

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

FREESERVE IN LEGAL SERVICE GIVE-AWAY

Freeserve, the free subscription Internet services arm of the Dixons Group which expects to be worth between £1.3 and £1.5 billion when it floats on the London Stock Exchange later this month, has launched a legal services give-away.

As part of a limited-duration promotion launched last Friday, each of Freeserve's 1.25 million members will be able to download any one legal document free of charge from the service's Desktop Lawyer facility. The documents on offer include: terms and conditions, employment contracts, guarantees, leases, wills, trusts and powers of attorney. There is even an "undefended divorce pack".

All the documents have been drafted by either members of the 11 Stone Buildings barristers' chambers or solicitors belonging to the LawNet group. In addition, subscribers have access to full support services ranging from free advice on which document to select, to referral to a LawNet solicitor for one-to-one consultations.

Richard Cohen, whose company Epoch Software developed the Desktop Lawyer service, estimates the total value of legal documents available means the free offer is worth the equivalent of £100 million in billable fees.

■ COMMENT - Insider sources suggest at least two more Freeserve Desktop Lawyer-type services are currently under development, including one involving a major insurer. This surge in interest is hardly surprising given it has been estimated that within three years commoditised online legal services will account for at least 20 percent of the work currently handled by High Street firms. The challenge for conventional firms would therefore seem to be to adopt, or at least ally themselves with, online legal services if they are not to become one of the one-in-five going to the wall.

ONLINE REFERRALS LAUNCH

Bury law firm Slater Ellison and local Internet specialist Mark Davies have launched LegalHelp, a web-based referral service that aims to put Internet users with legal problems in touch with a live solicitor by phone within 30 minutes.

Davies says the service, which already has a panel of 40 firms located around the UK including Scotland, plans to extend its current nine-to-five operation to a 24-hours a day service. Davies reckons one of the advantages of the LegalHelp approach is it allows solicitors to plug into the online legal services revolution without having to invest in the creation of their own interactive web sites.

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

MASONS GOES FOR KEYSTONE BIG BANG

After an implementation period lasting 18 months, on July 8th Masons became the second UK law firm to go live with the Keystone practice management system.

Unlike DJ Freeman, which went live this time last year, the Masons' project was a multi-site implementation with the firm opting for the "big bang" approach of having its seven main offices (the London head office plus Manchester, Bristol, Leeds, Glasgow, Dublin and Brussels) all going live simultaneously. The Hong Kong office is set to follow in August.

STOP PRESS

■ STAT PLUS TO BE FREE ISP

The Stat Plus (020 8646 5500) legal stationery and business services group is to become a free Internet service provider (ISP) offering law firms Internet access, web space and a range of e-mail facilities including unlimited e-mail addresses, encryption and virus scanning.

<http://www.legalisp.net>

BACK IN SEPTEMBER

This is the last issue of Legal Technology Insider before the Long Vacation. We will resume our regular fortnightly publishing cycle in the autumn with the next issue appearing on Wednesday 8th September.

In the meantime, any breaking news stories will be reported on the Insider web site, which will also continue to carry its regularly updated features, including the virus alert service and its reviews of legal and IT web sites.

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

■ Existing LTI-NET subscribers will receive e-mail notification of new stories. If any subscribers to the paper edition of the Insider would also like to receive these stories by e-mail, please send a note of your e-mail address to:

info@legaltechnology.co.uk

US NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **LEDES BECOMES LOC** - The Legal Electronic Data Exchange Standard (LEDES), which was originally developed by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) in the United States to provide a standard format for law firm-to-client billing and payment systems, has now been adopted by the LEDES Oversight Committee (LOC). This is an 18-member consortium that includes US law firm Morgan Lewis & Bockius and legal IT supplier Elite. Although the current version of LEDES is based on ASCII, an XML format version is now also under development.

■ **BATTLE RESUMES** - Lexis-Nexis has commenced legal proceedings in an Ohio federal court against rival legal publisher West. Lexis alleges that West's online services have continued to use the Shepard's name and system for tracing case citations after the expiry of an earlier licensing agreement.

■ **PDF TAKES ON FORMS** - Cardiff Software in California has just launched PDF+Forms, a new system which it claims "bridges the data-collection gap between the Internet and paper-based forms... without the limitations of HTML".

<http://www.cardiffsw.com>

MIGRATE TO LTi-NET

An increasing number of subscribers are migrating to LTi-Net, the digital version of Legal Technology Insider. Available in an HTML file format, it can be delivered as an e-mail attachment or accessed via a secure subscriber-only web site.

LTi-NET comes complete with live hypertext links and is designed for firms wanting to access the newsletter across corporate portals, intranets and Lotus Notes databases or people who just want to be able to read and print it from the desktop, rather than wait for the paper version to make its way to them down the distribution list. All LTi-NET subscribers also get access to a web archive of back-copies of the newsletter.

Subscription rates start at £135 (inc VAT) for a single user, rising to £270 (inc VAT) for a site licence. For a free sample copy e-mail: info@legaltechnology.co.uk

NO SHAKE-OUT AMONG IT SUPPLIERS CLAIM!

According to Tom Hervey, managing director of niche debt collection software supplier Acculaw, the long-predicted shake-out among suppliers within the UK legal systems market is now unlikely to take place.

"We no longer believe the market will shake down with the disappearance of some of the myriad suppliers, which used to seem inevitable," says Hervey. "Our relationship with many of our users dates back to the 1980's and we are sure other suppliers are in the same position, with a hard core of loyal users providing a backbone of steady revenue."

■ Hervey describes Acculaw as "still gliding along quite nicely" with pre-tax profit for 1998 of well over £100,000 and "the expectation of maintaining a similar level of profitability for the foreseeable future - which ain't bad for a one man company".

Acculaw now focuses on service rather than sales but recent projects include installing 32-bit "Microsoft-centric" systems at Bond Pearce, Bevan Ashford, Last Cawthra Feather in Bradford and Western Newspapers in Bristol. The company's flagship site remains Wragge & Co, which now has over 50 Acculaw systems running a variety of applications, including uninsured loss recovery, mortgage repossession, mortgage arrears and re-mortgage documentation.

"I still consider debt collection to be genuinely specialist work," says Hervey, "which cannot easily be catered for by attempting to tweak generic case management systems. Although we have found that we can do some useful case management work by tweaking our debt collection system."

LAW SOC GUIDE ON TARGET

The second edition of the English Law Society's *Software Solutions* guide for smaller firms is on target and scheduled for launch later this year. Mitzi Wyman, who heads the Society's Law Management Section, said her team was now evaluating a short-list of 12 prospective entries for the 1999/2000 guide. The new edition will also contain material on Woolf, the latest Legal Aid Board developments and systems for sole practitioners.

■ Gary Day, who co-ordinated the project's initial stages, is currently unwell. Commiserations and get well soon.

AXXIA COMBS CELTIC FRINGE

Axxia's Bill Kirby describes its one year-old relationship with Edinburgh-based distributor John Richard & Co as an "unequaled success". Recent signings include Mitchells Robertson in Glasgow, which has ordered Arista, and Brunton Miller, also in Glasgow, and Moor & Partners of Cumbernauld, who have both ordered Eiion. In addition, two Belfast practices, Carson & McDowell and Tughan & Co, have now signed up for Eiion via John Richard & Co.

ELITE RESTRUCTURES IN RECORD YEAR

The US-based legal systems supplier Elite has restructured its operations and is claiming its best-ever trading year.

On the restructuring front, although the main trading arm remains Elite Information Systems, because the group is now focussing entirely on the legal and professional services markets, its parent company Broadway & Seymour has changed its name to the Elite Information Group. Elite continues to trade on the US NASDAQ stock market (now under the symbol ELTE) and Alan Rich, the original driving force behind the Elite legal practice management system, has joined the group's main board of directors.

In terms of trading results, the group has just signed up its 650th customer and in the year to 31st December signed 120 contracts, its best year to-date. Elite's UK and European operations accounted for 14 percent of group revenues in 1998.

In the first six months of this year, Elite has signed 46 contracts worldwide. Although David Thorpe, who heads the group's UK/European arm, admits this is "probably a little flat with law firms bolting down due to Y2K," he adds that "we are still head and shoulders more successful than our nearest competitor," namely CMS Data.

Thorpe also says that while there is currently a lot of hype surrounding the ProLaw case management system, in the US market most Elite users stick with Elite's own case management product.

THE RETURN OF THE MACK

After 20 years going it alone as a legal IT consultant Michael McDonald has teamed up with practice management consultancy Practical Solutions (0161 929 8355). High workloads and the need to provide clients with a wider range of services geared to help lawyers make more and better use of IT drove the move.

According to McDonald: "It is not just the 'boxes' that matter now. The attitude and skills of the people who use them can be a firm's strongest competitive advantage - and one that nobody else can copy."

Practical Solutions' managing consultant Allan Carton, an MBA and former practising solicitor, reckons no other legal IT consultancy can offer such a broad-based business understanding and hands-on experience of lawyers and their management teams. "IT is now critical to every lawyer's business," says Carton, "but lawyers need help to get to grips with the changes needed to achieve real improvements."

Recent and ongoing projects handled by Michael McDonald/Practical Solutions include: Cripps Harries Hall, Pickering & Butters, Foy & Co, Chaffe Street, Gosschalks, Cartwrights, Wilkinson Woodward & Ludlam, Michelmores, Manby & Steward and Dickinson Dees.

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

DEALS AND TENDERS

■ BEVAN ASHFORD in Bristol has purchased a 300 user license DOCSFulcrum knowledge management system from PC DOCS. The system will be embedded in the firm's intranet to index and search all information repositories, including Novell NDS servers, relational databases and a number of specified external web sites. Lawyers will be able to create "agents" to pro-actively notify them when new information is available and "cluster" their search results lists into related topics of information. Bevan Ashford is the sixth "top 100" UK firm to buy DOCSFulcrum since January.

■ Following VIZARD OLDHAM's demerger from VIZARDS on 1st May, the new firm has ordered a 75-user Partner for Windows case and practice management system from TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESS. The system, which runs on Windows NT, includes TFB's new Web Server "corporate portal" software that will allow major clients access to case records via an extranet. The firm is also migrating from WORDPERFECT to Microsoft WORD.

■ Leading Scottish firm MACROBERTS plus media lawyers DAVENPORT LYONS and niche City firm MAPLES TEESDALE have all placed orders for PILGRIM SYSTEMS' LawSoft practice management system. MacRoberts, a former AIM site, is scheduled to go live in November. Davenport Lyons, a former NORWEL site, has also purchased the LawSoft case management and marketing modules.

■ Following its recent success at TOMPSONS, case management systems specialist HATTON BLUE has now sold its Vectus software into BERRYMANS LACE MAWER. Berrymans (currently reported to be in merger talks with troubled insurance law firm DAVIES ARNOLD COOPER) has one of the largest defendant insurance law practices in the country and will be using Vectus to help automate the management of its insurance-based litigation caseload. The new software will eventually be installed in all seven of the firm's offices as part of a major £2 million IT upgrade project.

ARE CONSULTANTS REALLY NECESSARY ?

At a recent seminar Andrew Levison of Grant Thornton gave a presentation explaining the underlying concepts behind and workings of the tendering process that is now widely used by law firms and consultants to help select suitable IT systems.

According to Levison, this structured approach, which includes the issuing of frequently very lengthy invitations to tender (ITTs) - David Thorpe of Elite says he once received one that took over 200 hours to complete - is essential if a firm is to have clear goals and be able to approach the project objectively.

But, is the process really necessary today? One person who thinks otherwise is Richard Brockbank of Oxford Law & Computing.

According to Brockbank, whole sections of the tendering process can be skipped because the solicitors' legal IT market is so segmented that short lists of potential suppliers effectively pre-select themselves. For example, if you are looking for practice management systems suitable for large City firms, there are only four names to consider: CMS, Elite, Keystone and Resolution.

Brockbank suggests lawyers should spend less time on commissioning huge reports that only tell them what they already know and would be better served devoting their time and money to really evaluating the short-listed products.

■ COMMENT - Brockbank may have a point. It is a frequent complaint from IT vendors that having devoted considerable resources to responding to consultants' highly detailed ITTs - and in some cases even organising product presentations at a prospect's premises - they later discover they were never a serious contender and had, apparently, only been involved to help "make up the numbers".

The Insider recalls talking to a firm that long ago decided it wanted CMS Open as its next practice management system but then spent the next 18 months going through the hoops of selecting a consultant and indulging in the full Monty tendering process with half a dozen suppliers before eventually placing an order for CMS Open.

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE - HAS THE LCD MISSED THE POINT ?

In a submission to the Society for Computers & Law on the UK government's recent Community Legal Service consultation paper, solicitor Michael Kaye, who was also one of the pioneers of interactive law firm web sites and the use of videoconferencing technology by lawyers, suggests the Lord Chancellor's Department has failed to understand the scale and scope of the current IT and online services revolution.

According to Kaye there are three main flaws in the LCD's approach. The first mistake is that in failing to realise the full extent of the IT revolution, the LCD is still talking about forming "local partnerships" whereas Kaye believes these are unnecessary as Internet "booths" and videoconferencing technology offer a way of both delivering services countrywide and ensuring quality standards are maintained.

The second mistake, says Kaye, is underestimating the difficulty of obtaining information from the Internet, particularly for those members of the community who are probably most in need of legal advice and assistance. And, finally, Kaye is concerned the LCD has not appreciated that "the revolution" relates to the means of delivery of legal advice and services not to the services themselves, which Kaye believes will always require solicitors.

■ COMMENT - Some interesting ideas in this paper. Kaye is right to express concern about the fate of the so-called "digital underclass" but whether this still remains a problem once Internet access starts to be delivered via interactive TV sets in every front room remains to be seen.

The Insider is also unconvinced by Kaye's argument that the IT revolution will only affect the delivery of legal services but not the services themselves. It is no secret that much of the LCD's thinking has been influenced by Richard Susskind's book *The Future of Law* and he repeatedly warns it is "foolhardy" for any lawyers to think their practices are immune from the impact of IT or that technology could not transform the whole nature of legal services.

PILGRIM CONSULTANCY MOVE

Pilgrim Systems has opened a new consultancy division to provide its customers with a range of services including "business change" advice at a pre-sales phase through to on-going post-implementation consultancy.

The service will be headed up by Jim Currie, the former IT director at Dundas & Wilson, which is now part of Arthur Andersen's law firm network, and Helen Murray, who was previously IT Manager at specialist oil and energy practice Ledingham Chalmers. Currie is already well-known among Pilgrim users as from 1983 to 1993 he was the company's director in charge of software development.

DISCLAIMERS - WHO NEEDS THEM ?

Anyone who has received an e-mail message from either a lawyer or commercial organisation in recent months will be familiar with the increasingly lengthy "disclaimers" that appear at the bottom of these messages.

Often the disclaimer is longer than the accompanying message - the longest the Insider has received ran to over 90 words, excluding "signature" and contact details - and the language employed can verge on being intimidatory.

Typically the wording is along the lines of "This email is confidential and may be protected by legal privilege against disclosure, it is for the use of the named recipient(s) only. If you have received it in error, please notify us immediately, please do not copy or disclose its contents to any person or body, and delete it from your computer systems" but, are such terms legally enforceable or valid?

This topic was recently the subject of a debate on the LINK online discussion forum. There, although it was widely accepted that existing laws relating to copyright and privilege already prevent the unauthorised disclosure of confidential information by an unintended recipient, it was felt doubtful that a court would compel anyone to comply with the provisions about notifying senders "immediately" or deleting the messages, attached files and similar material from their systems, as the recipients were not the parties at fault.

Andrew Lutley of SMS summed up the general opinion most succinctly when he said: "In my view, these messages are a complete waste of time. They tend to be cast in rather arrogant language and certainly get up my nose by suggesting it is the recipient rather than the sender's error they have received the message. If a sender does not want it read, then he should send it to the right address in the first place! Besides, no-one bothers to put a disclaimer on letters, despite the fact they are frequently misdirected."

LAW REPORTS DIGEST REVIVED FOR THE WEB

The *Law Reports Digest* has been re-launched a mere 49 years after it was last published by the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting. As a sign of the changes in legal research methods, the *Digest* is now only available in digital format on the Internet, where it is being published exclusively on Context's new <http://www.justis.com> site.

The new database contains the citations and headnotes of all the *Law Reports* and *Weekly Law Reports* cases, and can be searched in the same way as the databases of the complete text of the reports, which are also available on JUSTIS.com. Context managing director Robin Williamson says that at £250 per annum, the *Digest* is an attractive option for those who want the benefits of searching cases electronically but don't need the full version of the reports.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **RECORD YEAR AT AVENUE** - Avenue Legal Systems has announced that its annual turnover for the year ending 30th June 1999 exceeded £5 million, this represents an increase of more than 25 percent on the previous year. Avenue has also appointed two additional salesmen and is currently recruiting a third.

■ **NEW LEGAL IT HEADHUNTER** - Last week saw the launch of LegalTech Recruitment (020 7481 6123), a new City of London-based recruitment consultancy specialising in sourcing and placing IT personnel for law firms. LegalTech director Daniel Brown says that although the company already has "an impressive list of blue chip candidates", they would still like to hear from anyone looking for a career change.

■ **COMMENT** - With Greythorn and ZMB out of the market and Longbridge keeping a low profile since the departure of Craig Coverman, QD Technology has had the legal IT recruitment market to itself for the past six months. Perhaps LegalTech are in the right place at the right time to win some business.

■ **BEAT 'EM TO THE ORDER** - Lindon Wood Consultants has won a major contract from the Beetham Organisation, a Liverpool-based property redeveloper, to supply a new project and document management system.

■ **NORWEL SIGNS FOR BSD** - Legal systems supplier Norwel, which has not exhibited at a major London IT event for several years, has signed up for a stand at next February's Legal IT 2000 exhibition at the Business Design Centre.

■ **TNFOUR IN PAISNER MIGRATION** - A new (and oddly spelled) name in the legal IT market, Tnfour Computer Systems (020 7562 2900) is currently advising Paisner & Co on the development of an Outlook 98/Internet Explorer 5.0-based intranet for the firm. Last year Tnfour worked with Paisner during its migration from DOS and Unix to a Microsoft Windows NT 4.0/BackOffice architecture. Paisner remains a Norwel PMS site.

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

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

■ WE HAVE TO LIVE NEXT DOOR TO THAT ! - The information services groups Equifax and Yellow Pages have launched a property information service called HomeSight that will allow customers to obtain reports on the previous and current use of land around their homes or properties they are considering buying.

Data is provided by Landmark, the UK's leading provider of environmental contamination and land use information. The reports, which are by post code, cover an area of up to 500 metres around a property and also include such factors as the location of local landfill sites, radon emissions and subsidence.

Equifax say the reports could be offered by solicitors as part of an overall conveyancing package. Property reports can be ordered online or via the HomeSight call centre on 01722 411188.

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

■ DATA BASE HAS NEW HOME BASE Legal systems house the Data Base has just relaunched its web site. The site, which business development director Ed Hodgson stresses is still evolving, currently contains product and service information and will eventually include e-commerce facilities, such as a secure online ordering system.

<http://www.database.co.uk/legal>

■ WANT TO PHONE HOME? - TeleAdapt, which makes a range of phone socket adaptors for laptop computers and PC card modems, is offering law firms one hour of free consultation on mobile computing and online access issues, including LAN, e-mail and web access. For details call 020 8233 3000.

<http://www.teleadapt.com>

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A TALE OF TWO WEB SITES

Two new law firm web sites have gone live within the last couple of weeks - Slough-based Harris & Cartwright show how it should be done while Thomas Eggar Church Adams, which has offices across the South-East, wins the wooden spoon for concentrating on design gimmicks at the expense of operational functionality and ease of use.

The Harris & Cartwright site has an uncluttered, logically organised and generally clean feel to it. The site does not indulge itself in meaningless graphics nor *War and Peace* length verbiage. Instead, it concentrates on the bare facts, namely what the firm can offer both its private and business clients.

Navigation around the site is excellent, there are also some very clear maps showing where the firm's various offices in Slough are located and the direct phone numbers and e-mail addresses of all the partners and offices are unmissable. The overall effect is to create the impression that this is a firm that really would like to hear about your legal problems.

As for Thomas Eggar Church Adams, it is very hard to get enthusiastic about this site because it is just so mind-numbingly slow. The culprit is a java applet, containing an unnecessary interactive contents menu, that takes minutes to download. By way of exacerbating the problem, there is virtually no onsite navigation, forcing the visitor to use the "Back" command on the browser. Unfortunately this takes you back to the home page and yet another delay while that java applet reloads.

The TECA site also contains the longest running "cookie" we have ever encountered. Apparently it will continue to operate until 27th September 2037, which will be handy if the Insider is still using the same computers to surf the web in 38 years' time.

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

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

A WEB MASTER WRITES

The Insider's caustic comments on the use "Flash" animation in law firm web sites has prompted Ben Blench, who handles web site design for Solicitec Legal Systems, to make the following comment: "I like Flash because it's fun and gives you excellent control over layout and making things fly around the place, while remaining very low on file size. It is also simple to use it to create elegant navigation and interactive stuff.

"On the otherhand, I agree it is awful having to load new plug-ins to see anything every time a new format is unleashed on the web. Given time, better connection speeds and better browser technology matters will improve, maybe. The only problem then will be restraining the designers enough to get some actual content on the sites, instead of metamorphosing logos and dancing robots!"

LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

This autumn looks like being one of the busiest periods in recent memory for legal technology-related conferences, exhibitions and events, so start pencilling in those diary dates now. Fuller details of each event will be published nearer the time.

■ **SEPTEMBER 22 & 23, LONDON** - Improving Profitability Conference and Workshop, Lord's Cricket Ground. Speakers include David Terry of Elite plus Ian Dinwiddie of Allen & Overy on using IT to improve profitability. Fees from £447 per day. Call Centaur on 0207 970 4770.

■ **SEPTEMBER 23 & 24, STRATFORD** - Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) Autumn Conference, the Moat House Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon. Along with a seminar session on "Making the most of your PC", there will also be a one-day exhibition. There are a variety of conference packages available including a £250 (+VAT) special offer for delegates registering before 31st July. Call Marlene Lord of APIL on 0115 958 0585.

■ **SEPTEMBER 29, LONDON** - CPR in Practice, Forum Hotel SW7. One day conference on the new Civil Procedure Rules, litigation, case management and the role of IT. Fees from £499 (+VAT). Call QDOS on 020 7440 8920.

■ **OCTOBER 9, LONDON** - Bar Council 1999 Conference & Exhibition, the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre. Discount rates are available for delegates booking before 31st July. Call Blair Communications on 020 7483 8411.

■ **OCTOBER 13-to-15, GLENEAGLES, SCOTLAND** - The Legal IT Forum 1999. New event being staged by *Legal Week* to provide law firm IT directors and legal systems suppliers with a mixture of formal conference sessions and informal networking opportunities. There will also be an IT exhibition. Full programme details still to be announced however speakers already signed up include Richard Susskind and Michael Mills of US mega firm Davis Polk & Wardwell. The main sponsors will be Solicitec. Although this is an invitation-only event, the buzz going around the market is that this will be *the* legal IT event of the autumn.

■ **OCTOBER 20 & 21, MANCHESTER** - SOLEX North Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition, G-MEX Centre. Entry free, for preregistration tickets call Imark on 07000 763896.

■ **OCTOBER 29-to-31, DISNEYLAND PARIS** - The Solicitors' Law Festival '99, Newport Bay Club Convention Centre. The English Law Society's annual conference gets a radical new look. Huge number of conference and seminar sessions plus exhibition, including Internet Cafe feature. Fees run from £140 to £390 plus accommodation. Discounts are available for bookings before 31st July. Call Blair Communications on 020 7483 8410.

■ **NOVEMBER 1-to-3, CHICAGO** - LegalTech conference and exhibition organised by American Lawyer Media.
<http://www.legaltechshow.com>

■ **NOVEMBER 5, DUBLIN** - LawTech '99 legal technology conference and exhibition at the Law Society of Ireland, Dublin. Call Veronic Donnelly on + 353 (0)1 6710711.

■ **NOVEMBER 9 & 10, LONDON** - The Commoditisation & Online Provision of Legal Services. Two day conference, including how-to-do-it case studies on legal e-commerce market. Further details still to be announced. Call Osney Media on 020 7880 0000.

■ **NOVEMBER 12-to-15, MONTE CARLO** - Legal Monte Carlo '99 conference and networking event for commercial law firms and inhouse legal departments. Axxia is one of the main sponsors. Call Centaur Events on 020 7970 4772.

■ **NOVEMBER 22 (provisional), BRISTOL** - Society for Computers & Law 25th Anniversary Workshops & Exhibition. Full programme and dates still to be confirmed. With the apparent demise of the Western Legal Office show, this is now the only IT event in the west country. Call SCL on 01179 237393.

■ **NOVEMBER 30 & DECEMBER 1, LONDON** - IT for the Next Generation, Radisson Portman Hotel. New two day conference and exhibition. No further details currently available. Fees from £899. Call IBC on 020 7453 2872.

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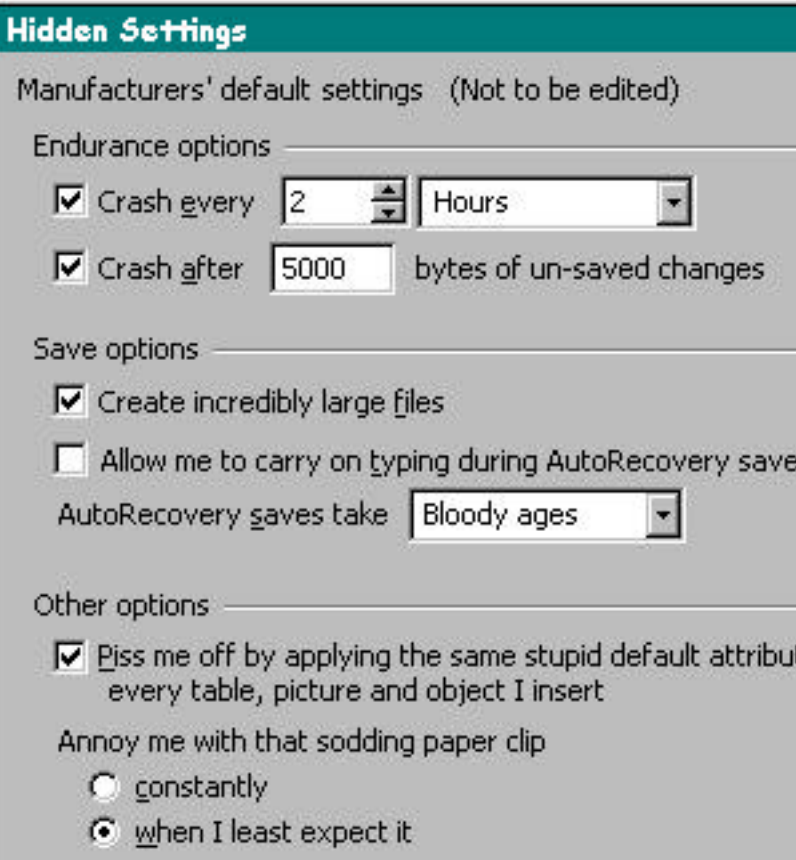
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COMPUTER LORE

■ THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

Accounts software specialist Graham Irwin has sent in this screen-shot of a settings option he claims he found buried deep within the Windows operating system. If it is genuine (as if !) it would explain all those system crashes PC users suffer. Alternatively, you could download a copy from the Insider web site, paste it onto to your desktop and give your help-desk staff something to worry about.



■ OFFBEAT SITE - ONE BODY BAG TO GO

This week's offbeat legal web site is the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office gift shop which provides an opportunity to browse through and order some really tasteful souvenirs.

How about a pair of pillow-cases decorated with a chalk outline of a murder victim? Or a travel bag in the shape and style of a body bag - a snip at US\$18. There is also a pad of Post-it notes printed with the slogan "We're dying for your business" and a cotton T-shirt featuring a picture of a pair of feet on a mortuary slab, complete with toe-tag carrying the message "Don't drink and drive". The site's navigation aids - and technically this is a good site - take the form of hyperlinked bones.

<http://www.lacoroner.com/catalog.html>

■ Gareth Morgan of Ferret Information Systems wins an Insider T-shirt for letting us know about this site. If you have come across any bizarre sites, e-mail the details to info@legaltechnology.co.uk and we will send you a T-shirt if we use it. The sites can also be accessed via the Insider home page and will be updated throughout the summer.