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AXXIA STANCE ON NT PROMPTS CHORUS OF DISAPPROVAL

Recent comments by Axxia Systems to the effect that although Microsoft Windows NT 4 does now provide a stable server platform for smaller practices, law firms wanting installations to support more than 30 users should wait for the release of NT 5 (and SQL Server 7.0), has produced a howl of protest from both other legal IT suppliers and Microsoft.

Axxia managing director Stuart Holden's view is law firms are not in business to take IT risks and should always "back the safe horse".

But, according to other IT suppliers, this is just a "red herring" being floated by Axxia to justify its sales strategy. Their unanimous view is that not only are Windows NT4 and SQL Server 6.5 stable but that "scalability" is not an issue.

Pilgrim Systems report already having 150 user NT sites up and running, with large 350-to-400 user sites to follow. Both Elite and CMS have 500 user plus sites running in the USA. And, for the record, the whole of Deloitte & Touche's 4500 user-strong global network (another CMS site) runs NT4/SQL 6.5.

One factor clouding the issue is the distinction between the total number of potential users linked to an NT network and the actual number of concurrent users simultaneously keying in data.

However, even when this qualification is taken into account, the Axxia 30 user limit still looks rather paltry. A number of CMS and Elite sites are running with 60 plus concurrent users in the United States, while Andrews & Kurth in Los Angeles reports still having spare ➡

➡ capacity on a DEC Alpha/NT platform with 100 concurrent users. Microsoft says there is even one (albeit non-legal) site in the UK with 750 concurrent users.

Microsoft UK development manager "KP" Bhimani told **LTi** allegations about the scalability of NT usually stemmed from "propaganda" spread by systems houses who were "struggling" to port their Unix applications to an NT platform.

"It is an endemic problem, suppliers think it will be a simple matter but they need to redesign their entire architecture. They must be prepared to make the commitment." KP also added that if Axxia needed any assistance with its NT projects. he would be happy to advise.

GARTON OUT AT AIM

AIM managing director Peter Garton has left the Hull-based legal systems supplier after what has been described as a "board room disagreement". Deputy chairman Mike Booth says it is "business as usual" and the departure will have no impact on services for legal market customers.

● **Comment...** It is still less than a year since Mr Garton's predecessor John Wilde left AIM. To paraphrase Oscar Wilde (no relation) to lose one managing director may be regarded as a misfortune, to lose two looks like carelessness.

44 PERCENT READ LTi

Independent research conducted by a major firm of chartered accountants into the use of IT by the legal profession has found that 44 percent of law firms in the sample said their understanding of IT had been increased through subscription to Legal Technology Insider. The publisher's own research shows **LTi** is now the most widely read legal IT publication in Europe.

Russell Jones takes Elite

Russell Jones & Walker has ordered the Elite practice management system to replace its ageing Kisol accounts software. RJW will be running Elite across a Windows NT network with Informix as the core database.

How to survive

Irwin Associates' IT security guide "How to survive a computer disaster" is now available on the firm's web site at http://ourworld. compuserve.com/ homepages/irwin

LSSA reports major interest

LSSA (the Legal Software Suppliers Association) says the "awareness" campaign it has been running in the *Law Society's Gazette* **has been a success and generated "a large number" of enquiries from both law firms and other IT suppliers.**

BUTTERWORTHS SAY WE ARE NOT THE COOKIE MONSTER

Butterworths has responded to criticisms of its use of "cookies" in its *Butterworths Direct* web-based information service (see **LTi** Issue 61). According to electronic business development manager Nich Shepheard, far from snooping around users' PCs and compromising their systems' security, cookies actually make life easier by storing pieces of information, such as passwords, user names and preferences, so users don't have to go through the full login procedure each time they want to access the service.

Mr Shepheard adds that criticism of Butterworths' reluctance to negotiate concurrent user licences is unfair, for while it may be common practice for legal accounts and case management systems, within the mainstream software industry licensing is based on a per-user basis.

"I sit here using MS Word 97, not sold on a concurrent user licence, which is running on Windows NT 4 Workstation, not sold on a concurrent user licence. On my hard disk are programs from a host of other companies, none of whom offer me a concurrent user licence," says Shepheard.

● **Comment...** This controversy looks set to run and run. One reader says the Butterworths' approach does not take into account that although users may not object to receiving cookies, their PCs may be set to regularly clear out cookies.

A further complaint is that cookies are inconvenient for firms with more than one office where the same user may, at different times, want to access the service from different PCs or, alternatively, from a laptop or from home.

As another reader puts it, "Why can't Butterworths use the same user name plus password verification login methods of other internet information services, such as Gee and ICC?"

By way of redressing the balance, a director with another legal publisher said his company would continue to use ➥

cookies until "you can trust solicitors not to cheat by buying a specific number of user licences and then giving the login details to everyone on the network."

This may seem a foul slur on the legal profession but **LTi** recalls a partner with one firm explaining in all seriousness that, because they were officers of the High Court, solicitors were exempt from the provisions of the 1985 *Copyright (Computer Software) Amendment Act.*

● For more information about cookies visit http://www netscape.com/assist/ security/ faqs/cookies.html or http://www. cookiecentral.com/ And if cookies are such a bad thing, why do some law firm sites, such as Bird & Bird (http://www. twobirds.com), also use them?

JURASSIC PICK

Having alienated almost its entire user base of law firms within the space of a few weeks, Applied Computer Expertise has turned its customer relations skills onto the Bar and is now upsetting them.

Having first offered chambers a free upgrade from their old Pick and Unix based systems to the new Infinity for Windows software, ACE is now warning users that it cannot guarantee the Y2K compliancy of their existing hardware.

Coming on top of delays in delivering the new Windows product – it is now promised for August but one set, 5 Raymond Buildings, has already thrown out a pre-release version – a growing number of ACE users are moving to the rival Windows system from Meridian Law.

Meridian, which only entered the Bar market in late 1994 to challenge the ACE monopoly, is now on target to have over 100 sets signed up for its system by the end of the year. By **LTi** calculations this is approaching a 30 percent share of the potential Bar IT market. Meridian also says that in the last year sales have more than doubled as the rate of defections from ACE has increased. Meridian is on ✆ 0171 356 0880, ACE explains its strategy at http://www.ace2000.law.co.uk.

TFB TAKING NEW NT ORDERS AT RATE OF ONE A WEEK

Technology for Business reports sales for its new Windows NT + SQL Server based Partner for Windows integrated accounts, practice and case management system are coming in at the rate of one a week and that since its launch five months ago, 26 practices have ordered the system.

The total order value is in excess of £1.6 million, with major contracts including Jay Benning & Peltz in central London (£200K), Armitage Sykes Hall Norton in Huddersfield (£125K), Wake Smith in Sheffield (£100K) and three branch Cheshire firm Hibbert Durrad Davies (£100K). The inhouse legal department of Thames Water plc in Reading has also ordered the Partner for Windows product.

More details about the system can be found on TFB's web site at http://www.tfbplc.co.uk/tfb/legal/

EU BOOST FOR NT

The two year old EU funded *Pan European Telemation Programme* has endorsed Pilgrim's LawSoft product as its officially approved practice management system for the UK (including Scotland) and Irish legal markets.

The primary pilot for the Telemation programme in the UK is niche City of London practice Fox Williams, where the LawSoft system is nearing the final stages of being integrated with the firm's telecoms network. For more details visit http://www.telemation.ie

SOLEX - AXXIA OUT, RIVALS CELEBRATE

Mainstream legal systems market leader Axxia has announced it is quitting the *SOLEX* event and will not be returning to the Barbican in 1999. Axxia, whose double-decker stand has dominated ➡

the exhibition hall in recent years, says it feels attending the event is no longer the best use of its marketing budget. Although the company still plans to exhibit at smaller events, such as GMEX in Manchester and the Law Society of Scotland conference, managing director Stuart Holden said he expects Axxia to focus more on smaller seminars in more convivial surroundings.

● **Comment… LTi** asked other major legal IT suppliers if Axxia's decision might prompt them to also quit the event. The universal response was "no". While all agreed the Barbican is a less-than-ideal environment and that visitor attendance was disappointing this year, they also all said it was still such a high profile event in the legal IT world that the benefits far outweighed the disadvantages. Two also went so far as to say Axxia's departure would be a blessing as their stands would no longer be overshadowed by Axxia's presence.

CALL FOR LAW SOCIETY Y2K MOVE

In an open email sent to the English Law Society, Sherwin Oliver managing partner Nigel Steward says it would "be a great service" if Chancery Lane could "collate, maintain and publish information" about the Year 2000 compliance of those "once removed" service suppliers, agencies and organisations on whom almost the entire legal profession relies.

Mr Steward suggests these include the Courts Service, the Legal Aid Board, Companies House, the Land Registry and the Land Charges Registry. **LTi** suggests two other names to add to this list are the Hays DX service and the Law Society.

● **Euro compliance** Software house Adobe has produced a new family of PostScript printer fonts for all Windows systems that includes the Euro symbol. The fonts can be downloaded free of charge from http://www.adobe.co.uk or call ✆ 0870 606 0325 for a copy on disk.

Mental health firm orders Videss

Newcastle-upon-Tyne law firm David Gray & Co, which has recently won a legal aid franchise to handle Mental Health Act work, has just completed the first phase of a major IT upgrade project by installing the Videss Legal Office accounts and case management system.

The system, which will eventually be used by over 50 fee earners and staff, is running on an NT network. Videss is on ✆ 01274 851 577 or visit www.videss.co.uk

Costs software upgrade

To assist with the preparation of legal aid claim forms, the Costs Plus taxation costing and billing software from Wordwright Associates (✆ 01473 212752) has been upgraded to provide improved data export facilities and integrated narrative text editing.

Resolution wins Rakisons

Chancery Lane law firm Rakisons is to spend £600,000 on a new practice management system. The firm has chosen the Windows NT-based FirmWare product from Resolutions Systems.

Rakisons say a key feature of the project will be the close integration with Microsoft's Exchange messaging software so all communications services, including telephones, will be part of the same physical network infrastructure as the practice management system.

Rakisons also plans to allow both mobile fee earners and clients remote access to relevant information and applications, where appropriate, over the Internet.

Resolution can be found at http://www. resolutionsystems. co.uk **and on** ✆ **0181 665 5050.**

WORDPERFECT TO BE COMEBACK KID ?

After spending the last two years giving a good impression of being dead to the world, WordPerfect, the legal profession's one-time favourite wordprocessing package, looks to be staging a comeback.

Users are reporting to **LTi** that in the latest version of WordPerfect Suite 8 file compatibility to and from Microsoft Word 97 (including exporting documents in RTF format) has been greatly enhanced, as has support for third-party document management systems, including Worldox, DOCS Open, GroupWise and Soft Solutions.

Suite 8 also includes the Corel Barista web page development application and synchronisation with PalmPilot hand held computers. Existing users of Suite 8 can upgrade their software to include the latest conversion filters and document management features by downloading Service Pack 4 from the web at http:// www.corel.com/support/ftpsite/ index.htm

● **Comment...** With reports suggesting the next version of WordPerfect (Suite 9, due later this year) will be a "Microsoft Office killer", the message for WordPerfect users seems to be: if you have not yet moved to Word, upgrade to WordPerfect 8.

● **Microsoft** will begin the first beta testing of Office 2000, its upgrade to Office 97, in July. The product will use HTML as a common file format so all documents created can be automatically saved to a web site or intranet pages. Spring 1999 is the expected release date.

Users of Office 97 might like to note Microsoft has produced a free service release which includes a number of bug fixes. A full fact sheet is available from http://www.microsoft.com/office/office 97/servicerelease/sr2/fact.asp

● **Lotus** will begin shipping the latest version of its office automation package SmartSuite Millennium in July. Along with Office 97 file compatibility, it will also use HTML as a standard file format for users wanting to develop web and ➡

➡ intranet documents and offer integration with IBM's ViaVoice speech recognition system, so it will be possible to dictate figures directly into Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheets.

● **Y2K** SmartSuite Millennium uses the "sliding window" approach to the Year 2000 by defining double digit date formats according to a 100-year window around a current date that looks 19 years into the future and 80 years into the past. Thus 29/06/19 would be recognised as 1919 while 29/06/17 would be 2017.

HAPPY TALK

More developments on the speech recognition systems front...

● **IBM** has announced ViaVoice 98. This is a Windows 98-ready application that features a number of enhancements including improved compatibility with Word 97 and "natural language commands" so the software will understand spoken instructions, such as "double space this paragraph".

ViaVoice 98 is available in two versions: the Executive Edition, which will be available from July price £139, and the entry level Home Edition, available in September, price £49.

● **Philips** has announced FreeSpeech 98, a new speech-to-text continuous voice recognition product for the home and small office PC markets. Currently the product is only available in a "US American" version (this can be purchased over the internet for $39 from http://www. freespeech98.com) but a "British English" version will be launched in the UK later this year.

● **Dictaphone** has launched Boomerang 2.0, a new Windows 95 version of its voice messaging and dictation system. The new system includes IBM's ViaVoice speech recognition software and is currently only available in the USA but is also expected to be commercially available in the UK later this year. Boomerang includes a handheld microphone with an audio playback facility.

LEGAL SERVICES BUYERS WANT INTERACTION

According to the results of a new survey conducted by research consultancy CSS, over 80 percent of the heads of inhouse legal departments and other major buyers of legal services in the UK expect technology will significantly change the way legal services are provided.

Over half of those expecting change are interested in faster and more efficient communications, particularly greater use of email. Surprisingly, the survey noted that very few respondents were concerned about email confidentiality.

Perhaps more significantly, the survey also found that a high proportion of respondents "spontaneously" volunteered the opinion they would like the law firms they used to deliver better technological solutions. One criticism made is that a lot of law firm web sites contain just advertorial "window dressing" rather than informative legal material.

Along with better communications, two other technologies currently attracting the interest of legal services buyers were the ability to download precedents and other legal documents directly from the internet and being able to access law firm online information and library services.

Both Linklaters' *Blue Flag* and Clifford Chance's *NextLaw* services were mentioned as possible models. Or, as one respondent put it: "Being an inhouse lawyer, the thing you lack is access to a library, so if that is something outside law firms can sell you, that makes quite a lot of sense. It won't reduce the amount of work you give them and in fact it means you spot more issues."

In conclusion, CSS says that in the past two years since the last survey was conducted "there has been a significant attitudinal shift and technology is now a major issue". With "significant numbers" of inhouse lawyers already using the internet and a massive 73 percent ➡

planning to make greater use of it during the next twelve months "this suggests fast change and law firms will have to react quickly to keep up with expectations".

● The IT findings represent just one element of the CSS report *Image & Performance of Legal Advisers 1998*, which examines the whole issue of why inhouse lawyers choose and use external law firms. A digest of the report's findings is available, price £700, from CSS on ✆ 0181 332 0808.

WORLDOX FINALISES UK DISTRIBUTION

Despite regularly receiving rave reviews in US surveys of document management systems, the Worldox system from World Software has never made much impact on the UK legal market. But this could be about to change as earlier this month World Software formally appointed SCS, a part of the Systematic Group, as its official UK distributor.

SCS has already won orders to put Worldox into Paisner & Co and Boodle Hatfield against competition from DOCS Open and is understood to have the system under evaluation in another eight solicitors practices.

Engin Yilmaz of SCS says Worldox features attracting attention include: reliability – the application is mirrored on the client hard disk and will still run even if the server is down; the fact it is not dependent upon SQL Server; and price – it is sold on the basis of concurrent user licences, starting at £250 per user.

● The Potters Bar based Systematic Group specialises in what it describes as "knowledge management" systems. Recent projects have included developing an intranet for ITN and motor mechanics CD-Roms for the RAC. The company is also building an intranet for a former member of the M5 group of law firms. For further details call ✆ 01707 824824 or visit http://www.syscorp.co.uk

Windows 98 now available

Last Thursday (25th June), Microsoft launched Windows 98, its upgrade to the Windows 95 operating system. By shopping around you should be able to buy a Windows 95 to 98 upgrade for about £60 while the full version is retailing for between £110 and £160.

● Do you need the upgrade? Opinion is split between those who say it is just a few add-ons and bug fixes to the later version of Windows 95 - you can download that functionality free from Microsoft's web site at http://www.eu.microsoft.com/windows/downloads/contents/updates/W95OSR2/default.asp **- and those who believe it offers significant enhancements in terms of support for more hardware devices, better use of hard disk space plus the ability to load applications 36 percent faster. The next issue of LTi will consider these issues in more detail.**

And justice for all

The Lord Chancellor's Department has set up an IT strategy group to produce a 5-to-15 year plan for the use of IT in support of the civil justice system.

The group, whose members include former Appeal Court judge and IT & the Courts Committee (ITAC) chairman Sir Brian Neill and *The Future of Law* author Richard Susskind, will produce a preliminary report by September. The LCD web site is at http://www.open.gov.uk/lcd

● The Crown Office & Procurator Fiscal Service in Scotland has awarded IT supplier Bull a £1million contract to provide replacement Unix systems and support services across the department's 45 offices. Bull, whose systems are also used by the Scottish Criminal Record Office, beat incumbent supplier IBM in a competitive tender.

ADD SPICE TO FULLY BENEFIT FROM BENEFITS PACKAGES

According to a recent survey the rate of IT staff turnover has increased by as much as 40 percent in the last year. One of the weapons at a firm's disposal to help find and retain staff is the benefits package, everything outside of the employee's basic salary. But, warns Longbridge consultant Craig Coverman, benefits are often under-estimated or overlooked by employers in favour of a fixation with salary levels.

The package many firms are offering IT specialists today will include: PRP (soon to be phased out), 20-25 days holiday (increasing with length of service), contributory pension scheme and life assurances, interest free season ticket loan, discounted gym membership, private health insurance (PHI – often after a qualifying period) and luncheon vouchers (or subsidised restaurant).

Of the above, any candidate worth their salt will be most interested in the pension arrangements, PHI and length of holidays. We never fail to be amazed at how difficult it is to move candidates from one job to another if they have generous holiday allowances.

Other benefits might include travel or relocation, paid overtime or on-call, laptops and mobile phones, cars or car allowances (rare in law firms), non-contributory pensions, child care/creche facilities and home based working. It is worth offering a basket of benefits from which individuals can choose the ones most applicable to their needs and motivations.

There are, however, other issues that need to be considered to really add spice to a package. The first of these is training. According to *Computer Weekly* this is the number one incentive to recruit and retain IT staff. One of our legal clients now offers a training commitment (including Microsoft accreditation) worth a minimum of £5000 per annum to every member of the IT team. ➡

➡ Do they have a problem recruiting? Yes, but not as much as other firms. Do they lose people once they have gained the training? Again, yes, but at a lower rate of attrition than other firms.

One relatively new development is bonuses, whether guaranteed or discretionary, project or performance related. This is an area of particular relevance to law firms who cannot give share options and rarely give a share of the profits (barring PRP).

In the region of 20 to 25 percent of companies now offer bonuses as part of the standard benefits package, and use them as a means of retaining staff. There are two views on bonuses.

Some employers take the view that since other organisations are already providing bonuses, then they should for fear of losing out. Others believe bonuses set a bad precedent as there will always be the likes of banks who can afford to pay bigger bonuses than the rest of the market.

Apart from the risk of fuelling a wages spiral, bonuses can also have the effect of making other employees, who are less crucial to projects, feel devalued. For this reason it may be preferable to link bonuses to training issues.

This way everyone benefits. The staff get their bonuses. The firm gets a higher skilled workforce. And, perhaps most importantly of all, the whole training and benefits package can be rolled into the overall "culture" of the firm. Along with appraisals, career planning, special projects, job swapping and, of course, salaries broadly in line with market rates, this can all help form an environment that is difficult to leave.

One final point on bonuses, try not to give them to all the IT staff at the same time. There are too many stories in the commercial sector of whole departments walking out the door as soon as bonuses hit their bank accounts. Instead, spread them out over 12 months, for example you could give them to individuals on their anniversary of joining the firm.

A TALE OF TWO WEB SITES

Kaye Tesler & Co has an interactive web site at http://www.kt.uklaw.net that offers a number of legal services, including will drafting. Last Wednesday, when the firm was carrying out a routine housekeeping exercise on its secure email server, staff found a number of files in a default directory containing new instructions for the Dewsbury firm of Chadwick Lawrence.

What puzzled Kaye Tesler was how did the files get there? There are no business links between the two firms, the Kaye Tesler server does not act as a host for the Chadwick Lawrence web site and the Dewsbury firm does not even use the NKT interactive system now employed by Kaye Tesler and other law firms.

LTi has looked into the problem and thinks it may have an answer. If you visit the Chadwick Lawrence web site at http://www.chad-law.co.uk, click the "contact" button in the wills section and then use the browser menu to view "source", the page's underlying HTML code will be revealed.

Among the HTML is the following line of coding <form action="https:// www. uklaw.net/FormsBin/doform.dll" method="POST"> which is designed to send the completed contents of online fill-in forms back to the host web site operator for processing.

Although this approach is widely used on interactive sites, curiously Chadwick Lawrence has not given its own URL address details but that of another law firm, namely Kaye Tesler & Co.

Chadwick Lawrence has been invited to explain why its site (which carries all the usual copyright notices and states it has been developed by the firm's resources manager Michael Blackburn) contains code relating to an entirely different law firm but at the time of going to press the firm had not responded.

Kaye Tesler senior partner Michael Kaye has his own suspicions and says he is "livid". He also adds that while he ➡

realises there is no copyright on ideas, he will be investigating the legal options open to him.

In the meantime prospective clients of Chadwick Lawrence will presumably continue to submit personal information via the interactive facility on the firm's web site – and then wonder why they never hear anything further.

● **Comment...** It is common practice for web site designers to use the "source" command to reveal the underlying HTML code to see how a particular look or effect has been achieved. However, there can be situations when the "borrowing" of ideas gets a little too close for comfort.

For example barrister Nick Lockett discovered last year that an American lawyer had not only copied the whole design and content of his web site but had even included the photograph of Mr Lockett in his wig and gown that appeared on the site's home page.

INTERNET NEWS BRIEFS

● **BT** is to launch a new service in September called BT Click that will offer a subscription-free pay-as-you-go internet access service as an alternative to taking out monthly subscriptions with an internet service provider. The cost is expected to be as little as 1p per minute on top of the normal BT local call rate and users will also be able to sign up for BT's free email service. BT is initially aiming the service at the two million people in the UK who have internet-ready PCs but have not yet signed up with ISPs.

● **Cable London**, which provides cable TV and phone services in north London, has produced a new report called *Telecoms for the legal sector* which looks at the potential impact of the internet, ISDN, email and video conferencing on the legal profession. Copies are available free of charge by calling Tara McKnight on ✆ 0500 300116 or visit http://www.cablelondon.co.uk/business ➡

● **Orange**, the mobile phone group, says it believes the future is "wire free" and that fixed phones will eventually become redundant and be replaced by mobile units. The company also plans to introduce new models over the next 18 months that will include mobile video phones and full colour web browsing.

● **Seen on the web** Law publisher Legalease's new legal IT web site at http://www.legal-it.com will not now go live until September. The Law Society Gazette web site can now be accessed directly at http://www.lawgazette.co.uk rather than via the main Law Society site. And, the new web site of insurance specialists Kennedys at http://www.kennedys-law.com offers online registration for its seminar programme.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

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STOP PRESS... LAWYER HIFAL IT AWARD WINNERS

Last Thursday the winners of the annual Lawyer/HIFAL awards were announced. In the IT categories, prizes went to...

● **Best Use of IT** Lovell White Durrant took the Gold Award for its *Total Access* know-how system.

D J Freeman took Silver for its "deeds on disc" initiative, which has created a searchable electronic archive of title deeds on CD-Rom.

And, the Bronze Award went to niche City firm Davis & Co, which makes widespread use of telecommuting, intranet and extranet to create a virtual office. (This category was sponsored by Longbridge International.)

● **Best Use of Multimedia** The College of Law took Gold for its CD-Rom based employment law training course which uses text, sound, graphics and video.

The Silver Award went to Kaye Tesler & Co for its interactive web site which allows clients to submit out-of-hours instructions by the internet.

The Bronze Award went to Linklaters for its *Blue Flag* service (see below)

● **Innovation Award** The winner of this new category was Linklaters, who received the Gold Award for its *Blue Flag* internet-based and "commoditised" legal advice and information service.

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