

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

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

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IBM SPEECH TECH SUBJECT OF EURO LEGAL COMPLAINT

Although widely regarded as being at the forefront of speech recognition technology thanks to its VoiceType and ViaVoice family of products, IBM has now become the subject of an official complaint to the European Commission.

This accuses IBM of abusing its dominant position (☞ the company's own figures suggest that during the period 1995-97 it held between a 60-to-85% share of the global market) contrary to Article 86 of the EC Treaty and/or Article 54 of the EEA Agreement and alleges that agreements entered into by IBM and other parties are contrary to Article 85 of the EC Treaty and/or Article 53 of the EEA Agreement in that they restrict competition.

The allegations are contained in a 112 page complaint submitted to the Commission by Devon-based AllVoice Computing plc, which has been actively involved in the UK speech recognition systems market, both as a developer and reseller, since the early 1990s.

The complaint chronicles how the business relationship between AllVoice and IBM deteriorated over the years from 1994, with close collaboration eventually giving way to hostilities and threats of legal action. Among the many claims made are that:

IBM engaged in predatory pricing by giving away copies of its software when the product was in competition with AllVoice's rival WordExpress system.

IBM staff indulged in what amounted to a dirty tricks campaign ➡

➡ hindering AllVoice's marketing activities by organising conflicting events, not passing on leads, giving out incorrect sales information, implying there was a reliability problem with WordExpress and removing the AllVoice name from reseller sales material. It is even alleged that on one occasion IBM sabotaged AllVoice's presence at an exhibition by drowning out the AllVoice stand with the sound of rock music playing on the IBM stand.

IBM attempted to interfere in commercial negotiations to dissuade potential customers and distributors from dealing with AllVoice and provided financial assistance to other speech product resellers, including The Speech Recognition Company, but not AllVoice.

A more serious allegation is that "IBM encouraged AllVoice to part with confidential information" about its new WordExpress software "...on the basis that IBM were not intending to produce competing software themselves, but were intending to license it from third parties, and on the basis that IBM could be trusted not to misuse the information which it acquired."

The complaint adds that for IBM to then use this confidential information to produce their own competing product "was in the circumstances an abuse." Or as AllVoice's solicitors put it: "We have yet to understand why IBM cannot accept a simple proposition, namely, that anything which is currently protected by intellectual property rights and disclosed to IBM should not be exploited by IBM without our client's consent."

AllVoice's solicitors Bird & Bird filed the complaint in December and are now awaiting a reaction from IBM. **LTi** asked IBM to respond to these allegations but was told by a spokeswoman: "We are declining to comment on this". ☐

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Solicitec wins ACE site

The fallout from the decision by Applied Computer Expertise to withdraw from the solicitors' IT market continues, with Solicitec reporting it has just won Dolmans, a 31 user site in Cardiff, in a head-to-head pitch against Axxia. Neil Ewin of Solicitec says the company's IT partner SOS is about to pick up another ACE user this week "and there are more in the pipeline".

Legato moves

Legal systems support specialists Legato Computer Services has moved to a new address: 1648 Parkway, Solent Business Park, Fareham PO15 7AH. For more information email: kate_upton@legato.demon.co.uk

Word 97 file conversion

Microsoft has put a free Word 97 binary converter for Word 6.0 and Word 95 users on its web site at http://www.microsoft.com/directaccess/word_rdr.htm

OYEZ ROLLS OUT NEXT GENERATION ELECTRONIC FORMS

The Oyez Stationery Group has launched a major upgrade to its electronic legal forms software. Called OyezForms Version II, the new software is available on CD Rom and 3.5" disk and will run on any PC running Windows 95 or NT with at least 16Mb of RAM.

Oyez say the new software has a number of advantages over the original 16-bit version, including: more scope for manipulating the size of a form's fields, the ability to preset the completion of fields containing standard information, such as a solicitor's name and address, and an optional interface that allows completed forms to be stored and retrieved under the control of third-party document management systems such as Docs Open.

OyezForms II can also be integrated with a growing number of case management systems, so forms can be pre-filled automatically from a central database. (☞ This is proving to be a fertile area for Oyez, thanks largely to Laserform having alienated many legal systems suppliers by launching its own case management software.)

Currently there are over 750 legal forms in the Oyez portfolio. These are sold in one of 13 different ranges or families of legal worktype, with rental prices starting at £200 per annum per range or £400 to purchase plus 20% maintenance after the first year. For a free demonstration disk call Amanda Nassar on ☎ 0171 232 1000.

☞ **Comment...** Oyez director Paul Cossey says the company's electronic forms are now used in more than 500 law firms but admits "we are still selling tens of thousands of our standard preprinted forms". Why?

Electronic legal forms have been around in one shape or another for nearly a decade yet despite the best efforts of Oyez, Laserform, Peapod and others ➔

➔ to promote the convenience and benefits of print on demand technology, there are still some 8000 law firms in England & Wales who clearly prefer to complete preprinted forms manually or on a typewriter.

Talking of Peapod, the company says that since it launched the 32-bit version of its PRINTAFORM electronic forms in January 1997, the package has been bought by nearly 300 firms, including Wragge & Co and Titmuss Sainer Dechert - the latter site also involving integration with Docs Open. ☐

PCS AIMS TO BE BIG IN MIDDLE ENGLAND

West Midlands based systems house Professional Computer Solutions (PCS) says it plans to strengthen its support and sales teams during 1998 so that, in the words of PCS legal division director Michael Pettet: "We realise our ambition of becoming the leading supplier of professional systems in the counties of Middle England".

Two of the latest wins recorded by PCS are: Harrison Clark in Worcester, which, as part of a larger £200,000 investment in new IT, is replacing an old Miles 33 accounts system with a combination of DPS case management and Cognito PMS software and Amery Parkes, which is extending its use of a DPS personal injury case management system by installing the software in its Basingstoke office. The firm already uses DPS in Birmingham, London and Bristol.

☞ **Comment...** Cognito may not be one of the legal world's sexiest systems but it is a good no-frills accounts work horse that still has a lot of fans. The systems' Devon-based developers Cognito Software also has a good reputation on the service and support front.

The one cloud on the horizon is Cognito's publicly quoted parent company Microvitec, which has issued ➔

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➔ a warning that it would make a trading loss in the year to 31st December. Last week the company also sold its VDU displays division to a former trading partner in what has been described as “a last minute attempt to save the core business... because the cash position had reached critical levels”.

As a result of the deal, Microvitec's bankers have agreed new credit facilities, which will allow the remaining business to continue trading, so for the time being Cognito's future looks secure. □

PILGRIM LOOKING TO US MARKET

Although traditionally regarded as a Scottish supplier with aspirations south of the border, Pilgrim Systems believes the Microsoft-with-everything strategy behind its LawSoft PMS and case management software gives it the potential of becoming a world class legal systems supplier.

Currently ten sites have gone “live” with LawSoft's Windows NT plus SQL Server platform, including Fyfe Ireland, Conveyancing Direct and Herrington & Carmichael in Camberley, with another ten in various stages of implementation and negotiation. Among this second group are Biddle & Co and Fox Williams in London, Nelson & Co in Leeds, and Simpson & Marwick, Bird Semple and Paull & Williamsons in Scotland. The P&W order was won in a straight fight with Axxia.

Pilgrim direct Ronnie Paton admits the LawSoft development project took longer to complete than originally anticipated but believes the company's perseverance is now starting to produce dividends. (☞ The company's long term ambition is to seek a Stock Exchange listing.)

“We always intended the system to be sufficiently open that it could be implemented in the different jurisdictions of Scotland, England and the Republic of Ireland,” says Paton, “however we now ➔

➔ see LawSoft being relevant in most common law jurisdictions. Singapore and Malaysia are two possibilities however because we are firmly built around a Microsoft platform, our initial export drive will be into the US market.” □

NEW NAME IN LITIGATIONSUPPORT

BSG Legal Solutions, the legal software and services division of the Business Systems Group, has been acquired for an undisclosed sum by the management team of Terry Dickinson, Andrew Kennell and Nick Athanasi, who will now trade as G3 Consulting Ltd.

BSG Legal Solutions was probably best known for its work with the JFS Litigator's Notebook case and litigation support product. This runs on a Lotus Notes platform and over the last couple of years has been used in litigation and forensic accountancy applications by Allen & Overy, Barlow Lyde & Gilbert, KPMG, Price Waterhouse and Lovell White Durrant.

Although there are longer term plans to expand and diversify, G3 will initially continue with the same core business as the old BSG Legal Solutions division. To this end G3 has now been appointed UK reseller for the JFS product range, including Litigator's Notebook, and will also sell the Concordance text retrieval system.

G3 is at 88 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LL, ☎ 0171 357 9441.

☞ **Comment...** 1998 looks like being an interesting year for the UK litigation support industry. Along with the formation of G3 Consulting, another newcomer IGL, made up largely of former Xerox Business Services staff, is being widely tipped as “one to watch”. And, LTI understands Legal Technologies Ltd is currently finalising a deal which could help expand that company's presence in both the UK and US legal markets. □

One Stop now in 105 firms
Bradleys of Dover is the latest firm to order the One Stop Solution integrated PMS, forms and case management suite which, since its launch in late 1996, has been installed in a total of 105 small-to-medium sized practices. The OSS suite was jointly developed by legal systems houses Peapod Solutions and Pracctice Ltd for 32-bit Windows 95/NT platforms.

“People ask why solicitors need advanced 32-bit systems,” says Peapod managing director Ian Wimbush. “OSS provides two good reasons. It is Y2K proof so firms need not worry about the millennium date change. And, by buying the latest products, firms can to an extent future proof their investment in IT as these systems will still be running well into the next century, long after older Unix and 16 bit systems have become obsolete.”

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Publishing news

The Pearson media group has confirmed earlier rumours that it plans to dispose of its FT Law & Tax accountancy and legal publishing division by appointing the Lazard Brothers merchant bank to handle the sale. FT Law & Tax, which also publishes the *Solicitors Journal*, has a turnover of £20 million and Pearson is believed to have set a price tag of £60 million.

Although currently involved in their own merger negotiations, Reed Elsevier (owners of Butterworths and Lexis) and Wolters Kluwer, who between them control almost 80 percent of the global professional publishing market, are now in negotiation with Microsoft over a possible web and online publishing deal.

MILLENNIUM COUNTDOWN

With one "top 20" City of London law firm rumoured to have been so badly hit by recent IT staff departures that partners are now getting worried they may be unable to fully implement their new and very expensive practice management system in time to deal with Y2K and EMU related computing problems, it is time for L*Ti* to catch up with the latest developments on the millennium IT front.

Microsoft has published a white paper on its web site at <http://www.microsoft.com/cio/year.asp> explaining its Y2K strategy.

This can best be summarised as upgrade to Windows 98 or Windows NT 5.0 (when they finally become available) as they contain a number of utilities to address Y2K compliance in the BIOS, screen displays, DOS 2 digit date entries and application date rollovers.

For example, in Windows 95 if you enter the date command at the DOS prompt and key "1-1-00" you will get "1900". But, with Windows 98 you will get "2000". (The break point for the system date assuming a "19" instead of "20" prefix is 1980/2079.)

The *Delia Venables Legal Resources* web site at <http://www.venables.co.uk/legal/year2000.htm> now has a series of links to material from IT suppliers, including IBM, Dell and Novell, and "official" information sources, such as Action 2000, the BSI and the British Computer Society, on their Y2K policies, as well as a series of papers by law firms on the legal aspects of Y2K compliance.

As a result of two years' work with its own customers and deputy chairman Mike Booth's involvement with the CSSA's (Computer Services & Software Association) millennium committee, legal systems supplier AIM is now offering an advice service for all law firms worried about Y2K computing problems. For details call AIM's marketing department on ☎ 01482 326971. □

Electronic publishing

BLACKSTONE'S ON A PSION

Legal software house Anya Designs and the Blackstone Press have just completed the development of a new edition of *Blackstone's Criminal Practice 1998* for the Psion Series 5 palmtop computer.

Anya director Christine Gribbin describes *BCP 98* as "a major development in electronic publishing... that will put this major criminal text into the pocket of everyone working within the criminal justice system.

"More portable than the book and more usable than a laptop, the Psion 5 can be used in places which are practical no-go areas for computers: courts, police stations, locus in quo's prisons and public transport," say Gribbin.

The *BCP 98* software contains the full, unabridged text of the book, with a number of enhancements including hypertext links, annotation, searching and book-marking. *BCP 98* will be available from 16th March, price £120, and can be obtained direct from Anya Designs on ☎ 01273 682020. Because the project is fully supported by Psion, Anya can supply Psion 5s at a discount price of £469.99 for an 8Mb model.

In other electronic publishing developments...

Legalease, the publisher of *The Legal 500* and *Legal Business*, has just launched a new web based resource for law students called *The Student Law Centre* at <http://www.studentlaw.com> The facility includes a database of law firms offering training and barristers chambers offering pupillages, as well as advice on preparing CVs and for interviews.

The long running *Watching Brief* law report comment and analysis column in *Local Government News* magazine can now be delivered directly to subscribers' desktops via email. There is no charge for the service and to subscribe to the emailing list send a note of your name, firm or authority and email address to: info@cloudnine.co.uk □

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Recruitment matters...

USING CONSULTANTS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

It is estimated that there are currently more than 50,000 unfilled IT jobs in the UK. Given such a difficult market for finding staff, how can you make the best use of recruitment consultants? Craig Coverman of Longbridge International has some suggestions.

Most firms use recruitment consultancies at some stage. Indeed, many firms rely on them, not having the time themselves to constantly advertise or wade through masses of potentially irrelevant CVs. But, it does appear it is the type of business relationship built up with consultancies that often determines the level of success experienced.

Some firms work with a select few. Others use what can only be described as a "scatter gun" approach blasting staffing requirements onto the market. To put these two approaches in context, let's consider some home truths about the current state of the IT jobs market:

Demand exceeds supply. We all know this but what it means for candidates is they have a choice. Their decisions are often based on which job has been best sold to them by the consultancy they are dealing with.

Candidates are in short supply. Just about every firm is recruiting at present and consultancies mostly recommend their candidates to the firms they are closest to: the ones they do not want to let down.

In the current market when dealing with consultancies you not only need to work closely with them but also to grab their attention. So, how do you do this? The easiest way is to set up what are known as "preferred supplier lists" and work with a select number of human resource (HR) "partners" - Herbert Smith and Linklaters already use this approach.

From the firm's point of view, a more focused service is provided and less time is spent fielding irrelevant calls ➔

➔ and sales pitches. The firm may even find it is covering more of the market using this method because of the strength of the "sell" by its preferred suppliers.

From the consultancies' point of view, they achieve a closer working relationship with the firm and hence feel more inclined and better equipped to sell the firm over and above other sites that are also recruiting. (It also provides them with a more in depth understanding of a firm, its culture and requirements, allowing them to match more closely any prospective candidates.)

This approach can be taken one step further, using a concept called a "managed supplier arrangement". This is the outsourcing of supplier management to one higher level consultancy, which takes responsibility for communicating and focusing the efforts of all the other recruitment partners. The benefit for a firm is it provides a single point of contact between them and the consultancies, freeing up the HR and IT teams to focus on staff retention and development.

The key for using consultancies is involvement - make them feel part of the project and get them to take "ownership" for the success of the campaign. Some firms even hold open evenings for their "partners", with tours of their facilities, a chance to meet their IT managers and a presentation on the overall IT strategy.

A relatively new feature is the practice of retaining consultancies to work on a firm's behalf. This involves paying a non-refundable portion of the fee up front, paying the consultancy for its time and expertise. This is a useful way of getting specialist vacancies filled, with the consultancy motivated by the prospect of a "success fee", payable upon completion of the assignment.

In terms of fees, given the strength of the market and the sheer volume of firms looking to recruit, tread carefully when negotiating. Getting a good deal for the firm is important but so is keeping a consultancy motivated. Remember, ➔

➔ recruitment consultancies are also in business, and it is a competitive market for skilled IT professionals. Longbridge's recent experience is some firms are even prepared to push up the placement fees to get difficult to find skills on board. This certainly grabs any recruitment consultancy's attention.

In return, get the consultancies to add value to the process. Get them to provide market data on salaries, help develop structured recruitment and induction programmes, and alert "preferred clients" to the opportunities thrown up in the marketplace.

Given the fact recruiting staff is not going to get any easier as we approach the millennium, it is likely that forging alliances with recruitment consultancies will become even more important. □

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Seen around the Web

This week sees a number of legal sites announcing upgrades and face lifts. The next issue of LTI will also carry a feature on the do's and don'ts of web site design.

Irwin Mitchell has completed the first phase of its site at <http://www.irwinmitchell.co.uk>. The development is being handled by The Database Ltd (<http://www.database.co.uk>)

Nabarro Nathanson has revamped its web site at <http://www.nabarro.com> to provide a broader range of news and information services, including email briefings and downloadable newsletters in a PDF format.

Kaye Tesler & Co has gone "live" with a new version of its interactive web site at <http://www.kt.uklaw.net>. A major change is a reduction in the number of .GIF file graphics, enabling the site to download more quickly.

Internet & comms news...

SCOTLAND PLUGS INTO THE WEB

Last week the Law Society of Scotland formally launched its new web site at <http://www.lawscot.org.uk>

This is an ambitious site, seeking to combine members' services with information of genuine interest to the general public, including a *Dial-a-law* facility providing instant legal information on over 40 topics, such as adoption, debt collection and dismissal.

At the site's core are three user searchable databases covering all 8000 practitioners in Scotland, every law firm belonging to the Scottish Law Society, and a listing of accredited specialists. Searches can be carried out by lawyer name, practice, geographic location or specialism.

In addition, there are sections on Scottish legal history, the implications for Scots law of the current moves towards home rule, the courts' structure, the role of the Scottish Law Society and how to commence a career in law. The Society also plans to extend the site to include links to all Scottish universities providing law degree courses.

Two other Scottish legal sites worth noting are: the Royal Faculty of Procurators Library in Glasgow at <http://www.scotnet.co.uk/als/rfp.htm> which includes a listing of the latest book purchases and the Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre at <http://www.espc.co.uk>. This provides details of homes to buy or rent, a listing of the 260 firms who are ESPC members and an email based property matching service. □

SPECIAL OFFER ON FELIX

Applied Computer Expertise (ACE) is currently running a special offer on its Felix for Windows secure email and conferencing system that has been widely used by the Judiciary since 1990. The Felix software normally retails for

➔ £200 + VAT but as part of a limited duration promotion it can be purchased for £150 + VAT. ACE is also offering a discount on the cost of annual software support contracts.

☞ **Comment...** Felix evolved from the earlier Legal Information eXchange (LIX) which ACE acquired a couple of years ago. Currently there are about 350 judges online, with another 650 scheduled to follow in the near future, and ACE is now hoping to extend the service into the broader legal community.

Although Felix uses an off-line reader and, as such, has a potential advantage over the rival LINK service from Legalease, it lacks the legal content LINK can offer. Furthermore, with both services soon to come under pressure from newer web-based systems, such as Lawlink, it begins to look doubtful whether a temporary £50 price cut will have any significant impact upon Felix's poor market penetration. □

NEW ONLINE BUSINESS INFORMATION SOURCES

Spring is in the air and with it comes the announcement of three new or enhanced business information services...

Mondaq, formerly known as Business Monitor Online (<http://www.businessmonitor.co.uk>), has just gone "live" with a new web site, featuring what the company describes as "drastically improved navigation and search tools", at <http://www.mondaq.com>. The site provides a mixture of legal, business and professional information. Most of this material is free, however, the site is "commerce enabled" with the pay-to-view sections using the DataCash online credit card payment system.

The Dialog Corporation, formed by the recent merger of MAID and Knight Ridder, has announced a number of changes to its online services. These include changing the names of some services to focus more heavily on the

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➔ Dialog brand, increasing the number of publications from which the content for its global news coverage is drawn, and adding additional data feeds from French, German and Spanish sources.

Intellectual property lawyers may be interested in the new *Trademarkscan Spain* database, produced by Thomson & Thomson/CompuMark, as Spain is the first country to belong to all three major international trademark registration systems: the Community Trade Mark, the Madrid Agreement and the Madrid Protocol. The Dialog home page is at <http://www.dialog.com>

Later this week ICC Information launches Juniper XD, a new online service which, it is claimed, will provide almost instant retrieval and access to a database containing over 34 million images of every UK statutory document filed at Companies House.

The database is updated everyday with over 80,000 pages of newly scanned information and users are offered a choice of over 30 pre-defined search routines. Search results can be delivered online or via conventional means, including fax, DX and courier. The ICC home page is at <http://www.icc.co.uk> □

ADOBE PAGEMILL UPGRADE

Adobe Systems has announced a new version of PageMill, its popular web page design software. PageMill 3.0 for Windows 95 and NT 4.0, which supports Java, will begin shipping in March and free evaluation copies are available now for downloading from the company's site at <http://www.adobe.co.uk> PageMill 3.0 will retail for £79 + VAT but registered users of version 2.0 can upgrade for £35 + VAT. □

CHEAPER FAX SUPPORT

Kommunicate has cut the price of its RightFAX "premier support service" for network fax systems by £800 per annum per server. For more details call ☎ 01252 815514. □

LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

March 3, AIM, London. Final date of legal IT supplier AIM's roadshow to promote its new Windows NT system. Admission is free, with sessions starting at 10am and 12noon. Call AIM on ☎ 01482 326971.

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 Marriott. Offshoot of Barbican show featuring legal IT and related services suppliers. 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. Conference and exhibition taking place at seven venues around the UK. Admission free, for tickets call ☎ 01905 727606 or visit <http://www.itx.co.uk>

March 19, Kaye Tesler Lecture, Birmingham Holiday Inn. Solicitor Michael Kaye resumes his popular lecture series with an expanded all-day format that includes sessions on speech recognition, video conferencing, the use of interactive internet sites, email, Y2K computing problems and strategies for raising finance to fund the acquisition of IT. The fee is £100 + VAT and the event qualifies for 8.45 CPD hours. Call ☎ 0181 809 6756 or visit <http://www.kt.uklaw.net>

March 24, Intranets & Beyond for Law Firms, Law Society, London. One day conference including seminars and multi-stream workgroup sessions looking at the practical, technical, legal and business aspects of developing intranets within solicitors practices. Speakers include Richard Susskind, Neil Cameron, Clive Whitfield-Jones of JGR ➔

➔ Derek Sturdy of LIR/Sweet & Maxwell and LTI editor Charles Christian. The event is organised by Osney Media and sponsored by **Legal Technology Insider**. The fee is £499 + VAT. Call ☎ 0171 880 0000 or visit <http://www.osneymedia.co.uk>

April 3 & 4, Law Society of Scotland Exhibition, Glasgow. Truemist, who organise the Barbican and GMEX events, have been appointed to organise the exhibition that will run alongside this year's AGM and conference of the Scottish Law Society. For details call ☎ 0181 742 3399.