

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

iNSIDER

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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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UNIX IS DEAD LONG LIVE UNIX !

In a strange turn of events, while it is now widely accepted that the future of legal IT lies not with Unix but with the Windows NT platform and the Microsoft SQL Server database, a lack of resources is forcing many firms to radically revise their implementation strategies.

One problem is some software suppliers have such a backlog of orders that they are quoting 18 month implementation periods – and nobody wants to risk going live in late 1999.

This problem is exacerbated by the fact NT 5.0, seen by many firms as the key client/server technology, is unlikely to be launched before the summer of 1999 and even then it will probably be another six months before a service pack with bug fixes is released.

Adding to these difficulties is the problem of finding and keeping staff with suitable NT and SQL skills. According to a recent *Computer Weekly* survey, the demand for NT skills within the UK IT market generally has increased by 97% over the past year.

Or, as one law firm IT director told **LTi** "We sent our Novell support staff on an NT training course but when they came back, they all found themselves jobs with merchant banks for double the salary we were paying them".

The net result is while many firms may want to go the NT/SQL Server route, for practical reasons they are having to put these projects on hold until such time as resources do become available. A further complication is many firm's inhouse IT resources are already being stretched by Y2K and Euro compliancy projects. ➔

➔ The message seems to be: shelve your NT projects until after the Millennium and in the meantime slap another coat of paint on your old Unix system and hope it will last for another two or three years.

ANNUS HORRIBLIS FOR KEYSTONE ?

It looks as if 1998 might not be a vintage year for Keystone Software. Hard on the heels of the Ashurst Morris Crisp debacle, it now appears there could be problems at some of the company's other UK sites.

LTi understands Masons has issued an ultimatum giving Keystone two months in which to either shape up or ship out. If Masons does pull the plug on the Keystone implementation, its fall back position will be to keep its existing Norwel system running for a couple of more years and then select a replacement once the immediate pressure of Y2K and Euro compliance projects has eased.

Meanwhile D J Freeman is still talking confidently about going live with Keystone "within six weeks" however **LTi** has learned it too is keeping its options open and recently took the precaution of checking that its old Kienzle (now Axxia) Kisol system is Y2K compliant. (It is.)

This still leaves Stephenson Harwood but while all reports suggest its Keystone implementation is going ahead smoothly, one possible hitch is the firm itself is now engaged in possible merger talks with accountants Ernst & Young.

● **Comment...** With wags suggesting Keystone may soon change its name to Tombstone, it is interesting to note that ex-Masons IT director Martin Telfer, who is now with major Australian Keystone site Malleasons, will shortly visit London for meetings with the legal IT fraternity.

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Revenue to pilot R/KYV

Later this month the Inland Revenue investigations department will commence a pilot project to evaluate ways the R/KYV litigation support system can help them with their work. This month also marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the original R/KYV software by Valid Information Systems.

Avenue wins major orders

Avenue Legal Systems has won two "six figure" orders from *Legal 500* firms for its Wisdom integrated case and practice management software.

The orders were placed by City charity law specialist Bates, Wells & Braithwaite and former ACE Infinity user E. Edwards, Son & Noice. The latter firm has a major personal injury practice and will be running the system throughout its East London and Essex offices.

AXXIA ROLLS OUT SON OF KISOL

In a move designed to win back its share of the 1000 plus firms in the 5 to 30 user bracket, which over the last couple of years has been slowly whittled away by rivals Videss, SOS, Avenue and others, Axxia Systems has just launched the new Eiiion practice management system.

The new product, which is expected to sell for less than £1000 per user, is designed as a replacement for the ageing Kisol system (although Kisol is now Y2K compliant and Axxia is committed to continuing to support it), runs on a Windows NT 4.0 network, is Euro ready and has an Informix database at its core. (A SQL Server version is on the way.)

- Axxia has also announced details of its next generation PMS system for larger firms (although it will continue to develop and support Arista). Code-named product Y, this will run on NT 5.0, with Informix or SQL in the engine room, and is due to go into beta testing in the autumn.

With NT 5.0 still a year away, Axxia is offering "phased contracts" so users can take the system running on Unix as an interim measure and then migrate to NT. Rowley Ashworth, via consultant Andrew Levison, has stuck its neck out and already signed up for this deal. For more details visit <http://www.axxia.com>

ICL MAKES WAVES FOR LAW SOCIETY

ICL has given a good example of how not to win friends and influence people in its negotiations with legal software suppliers over the Law Society IT catalogue.

Along with proposing that suppliers should pay ICL £1000 towards the cost of the catalogue and agree to pay a "finders fee" of 10% of all revenues accrued via the catalogue, ICL also wanted them to agree "to position ICL as (their) preferred supplier of generic hardware, software and services". ➔

➔ Suppliers have told L*Ti* that not only are these terms "simply not acceptable" but they are also annoyed by the way ICL has tried to "bounce" them into making a decision at short notice. L*Ti* has seen a letter from Mark Bennett of ICL asking suppliers "to conclude all contractual arrangement" by 29th May. The letter was dated 28th May and faxed to one supplier as late as 15.44 on 29th May.

The suppliers' view is they need to have a meeting with ICL and will only participate in the project if ICL agrees to "sensible" terms.

- The catalogue, to be called *SolicIT* and carrying joint ICL/Law Society branding, is due to be launched on 30th June. Initially it will take the form of a pilot project, running from 1st July to 31st December, with copies sent to around 3000 law firms within the M25 area. Along with between three and six legal software applications, it will also carry PC hardware from Fujitsu (ICL's parent), IBM, Compaq and Toshiba, plus office software from Corel, Lotus and Microsoft.

SOLEX '98 - MIXED SIGNALS

In the aftermath of this month's *Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition* at the Barbican, it is hard to judge whether or not the event was a success.

According to some exhibitors, it was "terrible" and they are never going there again. There again they said exactly the same thing last year and the year before.

On the other hand, there are suppliers such as Lexology who, despite having a small stand on a side gallery, were so impressed with the response they received (this was their Barbican debut) that not only have they rebooked for 1999 but they have actually taken a stand four times larger. In fact most of the stands for next year have already been reserved or booked.

Although attendance was down, the consensus among suppliers was the ➔

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➔ quality of visitors was still high, with few tyre-kickers in evidence. It is also worth bearing in mind the event does now face competition from a growing number of regional shows.

With lawyers currently enjoying a boom in business, practices becoming increasingly sophisticated in their procurement of IT and even relatively small High Street firms now on to their third generation of computer systems, perhaps the novelty value of attending any exhibition has also waned.

Nevertheless, these criticisms aside, SOLEX still firmly retains its position as the market's leading event and annual focal point for new product launches.

PC DOCS WINS AT EVERSHEDES

After an extensive evaluation of rival products, including FileNET, Eversheds has selected DOCS Open to be the basis of its new practice-wide document and information management infrastructure.

The firm has purchased a 2500 user site licence and over the next few months, starting in Leeds, will be rolling out the product nationally. Previously some parts of Eversheds were using Soft Solutions, some had a bespoke system, while others had no document management system at all.

Following recent orders from Stephenson Harwood and fast growing Arthur Anderson subsidiary Garretts, the Eversheds' deal means DOCS is now running in 30 of the UK's top 60 firms.

- **Paisner & Co** has ordered the rival Worldox document management package from distributor Systematics.

- **Ovum**, the IT analyst group, has just produced a new report on the document management market. It includes an evaluation of Documentum, FileNET and DOCS Open and while the full report costs £1195, an abridged white paper on the topic can be found at <http://www.ovum.com/news/dc2/dc2wp.html>

PILGRIM EXTENDS Y2K COVER

Pilgrim Solutions has confirmed that its older generation of Advocate accounts software is now millennium compliant on both Unix and VMS platforms. Users still running the original PDP/11 version of the system (which dates back to the early 1980s) will have to upgrade to Unix to gain Y2K compatibility.

- **Thin client technology** Pilgrim is also piloting a thin client front end for its newer LawSoft practice management system. It has web browser software as the interface, with a view to opening up the system to both non-PC users within a firm and outside access via an extranet.

DPS IS Y2K READY

MCS, the company behind the DPS case management system, has reacted angrily to rumours that DPS is not millennium compliant. MCS says users will encounter no Y2K problems because the product holds all dates in the DD/MM/CCYY long century date format. A leading DPS dealer has also told **LTi** that they would have no hesitation in commencing litigation against anyone found spreading defamatory rumours about the product.

- **Comment...** The rumours seem to have been spread by a disgruntled DPS dealer, who has been running down the product to existing users and consultants and, as such, will probably do more harm to his credibility than DPS.

It is also worth noting that along with its current DPS for Windows Version 8.0 product, MCS is also publicly committed to continuing to support its original DPS for DOS product (which only works with WordPerfect 5.1) "for as long as users want to use it" even if that means well beyond the Year 2000.

- A new SQL Server version of DPS is now in the final stages of development and due to be launched shortly. **LTi** also understands MCS is about to make a "major announcement" about its future.

Y2K finance
Schroder Finance has launched a new **Legal System Upgrade product for law firms using the Year 2000 as the "catalyst" to embark upon a major upgrade of their IT systems and networks. For details call ☎ 0181 233 4034.**

Atherton not out
Former Longbridge recruitment consultant Mark Atherton has set up his own IT staff and head hunting agency. The service, called Osborn Consulting, is based in Huntingdon (☎ 01480 431121) and has already placed staff in a number of law firms, including Norton Rose.

Robson Rhodes out in the autumn
Within the next couple of weeks management and IT consultants Robson Rhodes will be sending out the questionnaires for its 1998 survey. The firm expects to publish the results in the early autumn.

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Speech & dictation systems

● According to Dictaphone, the UK dictation systems market is worth £40 million a year. The company also reckons that despite the hype surrounding speech recognition software, the main growth market is for digital systems that combine conventional dictation with PC technology.

Dictaphone's own latest offering in this field is the Walkabout Tour, which is the company's first portable digital dictation machine. Dictation is stored on removable Flash memory cards and files can be uploaded to PCs for transcription or transmission to another location as email attachments.

● Philips has appointed Berrys of Holborn as its UK legal market agent for its PC speech recognition software. The software can now be integrated with DOCS Open.

NEW CASE & CLIENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The last couple of weeks have seen the launch of a number of new or enhanced systems for managing both clients and case loads:

● **Lawbase Legal Systems** (☎ 0181 840 9994) which back in 1984 was one of the first UK suppliers to launch a case management system, has begun rolling out a new generation of all Windows (95/NT), Y2K-compliant products.

To accommodate the demands of existing users, the first raft of products is aimed at probate practitioners in law firms and inhouse legal departments. There are three basic modules: a wills register, probate management (including estate accounts) and wills drafting, which includes a charities database and version for Scotland and Northern Ireland.

All three products are fully compatible with both Word and WordPerfect and further applications, including residential conveyancing and debt collection, will be launched later this year.

● **Professional Technology** (☎ 01634 815517) has launched a new workflow and case management system called Seriatim Master Class. It will run on Windows 3x, 95 or NT platforms, is compatible with WordPerfect and Word, and can be integrated with electronic forms products from Laserform, Peapod and others.

Interestingly, the software is available on a "pay as you use" rental basis of £2.50 for each matter that goes live plus a £0.50 charge for each month that a matter resides on the system. This is subject to a minimum charge of £50 per month. Staff training and telephone hotline support is extra.

● **WinLaw Legal Software** (☎ 0151 474 7777) is a Liverpool-based software supplier with a 32-bit integrated case and practice management system designed for smaller to medium sized firms. Called WinLaw, the product is based on the

➔ Microsoft Access database and is fully compatible with Microsoft Office. It requires either Windows 95 or NT on the desktop but the WinLaw software will run across a wide range of network platforms, including Novell, NT and Unix.

Currently there are modules available to support personal injury, family, crime, welfare benefits and conveyancing work, with debt, employment and immigration applications.

Although WinLaw only has a small user base, it was one of the systems shortlisted by the English Law Society for its new IT initiative.

● **ComTech Software** (☎ 01993 700232) The final new product is Legal Office, which comes from an Oxfordshire based software house probably better known in the process control and manufacturing systems market.

Legal Office is neither a full accounts or case management application and can best be described as a client management and billing utility. However, because it can handle Legal Aid work and is very cheap – it is currently available on special offer for just £295 (+VAT) – it could appeal to small firms and sole practitioners.

Legal Office is another Microsoft Access-based product and is available in Windows 95 and NT versions. ComTech can supply a free demonstration disk set although this does not actually shine much light on the product.

CUT-PRICE BANKING

NatWest Bank is running a special promotion on its electronic banking services for solicitors. Between now and 28th August firms can sign up for a combined package of the BankLine Cash Manager (for checking balances, transfers between accounts etc), Payment Manager (CHAPS and BACS payments) and Intra Day Update software for the reduced price of £999 (+VAT) instead of the usual price of £1,689 (+VAT).

For details contact your local branch or call Joanne Davis on ☎ 0171 920 5285.

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CCH OPT FOR MULTI LEVEL SERVICE

Legal publisher CCH has unveiled the first results of its recent takeover of New Law Publishing: the new multi level and multimedia *Employment Law Service*.

The full service comprises nine separate elements: an online facility offering overnight case reports and commentary, the *Employment Law Reports*, the *Employment Lawyer* journal, a newsletter, a guide to employment law, an annual edition of the *Employment Law Reports*, a discussion forum on the web and a CD-Rom version of the printed works.

Pricing depends upon the number of users and options selected however the company is currently running a free trial offer. Call ☎ 0181 247 1260 for details and quote "KRMH".

● **Comment...** At a time when other publishers are still soul-searching as to whether they should back CD or web based technologies, it is interesting to see CCH eschewing the "either/or" approach and opting to offer subscribers the full monty of hard back books, conventional law reports, update newsletters and CD and online delivery mechanisms.

The new title also seems designed to challenge DiscLaw's A-Z *Employment Law Service*, which will soon be available through the Law Society in a variety of formats, including book, CD-Rom and online updates via a web site.

FAMILIAR FACES MAKING A RETURN

After nearly twelve months of research and planning, New City Media, the publishing business set up by legal head hunters Quarry Dougall, is now starting to roll out its first titles.

These include: an employment law publication; *Lex*, a new magazine for law students; *Square Foot*, a magazine described as providing "commercial

➔ intelligence for property lawyers and their clients" (the first issue is published this month) plus a series of sector guides looking at the providers of legal services in specific areas of legal practice. The first of these, focussing on digital media, comes out in July.

The editorial team at New City Media (☎ 0171 831 1901) includes former *Legal 500* editor Mark Brandon and former *Legal Business* editor Catrin Griffiths.

● Also possibly planning a comeback is Lindsey Greig, the founder and first editor of *The Lawyer* newspaper. Since being bought out by Centaur five years ago, Greig's own Cecile Park Publishing business has developed a range of equestrian titles but his recent visit to SOLEX has prompted speculation that he may want to return to the legal market.

HOPING FOR SECOND TIME LUCKY

Legal publishers who use the HotDocs document assembly software in their publications and electronic forms are hoping for second time lucky with a new promotional campaign they are planning with *The Lawyer*.

As part of an initiative to increase awareness of the benefits of HotDocs technology, earlier this year the publishers produced 20,000 copies of a promotional CD containing a free run time version of the HotDocs software plus sample copies of legal forms, including copies of the Law Society's own conveyancing forms.

Due to a mix up, in mid-March a small item appeared in the *Law Society Gazette* mentioning the initiative but the disks themselves were not distributed in the *Gazette* until a fortnight later, without any further explanation or editorial coverage. The net result, as one publisher told LTI, is that 20,000 solicitors were left wondering why the Law Society had sent them shiny, silver coasters for their coffee mugs - hence the decision to relaunch the initiative with a different publication.

New IT directory
Marketeer, part of the same group that organises the SOLEX exhibition, has just published the 1998 edition of its annual *Legal Technology Directory*. It contains comprehensive information on over 40 suppliers of legal IT products and services and additional copies are available, price £10, by calling ☎ 0181 742 3388. And "no" LTI does not know why the cover shows a picture of a 1986 vintage DOS PC.

New Companies House forms
Convergent Development (☎ 07000 222123) is now publishing a full series of **Companies House electronic forms for Windows PCs**. The entry level pack costs £95 (+VAT) and the professional version (which also include Scottish company and Welsh language forms) costs £195 (+VAT). A free trial copy of the forms is also available.

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Law Society heading for outsourcing

As part of a project that will see the winding down of its 54-strong inhouse IT department and begin outsourcing computer services, the English Law Society has issued an invitation to tender to six as yet unnamed IT companies.

As well as supporting 700 staff in London, the West Midlands and six regional offices, the contractor will be responsible for running the membership records for 83,000 solicitors and 10,000 law firms.

One notable casualty is the department's former head Ashley Sollitt, who has now departed after 14 years with the Society. According to an official statement: "It was felt the Society needed a fresh input into the management of our computing and IT strategy". His replacement has still to be appointed.

SELECT INTRODUCE WEB ENABLEMENT

East Yorkshire IT company Select Legal Systems has joined the growing ranks of suppliers (eight at the last count) now offering some form of web enablement to their case management systems.

The Select product has a progress reports facility that allows a client to access a password protected web page to monitor the progress of a particular matter, rather than having to phone the firm for an update. Select suggest most firms would typically want to update the progress pages on their web sites once or twice a day by an FTP file upload.

● **Comment...** Although the Select approach is a relatively basic product, compared with some systems that are now offering interactive access to an online database information via a web browser, it is certainly going to meet the needs of the private and smaller commercial clients, such as estate agents, of most High Street firms.

The one drawback is it can only offer progress reports and not client account balances. Anecdotal evidence suggests that along with "What progress has been made on my case?" the other question clients most frequently ask is "How much of my money have you spent?"

The Select (☎ 01482 644334) system is currently in use at Fidler & Pepper in Nottinghamshire. The firm's site at <http://www.demon.co.uk/fidler> also offers interactive quotes for conveyancing work.

SECURE EMAIL - SPOILT FOR CHOICE

Secure internet email services are, it seems, a bit like London buses. There is never one around when you need it, then suddenly several come along at once.

The latest organisation to throw its hat into the ring is E-docs plc, a West Yorkshire company that is part of the Robinson Group (☎ 01977 677777). ➔

➔ From the information available to L*Ti*, it would appear the E-docs "electronic document exchange system", which will be launched "within the next few weeks", will be technologically sound in terms of offering secure servers, audit trails, password protection and encryption, with the promise of a videoconferencing facility in the next release of the software.

But, what is rather more important is the business model behind the service. The choice of a Windows 95/NT hardware platform and Microsoft Office as the interface will preclude many lawyers from being able to access the service. And, with prices based on a licence fee of £5 per week per user, there is a risk this will deter smaller firms from using it.

Together, these two factors could prevent the service from achieving the critical mass it needs if it is to become the electronic equivalent of the Hays DX.

● **Comment...** E-docs plc appears unconcerned by the fact that along with conventional communications methods (post, fax, DX etc) and insecure email, it also has to compete against the long established - and free - LINK service, as well as other newcomers such as Lawlink, which has already taken the Irish market by storm and will also shortly be launching in the UK. (L*Ti* understands there is also a company in the North-West beta testing yet another secure email service for lawyers.)

Bearing in mind none of the existing players in the UK or the USA have got rich providing these services, what hope is there for E-docs? The company clearly hopes to be endorsed by the English Law Society. But is it big enough to service the whole profession? Does it have a sufficient understanding of lawyers' needs? Does it have financial resources to support a prolonged marketing campaign? And has it a track record the Law Society would be comfortable with?

As the fates of LIX and LawCity have shown, what may be a good idea on paper does not necessarily translate into a commercially sustainable business. ➔

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➔ Law firms wanting to implement their own secure email environments are also now being offered a wider choice than ever before. Among the suppliers gearing up their activities in this sector are:

● **Russell Computing** Although the company is currently better known in the London insurance market, it has two main products in this field: **SecureMail**, a secure email system that is compatible with existing internet mail but also offers authorisation procedures, audit trails and archiving for "legally significant" material; and **SecureXchange**, an electronic document exchange facility for intranet/extranet environments. For details visit <http://www.russell.co.uk> or ☎ 0115 924 2030.

● **Peapod Solutions** has now added the WorldTalk WorldSecure range of secure email client/server software to its portfolio of internet security products. The system has built-in virus protection, a facility for quarantining unauthorised email, plus archiving and audit trails. Software licence fees are based on the number of users, starting at £500 per seat and falling to £150 for 26 to 50 user sites.

For further information contact John Bendall, who has just joined Peapod Solutions with responsibility for selling internet security products to the legal market, on ☎ 0181 574 8288.

INTERNET NEWS BRIEFS

● **Linklaters** may have found the Holy Grail of electronic commerce advocates namely a way of making money out of the internet. Latest reports suggest that after taking into account both the IT and legal resources devoted to the project, the firm is now breaking even on its *Blue Flag* legal information extranet – there again commercial clients are being charged approaching £100,000 a year for the full service.

Clifford Chance, which has just announced a similar initiative, called ➔

➔ **NextLaw**, is also optimistic its service will evolve over the next five years into a commercially viable profit centre.

● **Lexis-Nexis** has launched an upgraded version of Research Manager, its 16-bit graphical user interface, for users on Windows 3x and 95 platforms who do not want a web browser front end to the service. Lexis has also added 15 major UK regional daily newspapers and the Spanish paper *El Pais* to its database. For details visit <http://www.lexis-nexis.co.uk> or ☎ 0171 464 1300.

● **Dialog** has completed negotiations with the Institut National de la Propriete Industrielle (INPI) to allow users access to French intellectual property information. Starting late summer, INPI will provide information on all French applications and granted patents in force since 1966 (with all legal status descriptions available in English) via the Dialog online service. For details visit <http://www.dialog.com> or ☎ 0171 940 6900.

● **Xpedite Systems** has launched a new electronic document delivery service called LegalFax. The service provides firms with a fax broadcasting facility that has the capability to send lengthy documents to a large number of recipients without requiring the firm to invest in its own fax server systems. Users can also use Xpedite's new XWeb internet facility to schedule and monitor the progress of fax transmissions via the company's web site at <http://www.xpedite.co.uk> For further details call ☎ 01904 690000.

● **Kaye Tesler & Co** has been shortlisted for the 1998 Lawyer/HIFAL Awards in the *Best Use of Multimedia* category for its interactive legal services web site at <http://www.kt.uklaw.net>

● **Delia Venables**, the internet and IT consultant, is so fed up with other web sites ripping off her comprehensive and extensively researched listing of legal and law firm sites at <http://www.venables.co.uk/legal/> that she has "seeded" her site with fake data, to make it easier to establish when and where copyright infringement has taken place.

Seen on the Web

Among the latest legal web sites are:

● **Litigation support specialists DPA Egami** at <http://www.dpaegami.com>

● **The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting** at <http://www.lawreports.co.uk> Along with details of recent, current and forthcoming case reports, plus information about the Council's full range of print and CD-Rom reports, the site also contains a free advertising service for lawyers and law students wishing to buy and sell sets or part sets of the law reports.

● **In July Legalease** will launch a new web site providing access to legal IT information. The site, at <http://www.legal-it.com>, will be supported by IT supplier advertising.

● **Similar material** is also available now via the LTI site at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/hotlinks>

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LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

- **June 18, How to Build an Intranet, Law Society, London.** One day course on Lotus Notes and intranet design. Starts 9.30 am, course fee £499 (+VAT). Call Osney Media on ☎ 0171 880 0000.
- **June 24, Kaye Tesler Seminar, Coppid Beech Hotel, Bracknell.** Mixture of video conferencing open day, private lecture (attracting CPD points) by solicitor Michael Kaye on the use of the internet by lawyers plus workshops on internet and video conference systems. Starts 9.30 am with the CPD lecture running from 2.00 to 4.00 pm. There will be a similar event, with a slightly different format and a larger CPD element on **July 9, Royal Horticultural Halls, Victoria, London SW1**. For details call Kaye Tesler on ☎ 0181 809 6756.
- **June 30, The Highly Geared Lawyer, Lincoln's Inn Old Hall, London.** Two half day (starts 9.30 am & 2.00 pm) seminars looking at the role of technology and document management systems in the litigation process. Speakers include Mark Barnes QC, Stephen Powles QC, Tania Correia of Herbert Smith and Jane Jales from Rakisons. The event is sponsored by litigation support specialists DPA-Egami and IGL. Course fee £50 (+VAT). The event is CPD accredited. Call Professional Solutions on ☎ 0171 356 0838.

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