
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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And don't forget to visit <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk>

ENTHUSIASM GROWING FOR MARTINI FACTOR

The legal community's enthusiasm for intranets - internal networks that use hypertext links, web browsers and other aspects of internet technology to share information throughout an organisation - is growing, with this summer likely to see at least four new products entering the market.

Although the Bond Street firm of Jeffrey Green Russell were the first to go "live" with an intranet based around the Netscape Navigator, a number of other practices are also working in the same direction with Internet Explorer or, in some cases, Lotus Notes intranets.

Growing interest in the concept is also being shown by commercial suppliers, such as Information Hyperlink who previewed their Llama 2000 intranet, which uses Sun and Informix technology, at the *Information Systems for Lawyers* conference earlier this year.

Over the next three months at least four more "package" intranets are likely to be pitched at the legal market by commercial suppliers. These include a system for inhouse legal departments developed by Dallas-based software house Corprasoft, which will be on show at the *Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition* in London in early June,

But perhaps the most surprising prospective runner in the legal intranet stakes is Rebus Insurance Systems, a subsidiary of the publicly quoted Rebus Group and which, until a corporate ➔

➔ restructuring earlier this month, used to trade as Datasure. (Peterborough Software is also part of the Rebus Group.)

Rebus Insurance is a major player in the Lloyd's/international insurance systems market and has just launched a new intranet/extranet product called Trader 2000.

This is designed to support business transactions between brokers and underwriters on a local, regional or global basis by being able to deliver information in a variety of unstructured formats, ranging from wordprocessing and spreadsheet attachments, through to video conferencing and *white-boarding* shared computer screens.

The central "glue" is the system uses an easy to navigate browser as its interface but is secure (unlike the public internet) and supported by comprehensive audit trails. After the recent problems at Lloyd's, insurers regard it as essential to protect their *EOE* positions.

Rebus describe the inherent flexibility of the Trader 2000 intranet as the "Martini factor" - the ability to deliver information "anytime, anyplace, anywhere". And, it would seem, in any market, for Rebus takes the view its approach can also be applied to other business sectors where information needs to be shared.

This includes law and Rebus has already trialled the system with its legal advisers Clifford Chance. Given the favourable reception it received, Rebus is now seriously considering diversifying into the legal market with a version of the intranet. *Rebus will be demonstrating Trader 2000 at the Sedgwick Centre in London on 23rd April. Call Fiona Morrison on ☎ 0171 623 9043 for details.* □

Law Data chief out

Stephen Taylor Parker has been dismissed from his position as managing director of AIM Law Data and has now left the company. Pending a reorganisation of AIM's legal market operations, John Wilde has taken over as managing director of AIM Law Data.

Solicitec move

Case management specialists Solicitec have moved to bigger offices in north Leeds. The company's new address is: Arndale House, Otley Road, Headingley, Leeds LS6 2UU. The new phone number is ☎ 0113 226 2000.

ADMIRAL FIND GOLD IN SCOTLAND

Admiral Legal Systems has won its first order in Scotland for its Legal-Mind practice management system. The order for the Windows NT-based system was placed by Glasgow firm Golds, who will also be porting their own inhouse case management system to NT later this year.

Golds' managing partner Jonathan Edwards said there were three distinct reasons for selecting the Admiral system: "We have invested around £500,000 over the last few years developing leading edge applications but have been frustrated in finding an accounts and time recording system to match our requirements and ambitions.

"Having spent the last 18 months reviewing the market and sitting through numerous demonstrations, I was immediately impressed by the feature-rich suite of applications Admiral has to offer. A field tested and proven solution on a Windows NT/SQL Server platform was of primary importance to us, as was the supplier's commitment to a presence in Scotland."

Admiral Legal has appointed David Gallagher as business development manager for Scotland and the company's parent group Admiral plc has offices in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as well as a client list that includes the Scottish Office, the Royal Bank and the Bank of Scotland.

☞ **Comment...** After years of assuming business ends at Berwick, English legal IT suppliers are finally waking up to the existence of a market north of the border. The past eighteen months have seen Axxia and Curat Lex appoint Scottish distributors, while the AIM group has acquired Usher Systems and Elite has signed up Dundas & Wilson as users.

As for Scotland's own IT suppliers, both CB Business Systems and Axiom ▶

▶ seem content to concentrate on the domestic market (Axiom will be at the Scottish Business IT Show at the Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow on 14-15 May) with only Pilgrim Systems making any effort in the English market.

Incidentally Pilgrim, whose Law-Soft system is also based on a Windows NT/SQL Server platform and who recently took on former Equitrac salesman Martin Siddle to beef up their English sales operations, now has a web site at <http://www.lawsoft.co.uk> ☐

MILLENNIUM COUNTDOWN

☉ **Linetime** is currently investigating Year 2000 compliance at all its user sites. To arrange for a free millennium systems audit contact Linda Wood of Linetime on ☎ 0113 250 0020.

☉ **AIM Solutions** (formerly Usher Systems) is warning users of older Usher software running on the DEC Open VMS platform that some of them could hit date problems as early as 19th May this year! The problem arises from the fact the date fields in Open VMS only allow 9,999 days from 1st January 1970 and will overflow and cause the system to crash on the 10,000th day, which occurs in just under one month's time. Call Debbie Cox of AIM on ☎ 01482 326971 for more information.

☉ **BSI-DISC** (the IT arm of the British Standards Institution) has published a Definition of Year 2000 Conformity Requirements. The whole document can be downloaded free of charge from DISC's web site at <http://www.brainstorm.co.uk/reg/disc/year2000/2000.html> or call ☎ 0181 996 9000 for details.

☉ **Finally...** Simon Reeve in his new book *The Millennium Bomb* (Vision, price £8.99) warns that nuclear missile systems will fail and "riots and civil disorder" spread as Year 2000 problems cause social infrastructures to collapse. ☐

WORDPERFECT CONSIDERING UK OPTIONS

The Corel Corporation, which now owns the WordPerfect wordprocessing package has still not decided whether to launch a UK version of its "Legal Edition" suite (see Issue No.36 for first report)...

In the USA, the Legal Edition is being sold as a low cost bundle of applications suitable for smaller firms and sole practitioners, with Amicus Attorney case management and Hot Docs document assembly software included along with the wordprocessing program.

Both Alan Roberts of Gavel & Gown (who distribute Amicus in the UK) and Russell Shepherd of Capsoft UK (who distribute HotDocs) are keen to see Corel offer a similar deal in this country. But when LTI contacted Corel international communications manager Eric Lefebvre at the company's head office in Canada last week, he said a Legal Edition for the UK was "still under discussion".

"It is a question of demand from the legal community. Would it be popular in 32-bit format?" he added.

☞ **Comment...** As reflected in our story (see elsewhere on this page) about Walker Smith & Way migrating to WordPerfect 7.0, there is clearly still a demand for a 32-bit version of the Corel wordprocessing package. Perhaps the real problem is Corel is out of touch with its UK market, a situation not helped by the fact it recently sacked its UK marketing agency, conducts its UK operations from offices in Holland and Ireland and coordinates sales activities from Canada.

Other WordPerfect news

Although there are reports that Corel will be opening a UK office later this year, a more pressing concern for most Word Perfect users is finding adequate support services. For example, the Dutch-based helpline service charges end users \$60 ➡

➡ a call, while systems administrators can expect to pay \$100. LTI has located two alternative helpline numbers which appear to offer free assistance. These are ☎ 01932 821421 for WordPerfect and ☎ 01344 724100 for GroupWise problems.

Password recovery

Another wordprocessing related problem can be that of "too much" security where, for instance, a user protects a document with a password, which he or she promptly forgets. Although the official line from Corel is that there is no backdoor to WordPerfect, there are a number of companies who produce software keys to open password protected documents.

In the UK, the main "password recovery" specialist appears to be Miracle 2000 Security Ltd (☎ 0181 744 1551) who recently acquired the business of now defunct Key Exchange Services. Miracles' product range includes keys for Word, WordPerfect Excel and other popular PC applications, with prices starting at £159 (+ VAT and delivery) per application. ☐

HOT DOCS UPGRADES

Capsoft UK has launched HotDocs 4, a new version of the company's document assembly software, which is designed to make routine legal drafting faster and easier, while at the same time permitting work to be delegated to more junior staff.

One of the main enhancements is a clause management function allowing users to create, store and index extensive libraries of clauses, that can be quickly retrieved and inserted into a document.

Prices start at £99 for a single user licence but vary according to the type of licence. For example Sweet & Maxwell has a publishing licence whereas Lovell White Durrant, who are using it in the property department, have a site licence.

HotDocs is available both direct from Capsoft (☎ 0131 226 3999) and through a reseller network, which includes Laserform Law, Information for Lawyers and TikIt. ☐

Walker Smith migrate

23 partner Walker Smith & Way in Chester has begun its migration from DOS to Windows 95 by equipping its conveyancing department with 20 new Viglen PCs powered by 200Mhz Pentium MMX multimedia processors. The staff are currently undergoing training as they move from WordPerfect 5.1 for DOS to the 32-bit WordPerfect 7.0

Barbican sell out ?

Despite the absence of some familiar faces at the Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition at the Barbican this summer, the event is another sell-out, with a number of would-be exhibitors lamenting that they have been unable to secure stand spaces.

☞ **Contact the organisers now on ☎ 0181 742 3399 or email e-desk@marketeer.co.uk for pre-registration details.**

Maximising legal aid

Graham Dobson & Co, which has offices in Orpington and Camberwell, has installed the DPS Crime case management system from MCS (☎ 0181 882 8811) to help manage their Legal Aid Franchise. The firm says the system also helps identify the most advantageous way to bill for legal aid work without the need for cost draftsmen.

Sample new legal directory

Waterlow Legal Publishing (☎ 0171 490 0049) has produced the first edition of its 1997 *Solicitors & Barristers Directory* on CD-Rom. In a novel example of try-before-you-buy, the disk will work for 30 days from date of first use. If you want to keep using it, place an order (it retails for £138 +VAT) and Waterlows will send a registration code allowing you continued access.

SCHRODER OFFER NEW IT INSURANCE DEAL

Schroder Finance, the legal market leasing and finance subsidiary of Schroders plc, has launched a new "comprehensive" insurance scheme for law firms leasing new computer and related IT systems.

Developed in conjunction with Sun Alliance, the scheme, which is offered as an optional extra to finance deals, is intended to provide a practical insurance response to the problems of computer theft.

For example, recognising the rapid changes in hardware (486 PCs superseded by Pentiums etc) the cover guarantees that machines lost will be replaced by an equivalent or higher specification on a new for old basis. Similarly, the scheme covers PCs and other equipment a firm's solicitors may use at home, whereas with other policies they may have to add them to their household cover.

Schroder's Roger Farley says the impetus for the scheme came from lawyers who wanted cover that was not only comprehensive but also kept red tape to a minimum, so that they could get their practices back in action with minimum delay. To this end, claims will be processed within hours and without the intervention of loss adjusters and assessors so replacement equipment can be installed within 24-to-48 hours.

☞ NKT Computer Consultants, who recently launched their interactive legal business over the internet scheme for law firms (see *Issue No.36* for full story) can now offer lease finance for the scheme through Schroder Finance. Schroder can be contacted on ☎ 0181 233 7101. ☐

GOING DIGITAL

Although the quality and range of the UK's digital mobile phone network has improved substantially over the past ➡

➡ 15 months, the migration from first generation analogue phones to digital is still not as straightforward as it could be.

Although Orange and, to a lesser extent, One2One have extended the coverage of their PCN digital networks, these are still primarily focussed on major conurbations and the South-East.

For the rest of the country and in particular rural areas, the effective choice is between Vodafone and Cellnet with their respective GSM digital networks.

The companies claim to cover about 96% of the population – compared with 98% for analogue. However it is worth noting that this coverage claim is qualified by being restricted to car phones – which are more powerful – and only then on the basis of a 50% chance of making a call. The real test is whether you can make and receive calls on a handheld mobile phone from within a building.

The most gaping hole in digital coverage is in the north-west Highlands of Scotland, which is understandable as it is one of the most thinly populated areas of the country. But that is not much consolation if your car breaks down 10 miles north of Ullapool. On the other hand, in some other areas you may find that while digital coverage is poor, it is still better than on an analogue phone.

Wheeling and dealing

A glance through any newspaper will reveal there is currently intense competition for business. For example the Nokia 2110i is offered for sale at prices ranging from £45 to £85. But phone hardware is only part of the story, for you also need a service provider, who will typically charge you a connection fee, plus a monthly line rental (subject to a minimum contract period) and a call charge.

Much play is made in advertising of the fact some companies charge you per second for calls, while others charge per minute but it is also worth noting that unlike analogue services, most digital tariffs ...continued on next page ➡

➔ continued from previous page... also include some “free” call time, so some users will actually see their average monthly bills fall.

Watch out also for hidden extras. For example, if you upgrade to digital and stay with your existing service provider, apart from the change in your line rental tariff and a nominal amount (as little as £10) for a new phone, there are no extras. Most providers will even let you keep your existing mobile phone number – which could also mean a saving on stationery reprinting costs.

But, move to another “cheaper” service provider and you will face a connection charge of roughly £35, as well as probably having to pay your old supplier three months rental by way of notice and a further sum to transfer your existing phone number.

A further factor – as well as another area of misunderstanding, apparently even among some of the service providers **LTI** has spoken to – is that digital GSM technology is not synonymous with data communications, typically sending email and fax messages from laptop computers via mobile phones.

To have this facility, you must choose a digital phone that is compatible with a PCMCIA-style modem or “data card”. Although a number of phones are fully data compatible, on the supply side it is worth noting there are currently more data cards compatible with the Nokia 2110i than any other model of GSM phone. This also means some of the newer ultra-compact light weight phones, such as the Motorola Startac and Ericsson GF788 are not data compatible.

☞ An alternative option is the Nokia 9000 Communicator, which effectively combines a digital phone with a palmtop computer and email terminal. Within the last few weeks the price of this device has been slashed from around £1000 to just under £500. But this is still nearly £200 more than the cost of buying a GSM phone and a data card. ☐

CD PUBLISHING FOLIO AND JUSTIS SLOG IT OUT

As two more major legal publishers sign up to use the JUSTIS interface for their CD-Rom titles, it looks as if the standards battle is almost over.

A common complaint among users of legal CD-Rom titles is that each publisher has their own search engines and interfaces, thereby requiring users to master different skills to access material on different disks. But, as a result of deals recently signed between electronic publishers Context and legal publishers Sweet & Maxwell and LLP, who produce the *Lloyd's Law Reports*, some of this confusion could be coming to an end.

Under the deals, both publishers will be using Context's JUSTIS interface in the CD versions of their law reports. Sweet & Maxwell hope to release the electronic version of the *Common Market Law Reports* by the autumn, with the *Criminal Appeal Reports* following later this year. LLP plan a June launch.

Context, who already produce on CD the eLR electronic version of the *Weekly Law Reports* and a family law series for Jordans, say that because the JUSTIS interface is designed around the concept of Dynamic Document Linking (DDLs) – in effect a form of hypertext link – it is particularly suited to full text material, such as law reports and legal archives, where there is a need during research to be able to locate related references and information.

According to Context marketing director Michelle Green, the added benefit of having more and more reports series based around the JUSTIS product is that not only does the user become familiar with the common interface but it also increases the scope for research through the DDL links, by making UK precedents, European case law and domestic legislation, as well as many other legal sources all fully searchable and cross referencable. ➔

➔ Comment...

The rise and rise of JUSTIS, which is now probably the most widely used interface in legal CD publishing in the UK, is hastening a shakeout in the market, with Folio Views now the only other viable contender.

In fact the Blackstone Press has come in for criticism from some members of the Bar in recent weeks for using Biblos as the interface in the new CD version of *Blackstone's Criminal Practice 1997*. ☐

McLibel Web
After 313 days in court, the UK's longest running libel action is expected to produce a verdict within the next three weeks. A copy of the closing arguments made by counsel for McDonalds can now be found at [http:// www.mcspotlight.org/](http://www.mcspotlight.org/)

IT Services for hire
Jeremy Brockman, part of the team at Badger Applications Ltd, publishers of the LawNews email newsletter for solicitors, is now offering IT services to law firms in primarily the East Anglia area. Services available include systems development work and consultancy. In fact the list management software used to distribute LawNews was written by him. He can be contacted at: jeremy@badgerap.demon.co.uk

COMMUNIC@TIONS FUTURES

Direct hyperlinks to all the organisations mentioned on this page can be found at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/hotlinks/>

Details about Web Master/FM, the new outsourcing service for web site updating and maintenance can be found at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/fm/> □

NEW LINK FINALLY READY

It may have been a long time coming (in fact it is nearly 12 months late) as well as a cause of endless trials and tribulations for both the staff of Legalease and the users of the original LINK system but New Link (or the System Formerly Known as Link 96) is now finally available for the Windows 3x and 95 platforms.

Given its troubled history (and there are still a few question marks over such issues as how long will the old LINK system be kept running in tandem with its replacement) to almost everyone's pleasant surprise, the new system works – and works well.

Unsolicited comments arriving by email at **LTi** have all been consistently complimentary. Or, as one reader put it: "All's well that ends well". Although some difficulties are still being reported, the majority relate to technical problems associated with the configuration of the communications settings of Windows software or unfamiliarity with the Link's new interface, which is based on the email element of Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0.

To request a copy of the New Link "client" software on CD-Rom, email Nigel Armitage at: nigel_armitage@link.org □

VIRUS ALERT !

Michael Kaye of Kaye Tesler & Co warns that a new self-replicating computer virus has made its way over from the USA. It is spread by email and automatically sends a copy of itself to everyone listed in the ➡

➡ original recipient's email address book. Fortunately incoming emails containing the virus always have the subject header "YOU HAVE GOT TO READ THIS". Once incoming email is spotted with such a heading, simply delete the file without reading it. This stops the virus from infecting your machine and in turn from being spread to other systems. □

VISITING THE VIRTUAL OFFICE

City of London lawyers Theodore Goddard reports that since launching its "virtual office" web site on the internet six months ago, the firm's home page has received more than 90,000 "hits".

By closely monitoring IP addresses of people accessing the site, the firm has found that the single largest group of visitors are other law firms!

The busiest times of the day for access traffic are mid-afternoon and early evening. The most popular pages are the horoscope and the firm's profile, followed by the regular legal updates and special features on issues such as "cyber libel".

The Theodore Goddard site is at <http://www.thegoddard.com> □

MICROSOFT WINNING BROWSER WAR ?

Latest statistics on web software usage suggest that Microsoft's Internet Explorer system (all versions) has now overtaken Netscape Navigator (all versions) as the world's most popular browser.

Figures available for the 12 months to the beginning of January 1997 show Microsoft's market share rising from 12% in January 1996 to 35% in 1997, largely at the expense of Netscape, whose share fell from 74% to 57%. In the three months since then Microsoft has been gaining users at an average rate of 4% a month and, according to industry figures reported last week, by the beginning of April, Internet Explorer finally crept ahead of Navigator. □

PSION ON THE INTERNET

Over the last couple of months Psion has launched a number of new products for users of the Psion Series 3a/c palmtop computer who want to take advantage of the latest communications technology.

These include the portable Travel Modem (3c only, rrp £199) which links to a conventional phone line and a PC card modem adaptor (rrp £99), which permits the use of standard PC Card modems over a GSM mobile phone network.

This month Psion also begins shipping its send-only PsiFax software (rrp £49) and has announced the PsiWin Internet package (rrp £79) which offers TCP/IP compatible internet email and some, limited, web browsing facilities.

To overcome the problems of working on palmtops in dim lighting conditions, Psion has also introduced a new *backlit* screen version of the 3c.

For details call Psion on ☎ 0990 143050 or visit <http://www.pSION.com> ☐

SECOND TIME LUCKY ?

Web-site developer mi2g Ltd, who last year had to change its web pages for the legal community after allegations of copyright infringement by Information for Lawyers (see *Issue No.21 for full story*) has launched a new legal web site called the LawLounge.

☞ **Comment...** The site can be found at <http://lawlounge.com> and contains the now all-too familiar formula of links to other legal sites and downloadable information plus the promise of Link-style bulletin boards so visitors can take part in online debates on legal issues. mi2g hope to make the site commercially viable by charging publishers and legal services providers etc for advertising.

When **LTi** visited the site last week, pages were taking a long time to download and navigation around the site was confusing, not least because access to some parts seemed to be protected by passwords. Perhaps it will improve. ☐

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

☉ **April 24 - IT for Lawyers Exhibition & Workshops** One day seminar and exhibition organised by the Society for Computers & Law. Speakers include Steven Vincent of Go Interactive, Law Society council member Philip Hamer on IT for High Street firms, plus papers by Neil Cameron, John Irving and Richard Susskind. Admission from £15 at Royal Armouries in Leeds. Call the SCL on ☎ 0117 923 7393 for details.

☉ **May 12 - Support Services in Law Firms** One day conference on human resources, technology, support staff motivation and outsourcing, including speakers from Taylor Joynson Garrett, S J Berwin and Reynolds Porter Chamberlain. Fee £349 + VAT with £50 discount for members of the Solicitors Personnel Managers (IPD) Forum. The event also qualifies for 6 hours CPD points. At Radisson Marlborough Hotel, London. Call Centaur Conferences on ☎ 0171 434 3711 for details.

☉ **May 14 - Legal Issues of Doing Business on the Internet** One day conference on copyright, Web publishing and related issues. Fee £695 + VAT, the event qualifies for 7 hours CPD points. At Cumberland Hotel, London. Call ICM on ☎ 0171 436 5735 for details.

☉ **June 3, 4 & 5 - Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition** With in the region of 100 exhibitors, this is still the UK's leading legal technology exhibition. The location is the Barbican Exhibition Centre in London and admission is free. The doors open each day at 9.30am and close at 6pm on Tuesday and 5pm on Thursday - on Wednesday there is 7.30pm late night closing. For details about the event or pre-registration (to save queuing for admission on the day) call Truemist on ☎ 0181 742 3399. ☐

READER SERVICES

Need help or information ?

If you need a phone number, product name, contact point or any other elusive item of information concerning legal technology, just call the Insider Info Line on ☎ 01379 687518.

Hotlinks

Readers with Internet access can visit the Insider Hotlinks pages at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/hotlinks/> where you will find hyperlinks to the Web sites of organisations mentioned in this and previous issues.

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Next issue...
Issue No 38 of
the Insider will be
published on
Monday 5th May,
don't miss it.

Alexis Byter's COMPUTER LORE

Hello and goodbye

A couple of issues ago we mentioned that former Simmons & Simmons credit manager Elaine Jenking had set up her own management consultancy. Thanks to the publicity she received, within a couple of days she landed a job offer as full time practice director of a firm in Lincolnshire with equity partner status.

That must earn a place in the record books as the shortest lived ever independent management consultancy.

Talking of consultants, our illustrious editor reports that on several recent mornings he has spotted Neil Cameron – reckoned to be the UK's most expensive legal IT consultant – speaking into his mobile phone while having his shoes polished at the shoe-shine stand on Liverpool Street railway station.

Presumably the £1200 to £1500 day rate he is reputed to charge means he can afford to outsource shoe cleaning, rather than polishing them before he leaves home like most mortals.

Stars of the small screen

Over the last couple of years legal marketing methods have grown increasingly high tech, with email newsletters, web sites on the Internet and promotional ➔

➔ CD-Roms now almost commonplace. Congratulations then to Rowberry Morris of Reading for remembering that the most popular electronic mass media in the UK today is still television.

However for this firm, it is not some fleeting advertisement flashing across our screens late at night. Instead they have gone the whole hog with their own weekly programme on the local Thames Valley TV channel. And in case you are wondering how the firm can afford it, they were actually invited by the station to be part of the programme, which goes out on Monday evenings.

According to senior partner Anthony Rowberry: "The opportunity to host our own show – which covers such topics as *what is legal aid and how do I get it?* and *what is it like to spend a day in court* – came about because one of the station's staff came to us with a compensation claim for an accident. He was so impressed with our down to earth approach that we were their first choice of legal partner."

Of mice and coffee mugs

Congratulations also to legal IT supplier Linetime for devising a novel permutation on the promotional gift. We have all seen and received "corporate" coasters and mouse mats. Linetime has now taken this to its logical conclusion with a mini mouse mat the size of a coaster. Neat. ☐

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