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

In association with

LONGBRIDGE
INTERNATIONAL PLC

In this edition

UNIX - DEAD BUT IT WON'T LIE DOWN

With the NatWest Bank confirming that its recent cash machine problems were caused by bugs in the version of Windows NT 3.5.1 it was running, there are many Unix users in the legal market having to restrain themselves from shouting "We told you so" at advocates of the NT system.

Stuart Holden, the managing director of legal systems supplier Axxia, a company which has come in for criticism in recent weeks for its NT strategy, says the recent NT horror stories fully justify Axxia's "cautious" approach and reluctance to abandon Unix.

Holden suggests the key question is not "is Unix dead?" but "is NT ready to replace Unix?"

"This is a serious issue for debate," says Holden, "because given the number of stories and reports of scalability and reliability problems with NT and on-going delays with NT 5.0 there is a danger that by responding to market hype some firms could be endangering their businesses."

This view is echoed by IT consultant John Irving who warns that just because some City firms with large IT departments are taking the NT route, this does not mean all law firms should follow suit.

Unix versus NT is not just an IT issue says Irving. "Firms should base their IT strategies on their business requirements not hype. With a nationwide IT skills shortage, before embarking upon any project firms need to consider if they have or can find the IT staff to implement it.

"It is the difference between being leading edge and bleeding edge. For some firms NT is at the moment a step too far," adds Irving.   *...Continued on page 6* ➤

COMING SOON... INSIDER RELEASE 2.0

This is the last issue of Legal Technology Insider before the Long Vacation but it will be back again on Monday 7th September.

Over the next few weeks **LTi** will be redesigned to increase the volume of material each issue contains and to improve readability.

Along with changes to the paper edition of **LTi**, the accompanying web site at http://www.cloudnine.co.uk will be given a new look and enhanced with a search engine to create a "portal" to a comprehensive online directory of legal technology information.

STOP PRESS... WORDPERFECT BEEFS UP UK PRESENCE

Within the last few days Corel has appointed Bernard Stebbing as its new UK corporate licensing manager. Based at the company's offices in Slough, one of his main roles will be looking after sales of WordPerfect in the legal market.

Mr Stebbing told **LTi** one of his first tasks would be to clarify the position on the future availability of copies of WordPerfect for the Unix platform.

● Corel has provided further clarification on the recent large number of job losses at its WordPerfect development centre in Orem, Utah. The lay-offs were made as part of a cost cutting exercise that will see the company concentrating all future development work at its Ottawa headquarters. But, the company says the future of the forthcoming WordPerfect Version 9.0 is secure because it has retained the services of all key development staff working on the project.

More AIM sales

AIM's NT-based Evolution Client/Server system has been ordered by Downs in Dorking, Norman Astill & Sons in Leicester and Neves, which has three offices in the Luton area.

● **AIM's developers are now working on upgrades to both Evolution Client/Server and the older Unix product Evolution Classic that will allow these systems to support the Euro and multi currency accounting. A delivery date is yet to be announced but is expected to be no later than April 1999.**

Equitrac upgrade

Equitrac has released PrintLog 3.1, a new version of its software to track the use of network copiers and laser printers for Windows 95/98 and NT based PCs. For more details visit http://www. equitrac.com

PROSPECTS IMPROVING FOR KEYSTONE ?

After a rocky start to the year, Keystone Software plc has shown it can deliver the goods and has successfully completed the first UK implementation of its practice management product at City law firm D J Freeman.

The official "go live" date was achieved on schedule on 1st July but D J Freeman and Keystone delayed making a formal announcement for another fortnight to allow them to monitor the performance of the system. Keystone says its two other UK sites – Masons and Stephenson Harwood – are both on course to go live before the end of the year.

● **Comment...** After Ashurst Morris Crisp threw out its Keystone system amid a hail of bad publicity earlier this year, the rumour going round the market was that Keystone was little more than vapourware.

Keystone's marketing director Kaye Sycamore told **LTi** it was inevitable such rumours would spread in the aftermath of the AMC bust-up but she was certain confidence would return once Keystone had a successful UK implementation under its belt.

Sycamore's view is once prospects see just what Keystone really can deliver to firms such as D J Freeman, the company will be confirmed as a viable challenger to Elite and CMS. This may seem like wishful thinking but it is worth remembering that even Elite once had severe credibility problems when some of its earlier implementations turned sour.

NORWICH FIRMS ESCAPES FROM ACE

Norwich law firm Rogers & Norton has awarded Linetime the contract to supply replacement accounts and case management systems, following the recent decision by ACE to pull out of ➡

the solicitors IT market. Rogers & Norton will be using Linetime's Dataflow case management software, running on a 60-user Unix network, to support their personal injury, uninsured loss recovery and conveyancing/remortgaging services.

● **Comment...** There are a lot of hard luck stories emerging from the ACE debacle but Rogers & Norton do deserve special sympathy.

The firm was never very enthusiastic about the Infinity accounts software and only signed up with ACE because of the benefits promised by the Strategy Planner case management system. It was only then they discovered the product was barely out of its development phase and they were to be the pilot site.

ICL BARGAIN CORNER

ICL has picked up a bargain in its deal with the English Law Society and the launch of the new *SolicIT* mail order catalogue. Despite being able to benefit from the Law Society "branding" – the Society's crest is plastered all over the catalogue – ICL apparently paid Chancery Lane precisely nothing for the privilege.

According to one council member, because of the financial uncertainties surrounding the project – in otherwords, would anyone buy anything from the catalogue – it was thought inappropriate to charge ICL a fee. Furthermore, because an earlier proposed catalogue project with another supplier would have actually cost the Law Society money to run, it was felt the ICL deal offered a commercially attractive no cost, no risk alternative.

● ICL admits some of the prices are wrong and also warns that during the life of the catalogue some of the prices and hardware specifications will inevitably change. Before placing an order users should first call the *SolicIT* enquiry line for the latest prices.

● **STAR buy** In another bargain oriented move, ICL has also launched a new ➡

➡ service called STAR (Second Time Around) which will sell recycled PCs at rock-bottom prices. Apparently ICL wants to do for PCs what Vauxhall's Network Q scheme has done for second hand cars.

ICL is setting up a nationwide dealer network and will only be selling models from well-known manufacturers, such as Compaq, IBM and Fujitsu. Each machine will be wiped of data, refurbished, fitted with new keyboard and mouse, loaded with a copy of the Windows operating system and sold with a 90-day warranty.

ICL expects 486 machines to retail for £199 including VAT, rising to £349 for more recent Pentium models.

● As reported in **LTi 60**, if the proverbial boot is on the other foot and a law firm wants to get rid of a number of older PCs, there are companies such as Technical Asset Management (✆ 01707 333555) that can dispose of them securely and cost effectively.

AXXIA REORGANISES SCOTTISH BUSINESS

In a bid to emulate its success in the Irish legal IT market, where half of that country's top 20 law firms use Arista software, Axxia Systems has announced a new initiative designed to increase its presence in Scotland.

Axxia has just signed-up Edinburgh based systems house John Richard & Co (Software) Ltd to act as its new Scottish distributor and area consultant. The move follows the end of the company's successful relationship with Beltane Technologies, who helped Axxia establish a foothold in the region and win major customers such as The Morton Fraser Partnership and Semple Fraser.

According to Axxia sales & marketing director Bill Kirby: "Our future strategy was not deemed compatible with the direction Beltane now want to take, hence the decision to end what has been a fruitful relationship." **LTi** understands Beltane, which was set up by former ➡

➡ H G Usher director Charles Duthie, wants to "refocus" its energy on developing its front office systems and training business whereas Axxia wants to take "a more aggressive stance in a market still rich in potential".

All three companies will work closely together to ensure a smooth handover of responsibility and to safeguard existing and prospective customer relations. Axxia and John Richard & Co will also offer their Scottish customers the option of contracting directly with Axxia or the distributor, whichever way the customer is most comfortable.

"We have made a very positive start in Scotland," says Kirby, "but we now need to increase our efforts to gain real market share. I am confident that John Richard & Co will offer us a new impetus. The firm is a respected systems house with a strong pedigree and vital local knowledge. They are committed to giving us comprehensive representation and every support in our bid to become Scotland's No 1 legal supplier."

● **New address** As part of the company's ongoing expansion plans, Axxia has moved to larger premises on the Twyford business park where it is currently based. Along with providing more room for its growing workforce, the premises will also house new conference, training and demonstration rooms. The new address is: Axxia House, 4 The Pavilions, Ruscombe Business Park, Twyford, Berks RG10 9NN (✆ 0118 9602602).

● **New faces** Former Andersens consultant Stephen Dreyer, last heard of in March this year when "by mutual agreement" he quit as Olswang's IT director, has been appointed as Axxia's senior projects coordinator and will head a team of 30 staff with responsibility for all aspects of implementation and customer training.

Other new faces at Axxia include Caroline Hearne who joins from Miles 33, Janet Spence previously with ACE, Sue Nuttall from AIM and former Videss project manager Jonathan Gledhill.

Next WordPerfect on the way
Corel appears to be honouring its recently stated commitment to continue supporting the WordPerfect wordprocessing product in the legal market.

One legal software house with Corel "solution partner preferred status" has not only been notified that it will "shortly" receive a beta test version of WordPerfect 9.0 but has also been given information about the intended file formats for Version 10.

Documentum buys know-how
Document management specialist Documentum has acquired Relevance Technologies of San Francisco in a move intended to add know-how management for client/server and web environments to its product portfolio. The Relevance software is described as offering "intelligent content mining" of unstructured data.

Virtual file actually complete

Solicitec has taken the first orders for its new SolCase 98 document imaging module.

Incorporating a full post room facility, the imaging module covers scanning, distribution and storage of documents within the SolCase case management system.

Solicitec technical director Neil Ewin describes the module as completing SolCase's "virtual file" concept, providing instant access to full file details, including incoming and outgoing documentation without recourse to a paper file.

For more details visit http://www. solicitec.com **or** ✆ **0113 226 2000.**

Y2K - ARE SWING DATES A VIABLE REMEDY ?

Over the last few weeks it has become apparent that the approach many developers of both systems and applications software are using to "solve" Year 2000 compliancy problems is to employ a "swing date" or "sliding window". The new Microsoft Windows 98 and Lotus SmartSuite Millennium products are just two of the latest to adopt variations on this approach.

But is it a viable option or does this method merely risk creating more problems than it solves?

The way the swing dates work is to create a 100-year wide window around a predetermined "pivot" year and then interpret all dates in relation to that fixed point.

Thus, instead of a computer having an internal clock running from 1900 to 1999, if the pivot date was set at 1940, then years ending in 40 to 99 would be recognised as 1940 to 1999, while years ending 00 to 39 would be recognised as 2000 to 2039 and firmly belonging to the 21st century.

As such this approach fools the computer and apparently overcomes Y2K problems without having to rewrite or reprogram all double digit dates into a four digit date format.

Unfortunately there is no agreement on what the pivot date should be. The result is different applications have different pivot dates – and some products further cloud the issue by allowing each user to set their own pivot dates.

Because there are currently no network management tools capable of imposing and maintaining one standard pivot date on all PCs and applications, it is conceivable that even within the same firm users may encounter data conflicts and incompatibilities caused by the difficulty in harmonising timeframes.

● **Comment...** Swing dates may seem a tempting quick fix solution to Y2K ➡

➡ compliancy but they could be replacing one problem with a fresh set of difficulties. At best they should be seen as just a temporary short-term stop-gap to buy extra time to implement the only true, long term software fix, namely "year expansion" where every double digit date is changed into a four digit format.

● **New Y2K test** The software utilities company Symantec is to launch a new program called Norton 2000 that will scan the data held in user-generated spreadsheets and databases to check for potential Year 2000 problems, such as files containing double digit date references.

Norton 2000, which will be available on the retail market from September, can scan most versions of Excel, Lotus 1-2-3, Quattro Pro, dBase, Clipper, FoxPro and Paradox. For further details visit http://www.symantec.com

FRERE CHOLMELEY SPIN OFF BUYS NORWEL PMS

As part of the manoeuvrings surrounding the planned merger of Frere Cholmeley Bischoff with Eversheds on 1st August, Frere's property and private client departments, along with partners in the firm's corporate, tax, litigation and media departments are departing to create a new practice called Forsters.

For IT support Forsters is installing Norwel's Practice Management system, running on Data General Aviion hardware, in its new Mayfair offices. As Frere was a Norwel site, part of the implementation project includes extracting the relevant matter records from the FCB accounts system and transferring them over to the Forsters' system in preparation for live running on 1st August.

Although Eversheds is an Elite site, Frere Cholmeley Bischoff's offices in Monaco and Paris will continue to run their Norwel systems until further notice.

WINDOWS 98 ALSO MEANS MORE WORK

Following the story in **LTi 64** about the pros and cons of migrating to the new Windows 98 platform, Barlow Lyde & Gilbert's IT director Brian Powell has pointed out that there could soon be an additional problem for firms now running networks of Windows 3.1 or 95 PCs.

What concerns Powell is that anyone buying new PCs in the weeks to come is likely to find them supplied ready-loaded with Windows 98.

"The result," says Powell, "is law firm IT staff are then faced with the task of having to de-install Windows 98 and install Windows 95 or 3.1." As well as costing time and money, Powell points out this also raises the sensitive practical problem of selling the extra work involved in such a project to the partnership on the strengths of what are perhaps limited tangible gains.

● **Microsoft** has produced a new guide on the subject of which is the best Windows desktop platform (Windows 95, 98, 3.1 or NT) for small business. This can be found at http://www.microsoft.com/directaccess/smallbiz/default.htm

● Research analysts the Gartner Group is recommending users not to upgrade to Windows 98 unless they have a "pressing need". Gartner also warns that Windows 98 should be installed on fresh machines rather than over existing Windows 95 installations as the latter course can create problems with the system no longer recognising some hardware and peripherals.

THIN CLIENT FUTURE LOOKING HOPEFUL

Although a growing number of law firms and IT suppliers accept that "thin client" technology is a sensible approach to computing as it allows practices to utilise dumb terminals and older PCs in a network rather than install top of the ➡

➡ range Pentiums on every desktop, uncertainties about rival standards and the risk of backing the wrong horse are undoubtedly holding back the implementation of thin client networks.

Users **LTi** has spoken to say that while the Citrix WinFrame system, with its ICA architecture, is the better product in that it offers better load balancing and wider cross platform support, they are concerned the market will eventually be dominated by Microsoft with its new Windows Terminal Server (or WTS, previously code-named Hydra) system.

But, with latest reports suggesting Microsoft is now involved in negotiations with Citrix to incorporate Citrix's new MetaFrame (previously code-named pICAsso) product within Microsoft's new Windows NT Server 5.0 operating system (scheduled to be launched in mid 1999), there is a possibility users could get the best of both worlds.

Along with better network management functions, including "shadowing" support, MetaFrame can also support non-Windows and non-PC platforms, including Windows CE, DOS, Unix, Mac and Java.

● **Thin clients on NT 4.0** Microsoft has completed beta testing its WTS system and the software has now been released for manufacturing as the new Windows Terminal Edition extension to the current Windows NT Server 4.0 operating system.

The product should commence shipping later this summer but to find out more visit the WTS web site at http://www.microsoft.com/uk/windows/nt/nts_terminal_edition.htm Citrix MetaFrame will also be available as an add-on for NT Server 4.0 Terminal Server Edition.

● **Latest Microsoft beta news** Microsoft has also released the third beta version of SQL Server 7.0. To receive an evaluation copy email Microsoft at ltdbeta@microsoft-contact.co.uk And, the first beta version of Microsoft's new Office 2000 suite is now available. For details visit http://www.microsoft.com/uk/link/news/chan/jul-office2000.htm

Context to publish law of the land

In a move the company says has been prompted by subscriber demand, Context has begun the preparation of a JUSTIS based database of all UK statute law (including Acts only in force in Scotland and Northern Ireland) from 1235 AD onward. There will also be a statutory instruments service containing the full text of all SIs from 1987.

Subscribers to Context JUSTIS case law databases will have access to hyperlinks to take them directly to a relevant statutory provision.

JUSTIS Statute Law will be available on CD-Rom from December. The first year subscription to the UK statutes archive and update is £2500. For second and subsequent years' updates the price is £800. The SI service costs £900 pa. For details call ✆ 0171 267 8989.

BIOS virus alert

Two new computer viruses have been reported since the be beginning of July. These are Marburg, a largely harmless virus accidentally distributed on the cover CD of the July 1998 issue of *PC Gamer* magazine and CIH, a far more serious threat that is able to overwrite the BIOS of certain PCs, necessitating replacement of the BIOS chip. Both can be detected by the latest edition of the Sophos Sweep virus detection software. For more details visit http://www.sophos.com

Xerox gets paginator

Xerox is adding an automatic paginator to its latest range of high volume copiers. The move follows a successful pilot at Titmuss Sainer Dechert, where it proved a viable alternative to manually stamping page numbers onto documents being prepared for court.

UNIX - DEAD BUT IT WON'T LIE DOWN

➡ *Continued from front page...* Another insight on the Unix versus NT debate is provided by Solicitec's technical director Neil Ewin: "It is not often I defend Axxia, but I do not think the issue of NT scalability is quite as black and white as it has been presented.

"No-one with the relevant experience would disagree you need a lot more RAM and processing power to support the same number of users using a database on Windows NT than you would running on Unix. Unix also supports a number of additional software features, such as fast record locking, which further improve the performance of larger databases.

"Axxia's caution about the number of users does not sound so daft," say Ewin. "At Solicitec we use a rule of thumb that if a system is going to expand beyond 100 concurrent users we recommend Unix, otherwise NT. However these limitations are going to vary from supplier to supplier depending on the underlying database technology, and the efficiency of their implementation.

"As new versions of NT and SQL Server are released by Microsoft, so some of Unix's advantages will diminish but at the moment there are still circumstances where Unix provides the better solution."

In talking to law firms that have recently moved to Windows NT, **LTi** has encountered two other frequently cited issues which can make or break the success of an implementation.

The first factor, which is particularly important for smaller firms that have only minimal inhouse IT resources and need to rely on the services of their software suppliers, is the quality of support.

Or, to put it another way, NT may be a novel technology for law firms but a lot of IT suppliers are also only just getting to grips with it.

One reader says he is not worried by the fact the network and the comms links to the branch offices frequently and

➡ ➡ inexplicably crash. What concerns him is the cause of these crashes is as much a mystery to the "experts" working for his IT supplier as it is to him.

The second factor now causing firms to regret choosing NT is the business functionality of the applications software they have purchased.

A not infrequent complaint is some NT products seem to have been rushed to market before all the development has been properly completed. The result is they lack many of the accounting features legal cashiers and bookkeepers had at their disposal in older systems and have come to rely upon.

US MODEL FOR WOOLF TO FOLLOW ?

The American Bar Association's civil litigation group has drawn up a list of voluntary guidelines on the use of technology in courts, which could provide a model for the proposed Woolf reforms in England & Wales – that is when and if the UK government ever makes the necessary funding available.

ABA litigation group chairman Gregory Joseph said it was essential to leave the guidelines as general as possible, so not to bind the courts unnecessarily. "If we had written them 25 years ago, we would have had no clue where technology would be today. Similarly, we have no clue where IT will be 25 years from now. We wanted to further the goal without getting too specific."

One of the points the guidelines make is that because PCs are now in such widespread use, serving and filing submissions on disk typically involves no difficulty for litigants yet "can substantially facilitate the work of court and counsel".

"Trials," says Joseph, "are exercises in communication and courts must be open to exercising tools that further this goal."

For a copy of the guidelines visit http://www.abanet.org/litigation/home.html

INTERNET & COMMS NEWS BRIEFS

● **New high speed link on way?** High speed wireless data communications company Tele2 UK has announced an advanced digital wireless network (ADWN) which is intended to provide smaller businesses with a permanent high speed connection to the internet without the high costs associated with leased lines.

ADWN will be launched in the Thames Valley area during August and the plan is to start rolling it out nationally during 1999. Tele2 say they intend the service to reach approximately 60 percent of the UK population by 2003.

The cost of the service will start at £65 per month for a 128kbps connection. For more details visit http://www.tele2.co.uk

● **Theodore Goddard opts for Novell** As part of a project to replace Windows 3.1 on the desktop with a managed-PC environment running Windows NT 4.0 Workstation, rather than rely on NT's own security mechanisms to provide centralised control for the 350 user network, Theodore Goddard has chosen Novell Directory Services and Novell Workstation Manager.

The firm says the main advantage over NT will be simplified management. The firm is using Novell SoftSolutions for document management and end users will be running Corel's WordPerfect Suite.

● **Blow for domain name pirates** In a Court of Appeal judgment handed down last Thursday (23rd July), the court upheld the earlier High Court decision in the "famous names" case against the One in a Million domain name company.

This granted Virgin, Marks & Spencer, BT, Ladbrokes, Sainsburys and Cellnet permanent injunctions to prevent the defendants registering internet domains incorporating trademarks and brand names belonging to the plaintiffs.

Harbottle & Lewis acted for Virgin in this case and more information about the ruling can be found on the firm's web site at http://www.harbottle.co.uk ➤

● **Prestel On-line** has upgraded its email service to allow customers to have an unlimited number of email addresses and up to five private, password-protected POP3 email boxes on one dial-up account.

Prestel, which was voted "Internet Service Provider of the Year" in 1997, believes this facility will appeal to smaller businesses, such as law firms, where multiple users share one account but still need the privacy of private mailboxes.

The price of Prestel's On-line dial-up service starts at £8.99 a month, which is currently cheaper than comparable services from Demon, BT Internet and UUNet Pipex. For details call ✆ 0990 223300 or visit http://www.prestel.co.uk.

● **More problems with Cookies** Recent issues of **LTi** have looked at some of the controversies surrounding the use of "cookies" in legal web sites however new legislation now being considered by the US House of Representatives threatens to further muddy the water.

The measure in question, the Copyright Treaties Implementation Bill (HR 2281), is intended to update US copyright legislation to bring it into line with the latest WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) recommendations. The Bill is supported by a large number of print and music industry publishers and content providers but what is causing concern within some sections of the IT industry is its broad wording and the absence of the usual "fair dealings" exceptions.

According to the latest edition of the *Internet Law Digital Newsletter* this could in theory make it illegal both to store material from a web page in a browser cache on a user's PC and to block the use of cookies if those cookies are used as part of a copyright protection system.

● **Kommunicate**, the messaging and network fax specialist, has revamped its customer training services and can now offer RightFAX users a broader range of training options. For more details call Sandy Smith on ✆ 01962 835005.

Seen on the Web

● **Client Appeal, the marketing and legal practice development consultancy run by Lawrence McNulty, now has a web site at** http://www. enablis.co.uk/client-appeal **Mr McNulty says the site will be enhanced over the coming months.**

● **The Serious Fraud Office has launched an official web site at** http:// www.sfo.gov.uk **The site contains material about the role of the SFO and different aspects of fraud, a copy of the latest SFO annual report and a guide for court witnesses appearing on behalf of the SFO.**

● **Finally, if you are planning a motoring holiday in the UK this summer, it might be worth visiting the new Highways Agency web site at** http://www. highways.gov.uk **This allows you to access route maps to check for roadworks and other obstructions that could cause delays.**

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

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Next issue...
Issue 66 of the Insider will be published on Monday 7th September.

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LEGAL IT DIARY DATES FOR AUTUMN

You may be looking forward to the long vacation but the organisers of seminars, conferences and exhibitions are already well advanced with their autumn events programmes.

● **October 21/22, The Northern Legal Office Exhibition, GMEX Centre, Manchester.** The event enjoyed moderate success when it made its debut last year and the organisers have refined the formula for 1998. More tightly focussed on technology than the Barbican, the GMEX event also features a number of regional suppliers who never exhibit at national venues. For tickets call Truemist on ✆ 0181 742 3399. Full details will appear in the next issue of **LTi**.

● **November 16, Knowledge Management in Law Firms, London.** Covering the flavour-of-the-month topic of know-how systems and chaired by Clive Whitfield Jones of Jeffrey Green Russell, Centaur (✆ 0171 434 3711) hope this conference will become a permanent fixture in the legal IT events list. For more details see the next issue of **LTi**.

● One notable exception missing from the event calendar is Forum Conferences, which has pulled out of the legal sector "to concentrate on other markets" and cancelled its planned **LITigate '98** event at the Café Royal on 26th November.

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