Wednesday (15th January) Gavel & Gown (☎ 01242 243344) begin shipping a new version of the Amicus Attorney "lawyers productivity software" package.

Called Amicus Attorney Pro, the new version contains extensive support for document assembly applications and is compatible with Hot Docs, as well as Microsoft Word and WordPerfect.

The Windows software now also includes an "intelligent assistance" feature to automate routine administrative tasks - such as pulling up all the data needed to complete a document - by clicking on an onscreen "Do" button.

Existing users can upgrade to the Pro version for £50. The price includes a complete set of manuals. □

RightFAX aims for right deals

Network fax specialist **Kommunicate** (☎ 01252 815514) has introduced a volume purchase agreement for larger users wanting to expand their fax systems throughout their organisations.

☞ **Slaughter & May**, who last year produced 2 million fax pages, has increased its **Right-FAX** capacity to 40 phone lines. **Ashurst Morris Crisp** has doubled the size of its installation from 16 to 32 lines. In Leeds **Eversheds** has increased its configuration from 4 to 16 lines, while the Cardiff office of **Eversheds** has just placed an order for an 8 line **RightFAX** system.

LAW PUBLISHERS CRITICISED OVER CD-ROM POLICIES

Are legal publishers charging too much for their CD-Rom titles?

Scottish solicitor Chris Stuart says the £800 now being charged for the *Scots Law Times* on CD is "completely unacceptable" and outside the budgets of all but the largest firms. This view is echoed by James Horsley, who complains that as it is cheaper to press CDs than it is to print books, CD titles should be cheaper than paper-based law books.

Nick Holmes of Information for Lawyers, who has worked with a number of legal publishers, believes this is an "overly simplistic" view as most publishers still have to carry the cost of producing conventional versions of their books in tandem with their CD ranges.

He does concede that overall pricing policy "is a mess" with some titles being charged for on a per partner basis, others per user and others per concurrent user. However he also adds that as this "is a completely new market, they can be forgiven for taking a while to get it right."

Holmes is also optimistic that the market will see the emergence of industry technologies, so all CDs use the same search engines. (☞ *Context use Justis, Butterworths use Books on Screen, while Sweet & Maxwell use a whole range including Adobe Acrobat and Muscat.*)

Holmes' betting is on Folio Views (Version 4 was launched in December) which is already used in the UK by several law publishers, including Tolley, Sweet & Maxwell and FT Law & Tax.

☞ **Comment...** Law publishers are also coming in for criticism for the way they sell CD-Rom products. Butterworths get the lowest rating for always wanting to arrange a personal visit by a sales rep, whereas Context get full marks for their try before you buy policy. According to Frank Maher of Weightman Rutherfords "Context are streets ahead of the rest." ☐

DIARY DATES

☞ **27 January - SCL Awards** The winner of the Society for Computers & Law IT Award will be announced at the English Law Society. Call the SCL on ☞ 0117 923 7393 for details.

☞ **27 to 29 January - Legal Tech New York** At the New York Hilton, call Corporate Presentations on ☞ 001 212 877 5619 for details.

☞ **4 February - How to run a profitable legal aid practice** TV Edwards technology partner Paul Mason explains his firm's experiences of computerising legal aid work. **6 February - How to get more conveyancing business** Derek Wilkinson of Terence St J Millet looks at how IT can increase the profitability of property practice. The seminars are organised by DPS and take place at IBM's Southbank offices in London. Admission is free and there are sessions at 10.00am and 2.00pm on both days. Call DPS on ☞ 0181 882 8811 for details

☞ **10 & 11 February - ACUA Conference** The AIM user group event this year focusses on "the future of law", speakers include the new Law Society secretary general Jane Betts. Call Roger Hancock on ☞ 01789 296096 for details.

☞ **25 & 26 February - Information Systems for Lawyers** The annual Lawyer conference and exhibition, at the London Marriott, has twin themes this year: exploiting existing technologies and planning for the future. Admission £697 (+ VAT), call Centaur Conferences on ☞ 0171 287 5000 for details.

☞ **26 February - 1997 Law Office IT Awareness Day** The ILCA conference and exhibition at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The event is sponsored by **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** and the theme is the digital communications revolution. Admission from £95, call ILCA on ☞ 0181 294 2887 for details. ☐

Need action or help ?

In the last edition we carried a story about an Irish software house that was looking for a partner to help develop new products. The story appeared on the morning of Monday 16th December and by 9.30am that day, the company had received its first response.

☞ If you need a phone number, product name, contact point or any other elusive item of information concerning legal technology - including being put in contact with potential partners or new recruits - just call the Insider Info line on ☞ 01379 687518.

COMMUNIC@TIONS FUTURES

Web operators are welcome to create links to the **LTI** site at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/cloudnine/> **LTI** is a member of the HTML Writers Guild and supports the Electronic Frontier Foundation campaign for free speech on the Internet.

PLAYING HARD BALL WITH COMPUSERVE

A frequent complaint about the CompuServe (CIS) email and information service, who take payment by direct debits from credit cards, is that although you may cancel your subscription, it takes several weeks before they stop deducting money from your credit card account.

Because you are no longer on the service, you cannot email their accounts department - and telephoning does no good, not least because CIS is notorious for having an apparently permanently jammed voice mail system.

After failing to get his money back, despite numerous requests, Ravi Shankar, a solicitor with Beaumont & Sons in London, finally lost patience with CIS and took out a county court summons. CompuServe never replied, so he was able to obtain a default judgment and a few days later a cheque arrived by post. □

GERMANS TO OFFER ISDN IN THE UK ?

Deutsche Telekom, the German privatised national telecommunications operator, has confirmed it is considering offering high speed digital ISDN services, which can support both Internet access and video conferencing, in the UK. Deutsche is talking about a connection charge of £70, compared with the £199 to £680 British Telecom charges. However BT says that while Deutsche may be able offer cheaper connections, its call charges are higher, making BT the more economical option for most business users. □

LAWCITY GOING NOWHERE ?

Further information has now become available about the Current Science Group's plans to create an online "club" for lawyers called LawCity (see p.3 of Issue No 29 for first report).

According to the legal publishers that **LTI** has spoken to, negotiations are no longer in progress with CSG because the likes of Butterworths and Sweet & Maxwell could see no commercial incentive in making their legal material available to a third party.

Two further sticking points were: LawCity's proposal to use a dedicated Web browser rather than industry standard software, such as Netscape or Explorer and, given that most lawyers do not do very much legal research, why would they want to pay to join a service like LawCity when the same forums were freely available on LINK?

One publisher prepared to give an on-the-record comment was Legalease's John Pritchard. He said he felt LawCity was just LINK by another name and while he believes "anything that gets more lawyers using online services is good news for LINK... I suspect CSG will find there are some basic structural differences between the medical and legal professions. (☞ *CSG already run a "club" for the biomedical community.*) Not least that medicine and science are genuinely international in a way legal materials and practice are not." □

NOVELL BOOSTS WEB RANGE

Novell has announced further Internet friendly enhancements to its product range. These include a Java software development kit for the IntranetWare and NetWare 4.1 platforms and a beta version of Novell Web Server 3.0, which will support both internal intranets and publishing across the Internet.

The software is downloadable from [http:// developer.novell.com/net2000/java](http://developer.novell.com/net2000/java) and <http://support.novell.com/home/pubbeta/nws> □

Surfing corner

Thanks again to the US newsletter *Internet Lawyer* for drawing our attention to some of the legal world's more novel Web sites. At <http://www.mostwanted.org/> you can find details of the most wanted fugitives while <http://www.best.com/~policek9> contains case law and a "roll of valor" relating to police dogs.

Tel-Me loses ground

Phonelink has reported an 18% increase in pre-tax losses over the last six months as its Tel-Me online information service continues to fail to attract sufficient numbers of users.

☞ Although Tel-Me offers access to popular business services, such as credit checks from CCN, it requires proprietary software and so has steadily lost ground to Internet based services. When launched in 1994, Tel-Me was talking about 100,000s of users, currently it has 5,500 subscribers.

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Coming soon...
Next week the Law Society has to decide the fate of the HSSK low cost accounts system. To learn the result, don't miss the next issue No 31 out: 27 January.

Alexis Byter's COMPUTER LORE

Showing a bit of initiative

Can there be little doubt we now live in a global village?

Just before Christmas we received an email message from a software house offering us their online and Internet publishing services, including HTML coding. Nothing unusual in that, you might think, except that the software house is located in India.

Called LeafWriters, the company is connected to the Internet/WWW by a 128 Kbps satellite link and is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As well as being cheap, the company claims to have a large capacity, can provide a quick turnaround and will even undertake a sample project on a free trial basis.

They also clearly have a lot of initiative and can be found at <http://leaf.stpn.soft.net>

Missing the point ?

The English Law Society, its members will no doubt be pleased to learn, has just spent a large sum of money – rumoured to be in the region of £68,000 – installing Lotus Notes and cc:mail software plus associated server and firewalls to support an email network at Chancery Lane for 50 staff. Unfortunately, having got it, they now seem intent on keeping it a ➔

➔ secret and are refusing to disclose the email addresses of the individual staff members.

According to one council member, the reason for this caution is “in case too many people call them”. But isn't that the point of the exercise?

I seem to recall the Society's new director of communications takes over this month. Perhaps she would care to look into this problem.

When she has done so, she might also have a word with all those solicitors practices who still jealously guard their partners' email addresses. But, I shall not disclose the name of one firm that allows staff to receive incoming email messages but not to send or reply to them.

Nice one Steve

Corporate mission statements and slogans – particularly from IT companies – are usually cringe-making affairs full of fatuous commitments to quality and customer service, when you know the reality is a reception desk that leaves you permanently on “hold” with nothing but Vivaldi and his *Four Seasons* for company.

It is therefore good to see that Go Interactive, which was recently set up by Steven Vincent and Legal Technologies to provide Internet consultancy services, has at least devised a slogan that is both novel and to the point: “.net solutions for net profit”. Nice one Steve. □

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