

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

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

In association with



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ACE AND AXXIA IN USER GROUP BUST-UP

By the end of last month it looked as if Applied Computer Expertise and Axxia Systems had agreed an amicable deal allowing Axxia to approach law firms using the ACE Infinity system and offer them a migration path – a move prompted by ACE's recent decision to pull out of the solicitors' marketplace.

But now it seems the two suppliers have fallen out with each other and are barely on speaking terms.

The bust-up began when Axxia announced it would be giving a presentation to the Ace User Group at which Axxia proposed to make a commercial offer to transfer ACE users to Axxia as a group. Axxia also said ACE had "pledged full co-operation with Axxia to facilitate (data) conversion".

However within hours of **Legal Technology Insider** reporting this offer, the **LTI** office was taking phone calls from ACE users saying they had received a fax from ACE managing director Rodney Joyce which contained the following comments:

"...It is of some concern to the directors of ACE that our apparent co-operation and support in this matter has been misrepresented. ACE in no way endorse the current attempts by Axxia to convert Infinity users to their Arista product and will not be co-operating with Axxia in any resulting data conversions.

"A meeting was held between ACE and Axxia with three of Axxia's directors in attendance. It was clear that Axxia had no interest in helping provide continuing support to Infinity users. Axxia, like the majority of companies, ➔

➔ were interested in quickly converting those users who were in the financial position to act before March 31st...

"...I reiterate that ACE will not be co-operating directly in any data conversions despite claims to the contrary..."

When asked by **LTI** for a response, Axxia managing director Stuart Holden said: "It is not my intention nor Axxia's style to engage in a war of words, but for the record, representatives of Axxia's board of directors did have a confidential meeting with ACE representatives to explore commercial opportunities.

"As it was agreed at the start of the meeting that the discussions would be confidential I am not prepared to relate any agreements or understandings that were reached either at the meeting or in subsequent conversations.

"In the light of the letter from Mr Joyce I will state publicly that Axxia has a long and prestigious record in this market and would only enter into an arrangement which would both enhance our reputation and be of long-term benefit to our existing or prospective customers.

"Axxia have concluded that by acting quickly and effectively it is feasible to offer a migration route to an Arista system which ACE users may consider as an alternative to other options which may be offered to them."

LTI subsequently asked Rod Joyce if he could shed any light on the apparent difference of opinion as to what was, or was not, agreed at that meeting between Ace and Axxia. He replied: "I haven't got the time right now for chapter and verse but I can say that we do not have any special relationship with any legal supplier (apart from a potential tie-up short term ...continued on page 4 ➔

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LSSA barks back

Following criticism it received in the last issue of L*Ti*, the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) has responded by saying that "far from losing its way", it is about to start a £20,000 advertising campaign in the *Law Society's Gazette* to promote its benefits.

LSSA chairman Tony Landes also adds that "strictly speaking LSSA is not a watchdog in that it does not purport to speak for the whole industry" but is a trade association whose members are bound by a strict code of conduct.

New IBM voice system
IBM has launched ViaVoice Gold in the UK, a new and enhanced version of its continuous dictation speech recognition system. Gold will run on a Windows 95/NT 4.0 platform and retail for £139.

REVIVED COPITRAK AIMS TO TAKE ON EQUITRAK

For the better part of the last 15 years the legal expenses management and cost recovery market in both the UK and the USA has been dominated by the Equitrac Corporation. As a result of mergers and acquisitions Equitrac has a 70% share of US sales and, largely thanks to a lack of competition, it has been winning in the region of 90% of UK sales.

But, could this be about to change? One person who believes it will is Keith Child, a former Equitrac dealer who has now taken over the European (including UK) distribution rights for systems from Equitrac's only serious rival - Copittrak.

As a product range, Copittrak systems first entered the UK at about the same time as Equitrac and can still cite some blue chip names among its user base, including Titmuss Sainer Dechert, Slaughter & May, Herbert Smith and Stephenson Harwood. However, where the company seemed to go adrift was in appointing local distributors (EMOS was the last in the UK) who carried Copittrak as just one of their lines. This is in stark contrast with Equitrac which has always been sold through the London office of the American parent company.

Child thinks he has this problem solved by setting up a new company, trading as Copittrak Systems, with offices in Paris, Brussels and London (☎ 0171 891 2476) which will focus exclusively on the legal cost recovery market.

In addition, he believes Copittrak can now offer products that on a one-to-one basis can offer superior functionality to the rival Equitrac range. Products include Copittrak Plus, Faxtrak Plus and Lasertrak Pro to track copier, fax and printer usage plus the Phonetrak call logging system. Pride of place goes to the ERS for Windows software, which allows expense recovery operations to be managed across a network, including ➔

➔ collecting data from terminals located in remote offices via WAN or modem links.

According to Keith Child, if you add in Copittrak's millennium compliance, support for 16 and 32 bit Windows platforms, open architecture compliant with the ODBC database standard and backwards compatible software (firms can use the latest software without having to replace older hardware) the net result is unbeatable.

Child admits the company suffered in the past from having good technology let down by poor marketing and to this end Copittrak Systems is now going to be offering a money back guarantee to prospective purchasers.

Copittrak has also been building up interface links to other legal IT products from suppliers including: CMS, Elite, London Bridge, AIM, Axxia and RightFax.

In addition, Hewlett-Packard is launching a service called FirstView later this year that will provide HP sites with terminals and systems to monitor their fax, printer and copier usage - the hardware and software was jointly developed with Copittrak. □

TOM LEE IN NEW DOCS OPEN LINK

Tom Lee, one of the founders of Quintec (now PC Docs Europe) last week unveiled the KnowledgeBase 32 (KB32) and EZSearch systems developed by his new company Kramer Lee Associates (KLA).

KB32 (which was going to be called Precedent until Miles 33's lawyers pointed out the name was already in use) is effectively an add on to the Docs Open document management system that creates an active archive (or dynamic life cycle) that will automatically alert users when the contents of a particular document needs updating or revising.

The second product, EZSearch, is a front end input screen that allows Docs Open users to find documents without ➔

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➔ having to employ less than user friendly Boolean search routines.

EZSearch can be used as a stand alone utility or in conjunction with KB32. Both products will be distributed by Text Systems ☎ 0171 403 4033.

In a related development, Philips is introducing an add-on to its speech processing system that allows voice files to be routed and archived by Docs Open and so become an integral part of a firm's document management infrastructure.

☞ **Comment...** Although document management systems retain a flavour-of-the-month appeal to some firms, **LTI** wonders whether such products actually have a viable longer term role to play within the legal systems market?

On one side there is pressure from general office automation products, notably wordprocessing systems such as the more recent versions of MS Word, which now contain a growing number of document management features, including version control. At the same time, the traditional SoftSolutions/Docs Open market is being squeezed by the latest generation of legal sector specific applications, such as case management software, which now also incorporate document management elements.

Currently there are about 10,000 law firms within the UK and although less than 100 have invested in dedicated document management systems, reports of a slow down in sales (and a lot of the sales that are taking place are primarily migrations from SoftSolutions to Docs Open) suggest the market may have already reached saturation point. ☐

SOS GOES THROUGH THE 100 BARRIER

In the 24 months since Solicitors Own Software launched its Windows "Practice Manager" accounts and PMS software, the company has installed the system at 107 sites and has a full order book. ➔

➔ The most recent installation is a 75 user site at the Reading practice Field Seymour Parkes, which also involved an electronic data conversion from the firm's old Miles 33 system. SOS is also continuing its policy of adding extra functionality to the product. One of the latest enhancements is the development of a link to the Gavel & Gown Amicus Attorney system, so time recording carried out under Amicus can be posted directly to the SOS software and automatically update client ledger files.

☞ **Comment...** SOS sales manager David McNamara says one of the more interesting developments within the market has been the way fully integrated systems have now become the norm. "Around 18 months ago, many clients were choosing our practice management software with a view to ordering the integrated (SolCase) case management software at a later date as an add-on. This view coincides with **LTI**'s finding that case management software is no longer viewed as an optional extra but is instead seen as a key element in any law office automation project. ☐

ELITE SEES NT AS THE WAY AHEAD

Elite Information Systems reports that of the seven major orders it won in the UK during 1997, the majority were for Windows NT implementations, with just two firms opting for a Unix platform.

The seven were: McGrigor Donald in Glasgow (Unix + Informix), on a regional basis Shoosmiths & Harrison (NT + SQL Server), Bedell & Cristin in Jersey (NT + SQL Server) and in London: Laytons (NT + Informix), Macfarlanes (NT + Oracle), Capsticks (Unix + Informix) and Warner Cranston (NT + Informix).

Worldwide, in addition to a major deal with Baker & McKenzie, Elite signed 70 new contracts in 1997 - 39 were with firms with less than 100 fee earners. ☐

Deals and developments

Keogh Ritson in Bolton is finalising an order for an Arista system from Axxia.

Pinsent Curtis in Birmingham has called in Neil Cameron on a consultancy project to review the firm's overall IT strategy.

Mills & Reeve in Norwich has completed a SQL Server-based data warehousing project in association with local software house Badger Applications.

In the last issue we should have said it was Glaisyers in Manchester - not the Birmingham firm of the same name - that had ordered a new system from Videss. In fact Glaisyers in Birmingham has been using Linetime products since 1995.

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New IT guide

The Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators (ILCA) has just published the 1998 edition of its *Legal Software Suppliers Pocket Guide*. Retailing for £15, it contains an alphabetical listing of 28 legal PMS and accounts suppliers complete with a tick-box product information summary. To order a copy call ☎ 0181 294 2887.

20 percent solution

During the course of the recent British Coal respiratory diseases case, the trial judge Mr Justice Turner made the comment that "In using IT in this case process, one court day in five has been saved." The technology used in the case included the Livenote real time transcription system plus having all the trial documents stored on CD-Rom in the form of a Folio Views searchable database. The OCR work was handled by Westkey ☎ 0171 700 4274.

TFB LAUNCHES WINDOWS NT PLUS SQL SERVER RANGE

In a move that seems to have taken most of its competitors by surprise, Technology for Business – one of the UK's traditional "big four" legal IT suppliers – has announced it is now shipping "Partner for Windows". This is an all-new 32-bit suite of accounts and case management software designed to run on modern Windows NT platforms and offering users the increasingly popular Microsoft-with-everything approach to technology.

Partner for Windows is ODBC, SQL and millennium compliant, offers full OLE control and is compatible with the Microsoft office automation software, including Excel and MS Word.

Taking the view that "Microsoft is fast becoming the *de facto* industry standard", initial versions of the suite have been implemented using SQL Server but support for other databases will be offered in the near future.

Other third-party applications supported by the new TFB system include Crystal Reports and integration with Dragon's continuous speech recognition package NaturallySpeaking Deluxe. The latter element will allow fee earners to generate case management documents and time recording entries by using their voice. (As well as NT, Partner for Windows will also run across Novell networks.)

Along with developing the suite for a new platform, TFB has added extra functionality to the core programs. For example the nominal ledger now includes *drill down* and *drill across* features, which should make detailed analysis work easier for cashiers.

In addition, fee earners can now automatically generate bills from the desktop. Phoning, faxing and emailing contacts has been simplified by a new auto-dial facility. Graphical EIS-style reports can be created without the need to download information into a spreadsheet. TFB will also be offering online ➔

➔ support and upgrades via the internet. Currently eight firms, including Penman Johnson in Watford, are in the process of installing the new system.

☞ **Comment...** At the end of last year it was AIM, this month it is TFB and LTi understands that Norwel is now also porting users of the Norwel Practice Management system over to an NT/SQL Server platform. In the space of less than three years NT has moved from being a novelty product advocated by just two companies – Pilgrim and Admiral – to becoming the industry standard adopted by almost all of the major suppliers.

We say "almost all" because Axxia sales director Bill Kirby has been in touch to deny earlier reports that Axxia is gearing up for a spring NT launch (*which presumably means it will also not be ready in time for the Barbican*) and to say the company will "not be making any official pronouncements vis-à-vis a launch date until we are good and ready". ☐

ACE AND AXXIA BUST-UP

➔ *continued from front page...* with Peapod; deal not yet done) and our policy has been the same with all of those firms who supply solicitors *ie* we would co-operate on commercial terms if any of our solicitor Infinity users wished to convert to their systems.

"If any supplier has represented to you that there is a *joint initiative* or that we are *working closely* with them then this can be filed under the category *marketing hype* and is a misrepresentation as far as we are concerned.

"...Axxia are obviously keen to get hold of the ex-ACE solicitors and they may have got a little over enthusiastic."

☞ **Comment...** LTi has also learned that the Admiral group recently had preliminary discussions with Text Systems about the disposal of its Admiral Legal Systems/LegalMind business but these are not continuing. ☐

LAW SOCIETY IT INITIATIVE GETS WARM RECEPTION

The English Law Society's latest IT initiative, which is aiming to work in partnership with existing legal systems suppliers to develop low cost solutions for small firms, has started well with over 40 suppliers expressing a positive interest in the project.

The Society's director of membership services John Miller described the calibre of submissions as "very high" and added that while he recognised supplier concerns that too many firms were still basing purchasing decisions on price alone, he hoped the proposed *IT Literacy Certificate* scheme would help raise the level of IT awareness among the profession.

Following a sub-committee meeting last week, the number of potential business partners has been narrowed down to a shortlist of 20 "serious" contenders and the committee will be progressing the project over the next month.

☞ **Comment...** Most of those falling by the wayside are companies lacking their own core accounts and case management systems, such as speech recognition products suppliers. The Law Society will also be recontacting a number of larger suppliers who did not respond to the original proposal, to ensure the omission was deliberate rather than accidental. ☐

Exhibitions & events preview...

TWO NEW SHOWS IN MARCH

Next month sees two new shows debut on the legal events calendar.

The first is the *Solicitors - National Legal Office & Legal Services Exhibition* at the NEC (see *Diary Dates* for details). This initially seemed as if it was going to be an imitation of the Barbican event but has now developed its own clear identity. ➔

➔ Although there will be a number of IT, speech recognition and electronic forms suppliers present (including Quill, Oyez, MCS, Peapod, Sanderson, Dodona, Gavel & Gown, Lexology and 1998 SCL award finalists Wordwright Associates) the show will actually be covering legal-related services in its broadest sense, including publishing, finance and expert witnesses.

The event adopts the increasingly popular model of exhibition stands plus seminar-style presentations, including a series of free practice management lectures by College of Law staff that qualify for CPD points.

There are also two major set-piece exhibits to visit: the Millennium Legal Office of the Future and an Internet Cafe, with surfing facilities laid on by Toshiba and the Irish online group LawLink.

The second event, which also takes the form of a combination of supplier exhibits and seminar sessions, is the *Document Management Roadshow*.

As the name implies, this makes its way around the UK in the second half of March (see *Diary Dates*) including Glasgow on 24th and Birmingham on the 26th, where a speaker from the Law Society will be giving a presentation on the impact of workflow on the Society.

With many law firms now having to manage not only more and more paper based documentation but also electronic files and data created by WP, accounts, PMS and case management systems, the organisers believe this is a timely event providing visitors with an opportunity to catch up with the bewilderingly wide range of technologies currently available.

About 40 companies, including PC Docs, Lotus, Canon, Filenet, Kodak and Xerox will have stands showing OCR, ICR, CD-Rom, digital scanning, extranet, version control, workflow, microfilm, document image processing, indexing and related fast storage and retrieval systems.

Admission to both events is free. If you register for the *Document Management Roadshow* before 9th March you will also receive a free guide to the subject. ☐

People and places

After 15 years with the Edinburgh based legal software house H G Usher, including the last couple of years with AIM after they took over Ushers, Derek Bruce, has joined Scottish market leaders Pilgrim Systems.

Steve Hodge has joined Storage Computer as senior account manager for sales of the company's OmniRAID server technology. Jeffrey Green Russell is one of the firms firm's to have installed this system. Mr Hodge was previously with Bluepoint Business Systems.

Graham Irwin, who recently took over support for the DOS version of the Kestrel Accounts system, has changed the product's name to Virgo Accounts. A user manual can be found on the Irwin Associate web site at: <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/irwin>

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Seen around the Web

Two more firms have gone "live" with the NKT interactive internet system. They are: Singh & Choudry (<http://www.uklaw.net/sc/>) with a multilingual site for immigration law clients and Michael Anvoner & Co (<http://www.uklaw.net/mac/>) which offers a web-based wills service for expats working abroad.

The British Standards Institute has a site holding reference material on health & safety quality standards, and millennium compliance at <http://www.bsi.org.uk>

The new UK government sponsored Action 2000 "millennium bug campaign" has a web site at <http://www.open.gov.uk/bug2000.htm>

Barrister Alistair Kelman has set up a web site at <http://www.lbnipc.com/tax/> for anyone concerned by the Revenue's proposed changes to "cash" based accounting.

Internet & comms news...

LINKLATERS TO OFFER BLUE FLAG TRIAL

Linklaters is offering banks, investment firms, securities houses and fund managers three months free access to Blue Flag UK, the UK module to its "Blue Flag" internet-based advisory service.

Blue Flag was launched in 1996 as the first online, legal risk management service to provide *commoditised* legal advice on European regulatory issues. Blue Flag UK is updated daily and uses the same technology to deliver legal information via a web browser.

The Blue Flag site at <http://www.blueflag.com> is password protected but to apply for free access for the trial period email: pnelson@linklaters.com or call ☎ 0171 456 3620. ☐

WEB BROWSER UPDATE

As part of the settlement of its contempt of court dispute with the US Justice Department, Microsoft has agreed to give PC manufacturers the option of installing the latest version of Windows 95 without the Internet Explorer icon being displayed on screen.

Apparently the settlement is based on the theory that if the icon is not displayed, users will be unaware the browser software is present and so be more likely to opt to use an alternative product, such as Netscape Navigator.

Coinciding with this decision, Netscape has decided it will in future make the source code for its browser freely available to developers and also stop charging end users for the software. Previously Netscape charged a nominal licence fee, a strategy which resulted in its market share being steadily eroded by Microsoft, when it began giving away Explorer free of charge.

Meanwhile Microsoft is now shipping version 4.0 of Internet Explorer for both the Windows 3.1 and NT 3.5 operating systems. IE 4.0 is already ➔

➔ available on the Windows 95/NT 4.0 and Macintosh platforms and a Unix variant is also planned. The latest versions can be downloaded free of charge from <http://www.microsoft.com/ie>

Finally, Lotus has announced that Lotus Notes 5.0 (which is due to enter *beta* testing by early summer with a view to being launched later this year) will provide even closer integration with the HTML file format, so web sites and documents can be created within Notes and then published on the internet or an intranet via Lotus Domino.

Lotus say there are 20 million users of Notes worldwide with nine million copies shipped in 1997 alone. ☐

RED FACES OVER ISDN AT BT

Having spent the better part of a decade advocating the benefits of high speed ISDN links, British Telecommunications is now in the embarrassing position of finding demand outstripping supply.

One problem is although BT will no longer supply older ISDN2 compatible equipment, it has not yet obtained adequate stores of kit complying with the newer ISDN2e standard.

In addition, BT does not expect to complete its programme of updating local telephone exchanges to handle ISDN traffic until much later this year. It is also worth noting that the mere fact an exchange has recently been upgraded from an analogue to a digital service does not automatically mean it can also handle ISDN calls. ☐

IT'S ANOTHER HOAX !

Over the last fortnight the L*Ti* office has been bombarded with email traffic warning of a new email virus called *Join the Crew* which can supposedly delete the entire contents of a hard disk.

Relax. This is just another variation of the *Pen Pal*, *You have got to read this* and *Good Times* hoax viruses that have been floating around the ➔

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➔ internet since at least February 1997. For further information check out the *Dr Solomon* site at: <http://www.drsolomon.com/vircen/vanalyse/va005.html>

Readers should also note that a virus cannot usually be activated until its host program is run. This is not achieved by reading an email message. Although viruses have been found as *attachments* to email messages, they must still be extracted and executed before they can do any harm. □

HIGH SPEED NET ACCESS ...DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH

The announcement that Microsoft, Intel and Compaq are working on a new form of 1500 kbps internet access – called asymmetric digital subscriber lines (or ADSL) – has prompted suggestions that the days of high speed modems and even ISDN links (which can only manage a top speed of 128 bps) may soon be over.

May be – but don't hold your breath waiting for this technology to appear in a PC hardware shop near you.

Leaving aside the fact ADSL is still in the development stage and unlikely to go on sale even in the USA until early 1999, it suffers from the practical problem of being a capital intensive technology. To work, not only does the sender have to invest in a special terminal but so also does every intended recipient. More importantly, local telephone exchanges will have to be rewired to cope with ADSL and – as reported elsewhere – BT has yet to complete upgrading exchanges to handle ISDN let alone contemplate a whole new technology.

Finally, it should be remembered ADSL is only one option. Others being investigated include wireless – such as the service from Ionica, alternative DSL technologies, cable and satellite links. But, most industry analysts reckon these technologies will not take off for at least another five years. In the short term, if you want high speed, ISDN and leased lines remain the only viable option. □

LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

February 11 – AIM, Newcastle.

Legal IT supplier AIM is promoting its new Windows NT system with a seminar programme running until the beginning of March. Admission is free, seminars last two hours, with sessions commencing at 10am and 12noon. Call AIM's marketing department on ☎ 01482 326971.

February 12 & 26 – Peapod, London. Two free seminars, starting 10.30am, looking at 32-bit accounts, time recording, case management, legal forms and document production software. **LTi** editor Charles Christian will be talking on "Why 32-Bit" at the event on the 26th. Call Peapod on ☎ 0181 574 8288.

February 24 & 25 – Information Systems for Lawyers, London. The UK's leading legal IT conference this year marks its 10th anniversary with two days of seminars on ways to maximise fee earner use of IT systems and how to manage, deliver and sell legal know how via intranet and extranet technology. The event, which includes a mini-exhibition, takes place at the London Marriott Hotel and qualifies for 10.5 CPD hours. Prices start at £717 (+VAT) a ticket but there are discounts for block bookings and small firms. The event is organised by Centaur Conferences, call ☎ 0171 434 3711.

February 25 – How to Meet your Goals, Middlesbrough FC. Part of Avenue Legal Systems' series of free roadshows looking at the way IT can help law firms meet their business goals. All seminars held at the conference facilities of football clubs around the UK. Call Avenue on ☎ 01489 609010.

February 25 – Law Office IT Awareness Day, Birmingham. The Legal Cashier's annual conference and exhibition this year looks at the new *Accountant's Report Rules*. Prices start at £95 per delegate. Call the ILCA on ☎ 0181 294 2887.

March 3-to-5 – National Legal Office & Legal Services Exhibition, Birmingham NEC. New event featuring a mixture of trade stands and seminars. ➔

➔ Exhibitors include law publishers, office equipment, IT suppliers plus financial and miscellaneous legal service providers. Free admission, doors open 10am. For details call Nationwide on ☎ 0117 970 1370 or visit <http://www.nwe.co.uk>

March 4 & 5, Software for Solicitors, Bristol. Offshoot of Barbican show featuring legal IT and related services suppliers. Takes place at the Bristol Marriott, admission free. Times: 12noon to 7pm Wednesday and 10am to 4pm Thursday. For tickets call ☎ 0181 742 3399.

March 18 to 27 Document Management Roadshow. Free conference and exhibition taking place at seven venues around UK. For tickets see *insert*, call ☎ 01905 727606 or visit <http://www.itx.co.uk>

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Recruitment Advertisement



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Editor:
Charles Christian

For all editorial, advertising and subscription matters contact...

Cloudnine Technology, Ferndale House, North Lopham, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2NQ

☎ 01379 687518
Fax: 01379 687704
Email: editor@cloudnine.co.uk

Next issue... Issue 55 of the Insider will be published on Monday 23rd February.

Due to a rapid increase in business, as a result of the launch of exciting new packages, the Company is looking for additional experienced Sales Consultants to join a team of seven in the Sales Department.

Avenue have a turnover in excess of £4 million and have always been profitable since the inception of the Company in 1987. There are currently 500 firms using our systems, which include Accounts, Database and Case Management applications. The new Wisdom Suite of software is running in Windows and on NT platforms.

The successful candidate will have at least two years' experience on target and should possess a self motivated and highly professional attitude. The skills required are an understanding of current PC network technology and the ability to manage meetings at a partner level and conduct detailed application demonstrations. On target earnings are in the region of £50,000 per annum. A comprehensive employment package is available including a quality car and pension scheme.

If you think you possess the appropriate qualities and are interested in discussing the position further, please send your CV with all relevant details to:

Contact: Michael Belas, Sales & Marketing Director
Avenue Legal Systems Limited
1-2 Kingdom Close, Kingdom Business Park
Segensworth East, Fareham, Hants PO15 5TJ

Stop Press... Stop Press...

MORE DELAYS FOR THE NEXT WINDOWS UPGRADE ?

Reports suggest the next major upgrades to the Windows operating system may not now be available for full release until late this year or even early 1999.

Windows NT 5.0 is still in the throes of prolonged beta testing while the proposed Windows 98 product has run into a fresh set of legal problems in the shape of antitrust regulators in eleven ➔

➔ US states who have just commenced an investigation into whether Microsoft's plan to combine the Internet Explorer web browser with a GUI operating system is lawful.

This dispute is in addition to Microsoft's current legal problems relating to the bundling of a browser in with Windows 95 (see also page 6). Ironically, while Microsoft is having problems getting its new 32-bit systems to market, last year over 7.5 million copies of the older 16-bit Windows 3.1 were installed. □

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