

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

RIVAL SECURE EMAIL SERVICES TO LAUNCH

Within the course of the next three weeks the UK legal market will see the launch of two rival secure electronic messaging services.

First off the mark, with a launch later this week at the Law Society Hall in Chancery Lane, is the E-docs electronic document exchange system. This has been developed by E-docs plc, a subsidiary of the West Yorkshire-based Robinson Group, which also runs a recruitment agency. The company has recently appointed former Axxia salesman Peter Richmond as its sales director.

The second launch, scheduled for 29th September at the Institute of Directors, is LawLink UK. This service has two elements: a web-based "portal" to a range of online services, and the SecureMail secure email service.

LawLink is a subsidiary of the Irish financial services to technology and engineering group IFG. IFG is quoted on the Dublin stock market and last year had a turnover of IR£22.7 million. Unlike E-docs, LawLink already has a track record in the secure email market and for the last couple of years has been offering a similar service to Irish lawyers in a joint-venture with the Irish Law Society.

● COMMENT

Both SecureMail and E-docs aim to provide "electronic DX" services that will include encryption protected email, full audit trails, confirmation of delivery and better handling of attachments than is possible with standard internet email. The English Law Society, which has said the creation of an electronic DX is one of its IT priorities, has been using ICL to research the market for possible service providers but is not expected to announce any further developments until later this year/early 1999.

US SYSTEM IN KEY UK WIN

City law firm Berwin Leighton has placed a 500 seat order for the InterAction "relationship management" product developed by US systems house Interface Software. The order was won by InterAction's UK distributor TiKit Ltd.

Lampport Bassitt (another TiKit site) in Southampton has already been using the InterAction system for over 15 months and Legal Technology Insider understands a number of other practices, including one "Top 10" firm, are actively considering the product. The entry level price for a 50 user InterAction licence in the UK is £9000.

The next big thing in legal software ? Page 6

PORTABLE LAW LIBRARY ON A PSION

Today sees the launch of a new electronic law library that will run on a Psion Series 5 palmtop computer.

Called the *ADL Blackstone Software Law Library*, it has been developed by Psion specialists Anya Designs, in conjunction with Blackstone Press, and contains five titles: *Blackstone's Criminal Practice 1998*, *Indices of 20th Century Case Precedents*, *Practical Guide to Family Law*, *Practical Guide to Civil Law* and *The Court Guide*.

Commenting on the project, Anya director Christine Gribbin said: "Lawyers spend a great deal of time out of the office, often working in strange locations such as courts, police stations or on trains. Most offices only have one copy of each book so having this information on something as small and accessible as a Psion is a significant step forward. Anya Designs is on: 01273 682020.

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NEVER ON A MONDAY

As from this issue, Legal Technology Insider will now appear on Wednesdays.

KEYSTONE MOVES

Keystone Software plc has moved its London operations into new premises in the City. The address is 4th Floor, 21-26 Garlick Hill, London EC4V 2AU. The new phone number is: 0171 919 5800.

Colin Morris, who heads UK operating subsidiary Keystone Solutions, says he expects to double his eight-strong team of implementation and support staff over the coming year to meet the growing demand for the product. Recent recruits include former Lawrence Graham IT director Peter Morris (no relation) who will be working on project management.

The company has also reported that a 1300 user Keystone implementation project has gone live in the five offices of Australian law firm Mallesons Stephen Jacques after just nine months - this is half the time it was expected to take.

NEW CHAIR AT LSSA

Linetime managing director John Burrill has been appointed the new chairman of the Legal Software Suppliers Association. He takes over from Tony Landes of Quill, who will now head LSSA's disciplinary committee. Mr Burrill says his main aims are to raise the Association's profile and to continue the dialogue with the Law Society.

NEWS IN BRIEF

● ELITE IN THE UK

Elite Information Systems has moved its UK office to: One Royal Exchange Avenue, Threadneedle Street, London EC3V 3LT. The new phone number is: 0171 464 4148.

● CMS HOPING TO MOVE

CMS Data has left its Fetter Lane office and is operating on a temporary basis out of 20 Dock Street, London E1 8JP, pending a move to new premises. The phone number remains: 0171 505 1200.

● FALCON FINDS NEW NEST

Falcon Software NV has moved to Kontichsesteenweg 38, 2630 Aartselaar, Belgium. Contact Louis Heymans via email: louis.heymans@falconssoft.be

OYEZ IN LITIGATION SUPPORT INITIATIVE

The OyezStraker Group, which through its Solicitors' Law Stationery Society arm is still one of the best-known names in the law office supplies and services market, has just acquired litigation support specialists Legal Technologies Ltd (LTL) for an undisclosed sum.

Legal Technologies will now operate as a subsidiary of OyezStraker with Chris Baldwin remaining as managing director of the company. Mr Baldwin will also have some responsibilities for Oyez's Turnball division, which has a substantial legal copying and appellate filing business.

Chris Baldwin told the Insider that the acquisition made a lot of sense as there was a natural synergy between LTL's activities and Oyez's specialist document production services.

"Having maintained a close relationship with Oyez for many years, the deal gives us the opportunity to increase our range of services and broaden our customer base. Using the geographical and technological infrastructure of OyezStraker, we will be able to offer services to legal practices throughout the country," said Baldwin.

● COMMENT

Legal Technologies is currently the largest litigation support services company in the UK with a turnover of approximately £2 million last year. The Insider estimates that the UK litigation support market was worth in total £7.5 million for the year 1997/98 with just four companies (Bowhawk, Elliot Slone, IGL and Legal Technologies) accounting for two-thirds of the business.

Bearing in mind that Oyez, prior to the merger with Straker, was one of the victims of the late Robert Maxwell's pension funds plundering, it is ironic that LTL first made its name in the Maxwell trial when its TrialPro system was used to provide courtroom presentations.

● Legal Technologies has recently been running a novel publicity campaign using the poster slots on the escalators at London Underground stations. The posters carry the slogan "You work too hard" and go on to suggest that lawyers should let LTL help ease their load.

ENGLISH LAW SOCIETY MOVES TO GENEVA

The English Law Society has installed Geneva Digital's new Autograph document automation software at its Redditch offices to help streamline the production and printing of annual membership forms for 71,000 solicitors and 12,000 practices. One of the main benefits is it allows the Society to send completed forms to members for signing off, whereas previously members received blank forms which then had to be filled out manually. Geneva's phone number is: 01932 252299. <http://www.geneva.co.uk>

PILGRIM AIMING TO BE MAJOR PLAYER

According to Pilgrim Systems' chairman Jim Cummings, the Edinburgh-based legal systems supplier is now on target to become a "tangible force" within both the UK and international legal IT markets.

"When we used to sell our old Advocate software," said Cummings, "we were seen as a Scottish company trying to sell English firms a system that had been developed for Scottish lawyers. Our new LawSoft product is different in that it was designed from scratch to apply the English approach to management accounting, credit control and time recording. The result is we are now being taken far more seriously and as more - and bigger - firms take an interest, so our credibility increases."

Currently Pilgrim is finalising negotiations with both one of the largest solicitors' practices in the North-East of England and a top five firm in Scotland. In addition, the Cumberland Ellis Piers site has just gone live in London, while a 30+ partner City firm (believed to be Biddle & Co) is expected to go live within the next few days.

On the wider geographic front, Pierce & Fitzgibbon in Listowel in the Irish Republic is now running the LawSoft case management module and M J O'Connor in Wexford has become the first Irish firm to implement the accounts and practice management side of LawSoft. (Both contracts came via the Dublin-based distributor Star, previously a distributor for Avenue's old Solomon product.) LawSoft is also now being used by Nairobi-based Caplan & Stratton, the largest law firm in East Africa.

Cummings concedes extra functionality still has to be added to the system before it can meet the needs of very large multinational firms but says the company is already well placed to compete with the likes of CMS and Elite in the 300+ user market.

"We have two big advantages over the competition," said Cummings. "One is we can offer an integrated case and practice management solution. The other is we have totally restructured our internal management so instead of being primarily sales oriented, we are now driven by project management, implementation and the best use of our resources. This more client-service oriented approach is already having a positive impact on our business, to the extent I predict that in three year's time Pilgrim will have floated and be operating on a global basis."

Is this the future of conveyancing ? Page 5

IT CONSULTANCY IN IRELAND

E K Solutions, set up by Eleanor Kirby, a fellow of the Irish Institute of Legal Accountants and a former financial controller/IT manager for a major Waterford firm, is now offering independent computer consultancy and support services for solicitors' practices in the Waterford/Munster area. E K Solutions can be reached on: (IR) 087-2410853.

1999 SCL AWARD UNDERWAY

The Society for Computers & Law has begun the roll-out for its 1999 award for "the most outstanding application of IT to the law". The award is open to both UK and Irish entries.

This year the judging panel is led by Ed Dean, head of technology at Lovell White Durrant. Other judges include Cameron McKenna know-how partner Melissa Hardee, Lamport Bassitt managing partner Sean Kelly and *The Times* legal correspondent Frances Gibb.

The closing date for nominations is Friday 13th November (nominations should be submitted direct to Ed Dean) and the winner will be announced at an awards ceremony at the Law Society in London on 25th January 1999. Ed Dean can be contacted on: 0171 236 0066 or email: ed.dean@lovellwhitedurrant.com The SCL also has an online entry facility. <http://www.scl.org/award>

NORWEL CHANGES

Norwel's marketing manager Alison Bagnall is leaving the company to rejoin Laserform, where she will head sales and marketing activities for Laserform's new 32-bit legal accounts software.

Peter Mckay has taken over as the sales manager in charge of Norwel's London office in Shoe Lane. He can be reached on: 0171 583 0363.

SOLICITEC OPEN FOR DOCS

Solicitec has completed development work on the integration of the company's SolCase 98 case management software and PC Docs' DOCS Open document management system. Solicitec director Neil Ewin says the advantage of this integration is it gives users the ability to locate documents not just within a specific case but across a department or a firm's entire case management archive, using a range of criteria, including full text search. Stephen Murphy of PC Docs Europe says the recent merger with Fulcrum has further strengthened the product by adding an intranet capability.

LLP TO ADD SPARKLE

The LLP Group (formerly Lloyd's of London Press) has appointed Lindsey Roberts as its new head of reference and professional publications. She takes over from Jane Cramp, who has now left the company. LLP chairman Stuart Wallis said Ms Roberts' appointment would add "some sparkle" to the group's legal publishing. LLP's major legal product launch this autumn will be the release of the *Lloyd's Law Reports* series on CD-Rom. The archive goes back to 1919 and the electronic publishing side of the venture has been handled by Context.

LAW BOOKS ONLINE

The Norrie Semple Piggot Partnership, probably best known as providers of CPD training for practitioners (other divisions within the group run a range of vocational and post graduate legal education courses) has launched what it believes is the UK's first internet-based bookshop for lawyers.

Lawbooks Online has a database of over 18,000 titles and is currently offering a 20 percent discount off all orders worth more than £1000 placed before 30th September.

- To get the best out of the Lawbooks Online database you need a fourth generation browser, ideally Netscape Navigator 4.05, with Java enabled. A large VDU screen is also recommended, not least because the site's navigation aids are subtle, verging on the obscure.

<http://www.lawbooks-online.com>

AMERICANS BUY INTO CENTAUR

Centaur Communications, the company behind *The Lawyer*, Lawtel and the annual *Information Systems for Lawyers* conference has sold a £19.5 million stake in its business to New York-based venture capital group Veronis Suhler & Associates (VS&A) Communications Partners. Another US investor, Griffin Land & Nurseries, has also increased its stake in Centaur. The privately owned Centaur group says plans to float on the Stock Exchange have been put on ice.

CONTEXT JAZZES UP THE HYPERLINK

Electronic publishing specialist Context has unveiled what it describes as a "soft" hypertext technique that can provide links between case citations or references to legislation appearing in everyday law office documents, such as emails or wordprocessed text, and the legal source material but without the need for conventional hard coded links.

Context call this "Floating J-Link", a technique evolved from an earlier dynamic document linking product Context developed to allow cross-referencing between different CD-Rom publications using the same JUSTIS interface.

Floating J-Link, which will be provided free of charge with all new CDs and upgrades running Context's 32-bit JUSTIS-5 system from early October, takes the form of a movable desktop icon. Users simply highlight a citation in the document they are working with - the document could even be a non-JUSTIS product, such as the CD version of the *All England Law Reports* - click on the J-Link icon and the software then automatically calls up the full text of the legislation or case. (If the appropriate CD-Rom is not loaded J-Link prompts the user to insert the correct disk.)

Context say that because the software has been taught to recognise a wide range of citation formats, including mnemonics, it is not confused by informal references.

- Context managing director Robin Williamson has also denied rumours that his company is to be taken over by Sweet & Maxwell. "Of course we get lots of approaches but we are profitable and we value our independence, not least because it means we can work with a broad range of legal publishers and content providers," said Williamson.

BUTTERWORTHS EXPANDS ONLINE SERVICE

Butterworths has expanded its *Butterworths Direct* web based law library with the launch of two new services: *PI Online*, which will complement the *Butterworths Personal Injury Litigation Service* and include a new quantum cases database and *Legislation Direct*. Along with an index of 17,000 Acts and statutory instruments, this will allow subscribers access to "Progress of Legislation" and "Is it in Force" databases.

<http://www.butterworths.co.uk>

See next issue for a full report

KEMP & KEMP ON CD-ROM

Sweet & Maxwell continues the roll-out of its Connections series of digital titles on CD-Rom with the launch this month of *Kemp & Kemp Personal Injury Practice*, which is based on Kemp & Kemp's *The Quantum of Damages*. The list price for an annual subscription is £320 + VAT but for the first year the service is being offered at a discount price of £270 + VAT. For a no obligation trial call: 0171 449 1111.

IS THIS THE FUTURE OF CONVEYANCING ?

In 1996 Glasgow solicitor Graeme McCormick submitted a proposal to his then colleague on the reorganisation of the firm's conveyancing activities. Seeing a reluctance to adopt his ideas, in November that year he resigned and set up his own firm. Trading under the name Conveyancing Direct, and assisted by a television advertising campaign, the new practice opened its doors for business in February 1997.

Although there are 1200 law firms in Scotland, by June Conveyancing Direct was already in the top 40 in terms of conveyancing work, by September 1997 it was in the top 10 and today it is one of the three largest conveyancing practices in Scotland handling on average 75 new sets of instructions a week.

Based on the principle that 95 percent of all residential property work is relatively straightforward, Conveyancing Direct embodies McCormick's belief that by creating a workflow to automate case handling and document production, it is possible to dramatically reduce operating costs and so be able to offer legal services at prices that seriously under-cut the competition.

In Conveyancing Direct's case this means a flat fee of just £150 (plus disbursements) for standard conveyancing transactions, which is about £100 less than the firm's nearest competitors. (Fees, incidentally, are paid in advance.)

McCormick says the reason he can afford such rates is because the firm is more efficient than the competition. "The Scottish Law Society says a conveyance should take about eight billable hours whereas we can do it in two. Yet there are no compromises in terms of the quality of service clients receive as all the legal work, such as drafting missives (contracts), is still handled by qualified solicitors."

● Conveyancing Direct's operations are based on Pilgrim Systems' LawSoft case and practice management software. The firm comprises six solicitors (two are part time), five paralegals, two "client advisers" to take and clarify the instructions from new clients, two bookkeepers and just one secretary, who handles the non-standard paperwork. To handle its growing volume of work, the firm may soon extend its 8.00am to 7.00pm opening hours until 10.00pm.
<http://www.conveyancingdirect.co.uk>

PR BY PHONE

Beattie Media in Glasgow has set up a dial-a-press release service for lawyers which aims to produce press releases within four hours of a briefing. Instructions are taken by phone and a draft is then faxed or emailed back to the solicitors' practice for approval before distribution. Payment is by credit card and the agency promises to refund all fees if the release fails to be published. Beattie say the service is designed for firms who require occasional press releases but do not justify retaining PR consultants. For details call: freephone 0800 027 0202.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

● DEFENDING YOUR DATA

Free half day seminar looking at the way law firms can maintain the security of their IT systems and data. Speakers include Robert Bond from Hobson Audley Hopkins & Wood and Morgan Bruce IT manager Richard Martin. Takes place Wednesday 30 September on HMS Belfast, moored near London Bridge on the Thames. Starts 9.30. Call Lorella Fabiano on: 0171 372 6666 for details.

● AXXIA SEMINARS

Legal IT supplier Axxia is running a series of free seminars this autumn on fee earner productivity and case management to promote its products. The series starts in London on 7th October and ends in Canterbury on 12th November. Call Claire Jones or James Lambert on: 0118 960 2602 for details.

● NORTHERN LEGAL OFFICE

The second Northern Legal Office Exhibition takes place at the GMEX Centre in Manchester on 21/22 October. The doors open at 9.30 and close at 19.00 on Wednesday and 17.00 on Thursday. Admission is free, for tickets call: 0181 742 3399.

● LEGAL MONTE CARLO 98

Major "networking" opportunity for inhouse lawyers to meet law firms pitching for corporate business. Sponsors include Axxia and speakers at the seminar programme include Richard Susskind talking about client-to-law firm direct access. The event runs from Friday 30 October to Monday 2 November. For details call: 0171 578 7235 or see <http://www.legalmontecarlo.co.uk>

● KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

One day seminar Centaur Conference on Monday 16 November looking at the role of intranets and know-how systems within law firms. Speakers from Allen & Overy, Ashurst Morris Crisp and PC Docs. The chairman is Clive Whitfield-Jones of Jeffrey Green Russell. Starts 9.30, ends 17.30. Tickets £417 + VAT. To book a place phone: 0171 970 4770.

HEALTH CHECKS

Online property news and information service *Estates Gazette Interactive* has linked up with the R M Group to offer a new pay-as-you-go service providing corporate "health checks" (recent accounts, County Court judgments etc) on prospective business partners. Prices for the service, called aRMadillo Online, range from £6-£35 per report, which is substantially cheaper than the rival Focus service. <http://www.egi.co.uk>

FREE BLUE FLAG

Until 30th September Linklaters is offering free access to the part of its Blue Flag UK web site that is carrying online commentary and analysis on the recent Treasury and FSA consultation papers relating to the new Financial Services & Markets Bill. For a password call 0171 456 3620 <http://www.blueflag.com>

US PATENT DATA

The US Patent & Trademark Office (PTO) has begun making its entire database freely available via the web. Trademark text is online this month, with patent text and trademark images to follow in November. By next spring the site will contain the full text of 2 million patents dating back to 1976 and over 800,000 registered trademarks from the late 1800s. <http://www.uspto.gov>

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

● CASE MANAGEMENT

Lindon Wood, the developer of low cost case management systems, has a new web site containing details of its latest 32-bit ODBC compliant software. <http://www.lindonwood.demon.co.uk>

● NORWICH LAWYERS

Norwich lawyers T J Shepperson & Co now have a web site. <http://www.tjshepperson.co.uk>

● KNOW-HOW SYSTEMS

The US journal *Knowledge Management World* now has a supporting web site. <http://www.kmworld.com>

THE NEXT BIG THING IN LEGAL SOFTWARE ?

According to Nathan Fineberg, after practice management, case management and document management, the next big thing in law office software will be "relationship management" systems.

As president of Interface Software, whose main product is the InterAction relationship management package, Mr Fineberg would say that, wouldn't he? There again, as the system has been bought by nearly 80 major US law firms over the last couple of years, including 26 of the *American Lawyer's* "AMLaw Top 100", and is now starting to attract the interest of a number of large firms in the UK, perhaps this claim is more than just hype.

Nate Fineberg's view is lawyers need to manage their "relationships" with clients and other business contacts with the same degree of care they currently devote to document management. "Lawyers talk about know-how being an asset but the quality of their relationship with the client is an equally important asset."

With this concept in mind, Interface designed a product that had the potential to provide all fee earners within a firm (even New York firm Skadden Arps which is now running a 2000-user InterAction site) with desktop access to all relevant up-to-the-minute information about clients.

Interestingly, although a relationship management system's natural competitors might appear to be legal marketing systems such as MarketEase or even "contact management" products such as Lotus Organiser and Microsoft Outlook, Fineberg says he finds that InterAction is increasingly being purchased by firms wanting a more focussed alternative to the marketing modules within their Elite and CMS practice management systems.

InterAction is currently available in the UK through TiKit (0171 717 1580) however Interface is planning to open a London office in 1999.

<http://www.interfacesoftware.com>

HOAXES AND SPAM

There are currently two new email hoaxes doing the rounds. One, headed "Virus Alert" warns of a hard disk wrecking virus lurking in the BUDDYLST.ZIP download file for a screen saver program featuring the frogs that appear in some Budweiser beer adverts. The other, headed "Let's all go" purports to involve a beta test of a new Microsoft email tracking system and offers \$5000 or a free expenses paid trip to Disney World if you forward the email to 15 of your friends and associates.

Although the emails have been forwarded to the *Insider* by a number of sources, including law firms, Lexis and legal headhunters Longbridge, we are sad to report these are both hoaxes. If you receive one of these messages, do not forward it, that merely propagates the hoax and adds extra strain on email servers. Instead, just delete the file.

WORDPERFECT STILL BACKING UNIX

Corel, the developers of the WordPerfect wordprocessing system, have provided a fillip for Unix users with the announcement last week that the company's core product WordPerfect 8.0 will now be available for most major Unix platforms. These include SCO Unix, Linux, IBM RS6000, Solaris, Hewlett Packard and Digital. Corel say the new Unix product contains the same functionality currently enjoyed by WordPerfect 8.0 users running Windows NT/95.

- The official distributor for WordPerfect Unix products in the UK and Ireland is Avalan Technologies. Avalan should also still be able to supply Unix versions of both WordPerfect 7.0 and WordPerfect 5.1. Contact sales director Mike Heritage on 01923 208 440 for more details or email mikeher@sbservices.co.uk

Another possible source for older WordPerfect for Unix software, including 5.1 and 6.1, is Orchid UK in Nottingham. Call Brett Critchley on 0115 973 5050.

EGAMI IN LINKLATERS DEAL

Linklaters has installed DPA-Egami's Egami Legal litigation support software in its London and Hong Kong offices. The system will allow document originals to be scanned and coded in one country and then transmitted electronically to the other location for staff to work on.

- A client server version of DPA's core electronic document management product Egami has been installed in the London offices of Berwin Leighton, where it will be used as part of a project to create a know-how library from their "bibles", and Rakisons has installed a file server version of Egami to control and manage a number of projects, including graduate recruitment.

JERSEY IT LAW GUIDE AVAILABLE ON THE WEB

The St Helier-based law firm Crills has just launched a free web-based guide to IT law from the perspective of Jersey's own unique legal jurisdiction.

Called *Cyber Loi*, the guide is primarily the work of advocate Peter Harris and covers: intellectual property, EMU, the Year 2000, data protection, the internet, telecoms, crime, employment and procedural matters. There is also a comprehensive table of cases, as well as an introductory chapter setting out the principles of Jersey law in the context of its relationship with the rest of the UK and the EU.

- There is no charge for access to this well built site. It has a logical book-like structure, easy to follow navigation aids and no extraneous graphics to distract from a high quality content that is unavailable anywhere else.

<http://www.crills.com/cyber.loi>

READER SERVICES

- **LTi-NET**

The Insider is also available electronically in an HTML file format (delivered on disk or as an email attachment) that can be accessed via internal intranets, cut and pasted into Lotus Notes databases or just read and printed from the desktop. If you have an Internet Explorer, Microsoft Outlook Express or Word 7.0 (or later) you can open the file directly by clicking on it. If you run Netscape, use the "Open File" command. LTi-NET comes complete with hypertext links. Subscription rates start at £135 (£115 + VAT). For details phone: 01379 687518.

- **INSIDER WEB SITE**

For the latest news and links to legal IT web sites visit the Insider home page.

<http://www.cloudnine.co.uk>

- **EXTRA COPIES**

Tired of waiting for the latest issue of the Insider to make its way around the office and arrive at your desktop? For details of discount rates for bulk sales and group subscriptions phone: 01379 687518.

- **E-PR@CTICE NEWSLETTERS**

These are a series of free current awareness email newsletters providing news and comment on areas of legal practice. The titles currently available are *Local Government Law Digital Newsletter* and the *Internet Law Digital Newsletter*. To subscribe, send a note of your email address to: info@cloudnine.co.uk

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● NEXT ISSUE

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LIVERPOOL FIRM HOPE FOR 50% GROWTH

Recently established Liverpool law firm JST Mackintosh has ordered the Partner for Windows case and practice management system from Technology for Business.

The firm, which has a total of 21 partners and staff, has set itself a business plan that envisages using IT to help achieve a 50 percent growth rate during the next year.

● Wake Smith in Sheffield is to upgrade to the Partner for Windows product, which they will be integrating with continuous speech recognition software. Since its launch in January, 35 firms have bought the new Windows suite with the total order value in excess of £1.6 million.

LAPTHORN JOINS WOLFPACK

Blake Laphorn, which with a total of 375 staff, including 43 partners is the largest practice on the South Coast, is spending £1 million on the installation of new case and practice management software plus associated hardware and implementation. The Videss Legal Office suite, running on a Progress database, will replace both the firm's existing Ushers system and a number of stand-alone applications. The system will be based on two file servers running Windows NT Enterprise edition. This supports Microsoft's new Cluster Server (previously called Wolfpack) technology, which Videss says provides greater network security.

NEWS IN BRIEF

● SOS MAKES IT FIVE IN A ROW

Lincoln's Inn-based Tweedie & Prideaux has become the fifth law firm to order the Practice Manager accounts system from Solicitors Own Software (SOS) following the withdrawal of ACE from the solicitors software market. The other four are: Dolmans, Kershaws, Lawford & Co and high profile media lawyers Schilling & Lom.

● CAMPBELL HOOPER SHOWS RESOLUTION

Resolution Systems has won a contract worth £250,000 from London firm Campbell Hooper to replace the practice's old Novell technology with a new Windows NT network infrastructure. The project includes installing FileNET's new Panagon document management system.

● NETWORK UPGRADE FOR LEWIS SILKIN

Mason Communications has carried out a major network upgrade for Lewis Silkin. The project included migrating the firm's main file servers to Novell Netware 4.11. This was carried out offline and installed over a weekend to minimise disruption. The upgrade will allow the firm to take advantage of Novell's Directory Services and web technology, which will support a new intranet. Mason is on: 0161 877 7808. <http://www.masoncom.com>