

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

MARTIN KAYE TAKE ASP ROUTE WITH AXXIA

In what is believed to be the first deal of its kind in the UK legal market, Axxia Systems is delivering its back office and fee earner tools to Telford solicitors Martin Kaye via an application service provider. Axxia has teamed up with Martin Kaye's preferred comms partner Hub to ASP its Artiion accounts, case management and fee earner desktop systems to the 54-strong practice.

Martin Kaye systems partner Chris Cann said the firm went the ASP route because "We were facing the classic expansion conundrum. We'd won a substantial tranche of new business, had plans to double the staff over the next year but knew our technical infrastructure would require a massive upgrade. I drew up plans on the current client server model but there were two immediate stumbling blocks - the huge cost and the on-going resources needed to manage such a sprawling network.

"One of the reasons why a conventional upgrade would have been so costly was we were running a hotchpotch of PC specifications, most necessitating either major modernisation or replacement. Add to that the desire to double the size of the practice - with a PC per person - and it seemed there was an awful lot of investment required, in effect, just to stand still. Also, we had yet to factor in total cost of ownership, which is very substantial in a desktop computing environment."

Cann describes Hub's ASP server-based solution as "in essence a miracle cure" as it removes all the technical, financial, upgrade and support issues associated with running a conventional inhouse IT facility.

Although lack of bandwidth is frequently cited as a reason why pure internet based ASP might be slow to take off in the UK, Cann reckons Hub's 512k leased line connection to Martin Kaye means users are able to work with Axxia applications at speeds equivalent to those of a Pentium III PC.

■ This form of ASP turns conventional PCs into thin client/dumb terminals. Other legal vendors have told the Insider they see the new Windows 2000 Server system, which replaces Microsoft's older Terminal Server product, as an alternative inhouse approach for firms needing to upgrade their software applications, such as moving to Word from WordPerfect, without also having to replace all their PC hardware. Changes in Microsoft's pricing structure also mean that for single location implementations 2000 Server is cheaper than the rival Citrix Winframe system.

US legal ASP service fails, see page 3

HOBSON AUDLEY IN OUTSOURCING DEAL

City of London law firm Hobson Audley has outsourced its IT facilities to the technology services supplier Tikit as part of a deal that is expected to see the firm spending in excess of £500,000 with Tikit over the next three years.

Despite the fact outsourcing and facilities management (FM) have proved a success in other markets, Hobson Audley is only the second UK law firm to have adopted this approach on a practice wide scale - the first was Clarke Willmott & Clarke in the west country.

Cynics might say this is because inhouse IT departments have a vested interest in rubbishing the benefits of FM. While you cannot expect turkeys to vote for Christmas, 2001 could be the year lawyers finally wake up to the advantages of FM. Insider sources indicate between ten and 15 law firms, as well as a set of barristers' chambers, are currently considering outsourcing.

■ Tikit has just reported a 38 percent increase in revenues for the first half of this year, suggesting it is escaping the recession hitting other legal IT vendors.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

www.legaltechnology.org

To keep up with the latest developments in legal technology and new media law between issues of this newsletter visit the Legal Technology Insider web site.

Along with regularly updated news, including daily reports from Masons' OUT-LAW.COM service, there are web bookmarks, a diary of legal IT events, the latest hoax and virus reports, an archive of back issues of the Insider, extensive search facilities plus portal links to the LSSA Solution Finder, UKLIT and ILCA web sites.

UK IT INDUSTRY GETS THE THUMBS DOWN

At a recent Berwin Leighton seminar computer industry analyst Richard Holway warned that the UK's IT sector could expect another two years of weak growth and falling profits, with many suppliers suffering losses not seen since the early 1990s. Holway says most companies will be lucky if they enjoy growth rates of 10 percent and suggests it will be the year 2002 before the market starts to recover. He blames the recession on the "Y2K micro climate" which saw customers bring forward IT investment plans to tackle the millennium bug but then freeze all new expenditure.

Holway's analysis confirms earlier predictions by the Insider that the legal IT industry is heading for a recession. Along with a number of vendors in the dead pool, who we suspect will not survive until the end of next year in their present form, the combination of slump and the new IR35 tax scheme is taking its toll on independent consultants, with several recently throwing in the towel and opting to work inhouse for either law firms or other suppliers.

L&H ON CRITICAL LIST ?

The recent saga of the speech recognition group Lernout & Hauspie, the parent of Dragon Dictate and Dictaphone, has taken a turn for the worst with directors admitting to accounting "errors and irregularities" in the financial statements for 1998, 1999 and the first half of 2000. Third quarter revenues for this year are now expected to be at least \$40 million lower than previous predictions. The company's stock has been suspended on both NASDAQ and EASDAQ - not that this matters as its shares have now fallen by about 95 percent of their value from their record high in March this year. Co-founders Jo Lernout and Pol Hauspie have stepped down as co-chairman and managing director, although they retain their seats on the board. And the company is facing a growing number of shareholder class actions in the United States, as well as having to repay \$200 million in short term debt by March.

YOU CAN ALWAYS BE CERTAIN OF DEATH AND TAXES

Excelsior LawDesk (01273 494978) launched its FormDesk IHT 2000 system at the recent STEP Scotland annual conference. The new system, which runs in conjunction with Microsoft Excel, costs from £550 (+ VAT) and is designed to handle the changes to the inheritance tax regime introduced in Scotland in late September. The product includes the new C1 and C2 forms which become mandatory from the beginning of December. Excelsior's ExecutryDesk estate accounts system, originally developed in conjunction with Murray Beith Murray, has also been updated to encompass the new forms.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ TRIAY AND TRIAY AGAIN

Elite Information Systems continues to go from strength to strength in the European legal market, its latest win being at Triay & Triay, one of the largest law firms in Europe. Elite's European general manager David Thorpe says the company is currently devoting a lot of resources to developing European-specific functionality, including the recently released French language version of the accounts system and a new EGR globalisation release that is due to be launched in a couple of months.

■ NEW FROM COPITRAK

Keeping with the European theme, Copitrak Systems, which has offices in the UK, France, Belgium and Germany, has announced two new modules for its cost recovery product range. These are: ServiceTRAK Plus, which provides additional systems administration functionality, and WEB Edit, a browser based application for editing expenses relating to telephone calls.

www.copitrak-europe.com

■ SAVING THE TREES

Glasgow solicitors Golds are using a new printer utility called FinePrint to manage their print activities, which reduces both paper and toner consumption. The application gives users greater control over layout, such as producing some documents as an A5 booklet rather than a series of A4 pages. Some users in the United States report that the software has reduced paper consumption by over 30 percent. The full version of FinePrint costs £28 (inc VAT) and is available from Software Partners (01926 842998). There is also a limited shareware version of the product that can be downloaded free of charge from the web.

www.software-partners.co.uk/printing

■ LEGAL TECH GOES EAST

Legal IT staff agency LegalTech Recruitment has moved from its offices in the City of London to new premises in the Docklands area. The new address is 46 Skylines, Limeharbour, London E4 9TS. The new phone number is 020 7510 8400.

RESSOFT HAS BIG IDEA

Legal systems supplier ResSoft has long been an advocate of "best of breed" but now the company, which in recent months has been assembling alliances with third-party integration partners including iManage, Metastorm e-work and Eureka IQ, believes it is in a position to offer law firms the next generation in practice management systems.

Provisionally called Total Practice Management, this is a super-PMS concept employing an onion-like architecture of overlapping layers that can offer a law firm everything from accounts and billing through to a knowledge management intranet/extranet portal by way of document, case and workflow management.

ResSoft business development director Neil Renfrew says the beauty of this approach is that it is all available out of a box, can be wrapped up in a web browser interface and is totally scalable - so the same system and code can run in a single site provincial practice or, as in the case of Freshfields, a global firm with 27 offices worldwide.

WILLS AND DIVORCE MOST POPULAR ONLINE BUYS

Apparently wills are the most popular legal product web users want to buy online.

Epoch Software, the company behind the Desktop Lawyer service has just published the list of its five best-selling legal documents. Topping the list are wills - since its launch in April 1999 the company has sold over 13,000 over the web. In second place is the online divorce package - at one point six percent of all UK divorce petitions were derived from this download. (Epoch is now offering free legal support over the telephone for users of this package.) Then come residential tenancy agreements, followed by general employment and consultancy contracts.

RED GORILLA IS ASP CASUALTY

The concept of ASP services may only just be catching on in the legal world (**see front page**) but already the industry has suffered its first casualty, with the improbably named US-based ASP Red Gorilla, which used to supply American lawyers and other time-based professionals with time recording and billing services via the internet, ceased trading last month, blaming a lack of revenue and the failure to raise \$10 million in third round funding.

Although the company has yet to file for bankruptcy, its chief executive has admitted "there's no money in the bank". Unlike the rival OpenAir and Elite.com Timesolv ASP services, which both charge US lawyers \$9.95 a month to use their time and billing software, Red Gorilla's business model was to provide the basic services free of charge and make its money on web advertising and optional add-on services. But apparently there were no buyers for either the extra services or the advertising.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ LAW SOCIETY GUIDE OUT NOW

The English Law Society last week published the latest edition of its *Software Solutions Guide* for smaller law firms. Thanks to sponsorship by Canon UK it is being mailed to all firms with 10 partners or less. The 2001 guide contains details of nine suppliers of practice management systems.

■ SUSSKIND MOVES TO ANDERSEN

Richard Susskind has been retained by Arthur Andersen and their legal services offshoot Andersen Legal to advise them on their IT, internet and e-commerce strategies. Susskind, previously an adviser to Clifford Chance, will continue in his capacity as IT adviser to the Lord Chief Justice. He will be working with Tony Williams, worldwide managing partner for Andersen Legal, who was also previously at Clifford Chance.

■ PROFITS UP FOR DOCS PARENT

Hummingbird, the company behind the PC Docs document management system, has reported record revenues for its trading year to 30 September 2000. Sales were \$237 million, a 43 percent increase over the previous year's \$166 million, with a net income of \$10.3 million, compared with \$0.3 million in 1999.

■ A&L GOODBODY GOES LIVE

Ireland's largest law firm A&L Goodbody has gone live with its new Keystone practice management system after an implementation project that took just nine months to complete - substantially quicker than many London law firms. Professional Plus (0207 713 8833), which has offices in London and Dublin, supplied the implementation consultancy and project management services.

■ NEW TEAM AT CONTEXT

Legal publisher Context has beefed up its management team with the appointment of Duncan Christelow as commercial director, Julia Preece as marketing director and Claire Brissenden as sales manager. The changes free Michelle Green to move from commercial director to development director so she can focus on new business and product opportunities.

DEALROOMS - THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE D-I-Y

The latest London law firm to launch a virtual dealroom is Richards Butler with its RB-AssetsOnline facility for handling property management and commercial property market transactions online. Clients and property managers will be able to retrieve and view all documents relating to a property via a web browser, as well as have access to continuous transaction reporting around the clock.

The firm says that while property is regarded as a secure asset, when viewed in terms of its liquidity the time delay involved in transactions has tended to be one of its greatest drawbacks. Along with offering 24/7 access, Richards Butler believe the new dealroom service will effectively help improve the liquidity of property assets.

The bad news is despite the rush to launch them, there remain doubts as to whether clients really want online dealrooms. For example a new survey carried out on behalf of the *Financial Times* suggests there is currently little enthusiasm. Out of a sample of 100 lawyers, less than 10 percent thought they were "very likely" to use a dealroom within the next 12 months and 71 percent said they were "unlikely" to use such a facility.

However, if you do see a role for a dealroom in your online business strategy, have a look at the DealComposer system which effectively provides a dealroom in a box facility. The UK representative is Kevin Arnold (0207 350 5300) and there are full details available on the web.

www.dealcomposer.com

MORE ONLINE LEGAL SERVICES ROLLED OUT

Christmas is coming but that has done nothing to slow the flow of new online legal services onto the UK market.

■ PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Hereford legal systems supplier Pracctice (01432 372110) is to launch an e-business referrals site for solicitors. Called OpenLawDirect, along with the usual online directory of services, law firm subscribers will have access to a secure extranet facility, where they can publish updated case progress reports that can only be accessed by their clients. Pracctice says the site will be supported by advertising.

www.openlawdirect.com

■ PUBLIC POLICY ONLINE

Clifford Chance's online business group last week unveiled Public Policy Online, a new database of EU and UK legislative, regulatory and policy developments giving users access to detailed information on policy initiatives and tracking public consultations from inception through to legislation or abandonment. The service is designed for inhouse lawyers responsible for monitoring potential changes that might affect their businesses.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ NEW WORDPERFECT PREVIEWED

Corel previewed the next version of its WordPerfect Office suite at last week's COMDEX Fall exhibition in Las Vegas. Called WordPerfect Office 2002, the new suite will feature closer integration between the different applications plus a number of add-on utilities. Although the final version is unlikely to be released in Europe until at least the summer of next year, a spokesman for Corel said it would be "the best upgrade to the application since WordPerfect 5.1".

■ BAR HAS NO INTEREST IN IT

Following reports in the press that in February this year the Bar Council had to intervene in a dispute between the Institute of Barristers Clerks and the Bar systems supplier ACE, over complaints about bugs in the company's software and its "lousy" customer support, a spokesman told the Insider there was no truth in rumours that the Bar Council had taken a financial interest in ACE and its competitor Meridian Information Systems to ensure the Bar continues to have a choice of viable IT suppliers.

■ WEB ACCESS TO LIT SUPPORT

Litigation support specialist Elliott Slone has this week been running a series of seminars in London to demonstrate the integration between the Concordance litigation support database and the new iCONNECT system. Running together, the two applications allow users to search document and image databases, plus have access to standard litigation support functionality, via a web browser, thus widening the scope for lawyers and related parties to work together on case preparation from remote locations.

■ TOP OF THE DOWNLOADS

According to online legal forms supplier Everyform, its most popular forms - the Lord Chancellor's Claims pack - has been downloaded 2906 times since the service launched just over a year ago. Divorce forms have been downloaded 2231 times and the Civil Procedure Rules pack 1883 times. The service now has over 11,000 registered users including representatives of 36 percent of all UK law firms.

SECURE ONLINE ?

At a recent conference English Law Society president Michael Napier advised delegates to "embrace the web but do it securely". To address this issue - poor security is not an option when it comes to online legal services - the legal ISP Lawyers Online is now offering a secure internet package in conjunction with Peapod Solutions.

Called SECUREInternet, it features the well known BorderWare firewall server and SecureISP, a special email and internet access account that provides all the usual features you would expect from an ISP but configured to run in conjunction with a firewall. The service supports a number of connection options including dial-up, ISDN plus newer "always open" services such as ADSL. Call Alan Tomlinson of Lawyers Online (01432 357050) for details.

■ Keeping with the security theme, the international e-commerce company WorldPay now has a number of services suitable for the legal market, including a micropayments scheme and a secure internet credit card payments system - the latter is used by the UK divorce web site Divorce-Online.co.uk.

www.worldpay.com

EVENTS DATE CLASH AVOIDED

The threat of a dates clash between two of the most important events in next year's legal technology diary - the Legal IT Forum at Gleneagles and LegalTech London has been avoided. Glen Legal will now run from 17-to-19 October 2001, with LegalTech following a week later on 24 & 25 October at the new Excel venue in Docklands. LegalTech's organisers iMark say most of the exhibition stand space at Excel has already been sold.

Meanwhile another event organiser, the Ark Group - best known in the UK for its spring knowledge management conference and *Managing Partner* magazine, has just announced it is planning to hold what it believes will be the market's first pan-European legal IT conference and exhibition. Called Legal Solutions Europe, it is scheduled to take place from 12-to-14 September at the Netherlands Congress Centre at The Hague. For details email Rebecca Thurlow at rthurlow@ark-group.com

Ark still have some places available for their Best Practice Law Firm Management Conference in London on 4-to-6 December, for details email hlewis@ark-group.com

■ Two other changes to next year's events diary to note:

The Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators (ILCA) has dropped its annual IT Awareness Day conference, which usually takes place at the end of February but will instead hold a one day conference on legal aid on 13 February. The event includes a small exhibition - suppliers with LSC/legal aid systems should contact Maria Maloney at the ILCA (020 8984 2887) to book stand space.

And, Osney Media is to run a conference on planning and developing online legal services on 24 & 25 January in London. Call Veronica Yates on 0207 880 0000 for details.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

■ NOVEMBER 29, LONDON. The last of Sanderson IT Systems' autumn seminars showcasing new developments with its Galaxy case and practice management system plus unified messaging, which manages email and voice messages via a single source. Insider editor Charles Christian is the guest speaker. The event takes place at the Russell Hotel, WC1. Admission free. For details email:

marketing@sanderson.com

■ NOVEMBER 30, BIRMINGHAM. Managing for Success. One day conference organised by the Law Society Law Management Section at the Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel. Fees from £220 + VAT for LMS members. Speakers include Stephen Mayson of Nottingham Law School, David Temporal of Altman Weil and Michael Simmons of Finer Stephens Innocent. The event qualifies for 5 CPD hours. Call Central Law Training on 0121 355 0900 for details.

■ DECEMBER 6, MANCHESTER. Pilgrim Systems Case Management & Online Strategy Seminar. Baker Robbins consultant Andrew Levison is the guest speaker. Each seminar lasts two hours, with morning and afternoon sessions. The Manchester event is at Malmaison and there is a final conference in Birmingham on 13 December. Admission free. Call 0131 555 9700 or email:

sales@pilgrimsystems.com

■ DECEMBER 7 & 8, LONDON. Successful E-Legal Services - optimising your web site and developing a fully interactive online legal service. Two day conference plus one day pre-conference workshop with speakers from legal publishers, law firms and the new media world. The event takes place at the Hilton St Ermins Hotel and promises to provide a comprehensive guide to the legal, technical and conceptual issues surrounding online legal services. Fees from £1099 + VAT, the event qualifies for 12 CPD points. For details call IQPC on 020 7368 9300.

www.iqpc.co.uk

SWEET & MAXWELL BUYS NEW LAW FROM CRONER.CCH

Sweet & Maxwell is to buy the New Law next day law reporting service from Croner.CCH for an undisclosed sum. The deal, which also includes the sale of CCH's other print and online legal publications, is set for completion on 27 November. Annual revenues of the New Law and CCH legal list are £4 million.

The CCH list has a strong commercial law flavour and includes a number of IP, EU and employment law services. Sweet & Maxwell plans to add the New Law Online service to its Westlaw UK product range. Managing director Wendy Beecham told the Insider that as well as strengthening Sweet & Maxwell's position in the online market, the deal would also increase the number of products the company could offer smaller law firms and members of the Bar.

After the acquisition was first reported on the Insider web site last week, we received a stream of emails from law librarians expressing concern about the diminishing choice available in the legal publishing market. One firm described the move as "disastrous" as they had just chosen New Law Online in favour of Westlaw and suggested we start a campaign to block it, while the head of library services at a major provincial firm said she felt "somewhat threatened by the Westlaw fiend".

■ Croner.CCH is part of the Wolters Kluwer group that was involved in abortive merger talks with the rival Reed Elsevier publishing group two years ago. Insider readers will recall that in 1998 the New Law service's founder Kenneth Bagnall QC was charged with nine counts of theft totalling £375,000 in the aftermath of Croner.CCH's acquisition of his New Law Publishing company.

■ In a related development Sweet & Maxwell has just launched a number of enhancements to the Westlaw UK user interface. These include special tabs providing instant access to information, such as a cited case, related to the displayed documents; a 'trail' function to locate documents retrieved in a prior search; and an exact pagination feature. Westlaw's Cynthia Murphy believes this is a first in electronic publishing as it permits researchers to find sections of a case referred to in court by a page number without the need for a print version of the court report.

LCD TO LOOK AT METADATA

The Lord Chancellor's Department has issued a new consultation paper on proposals for a metadata scheme and the development of a supporting content classification scheme for web sites in the legal and advice sectors.

On first impressions this sounds an impenetrably deep and techie topic but in fact it is a well timed and welcome initiative to promote common standards for metadata to make it easier for members of the public to locate legal advice and information on the internet.

Metadata is the indexing and search engine friendly information most web pages

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WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

■ CONTRACT STORE NOW OPEN

ContractStore, a new internet service providing commercial contracts online, has launched in the UK offering a range of off-the-peg documents at prices from £15 to £100. Along with standard agency, employment and shareholder agreements there are a number of more specialist construction and engineering contracts available. Contracts can be downloaded from the web as conventional Word files with payment handled by an online credit card transaction. ContractStore sees its prime market as inhouse lawyers of small to mid-sized companies, as well as smaller law firms wanting a template for a contract they can tailor for a client.

www.contractstore.com

■ BAR GETS NEW WEB SITE

The Bar Council has relaunched its web site. New features include an online version of the Council's professional conduct rules.

www.barcouncil.org.uk

■ JUST ASK! JUST MISSES OUT

The LCD's JustAsk! legal advice web portal was the runner up in two categories in last week's *Computer Weekly* e-business awards. And congratulations to Companies House which won the E-Government Award for the best public sector use of e-business.

www.justask.org.uk

INSIDER JOINS UP WITH OUT-LAW

The publishers of the Insider are pleased to announce an editorial content deal with the law firm Masons that will give visitors to the Insider web site access to Masons' OUT-LAW.COM e-commerce and new media law service. As part of the deal, the Insider's sister publication, the ezine Legal Technology News.com, will now carry the headlines and summaries of the latest OUT-LAW.COM stories which subscribers can then click on to read the full text. The stories are updated on a daily basis and there is no charge for accessing the service.

www.legaltechnology.org

continued from page 6 carry in their underlying code but it can frequently be ambiguous, with the result that the web user is directed to irrelevant sites. For example the word "drugs" means something entirely different depending on whether you are seeking medical or legal advice.

The LCD is likely to make compliance with the scheme a requirement of its proposed "quality mark" scheme for legal advice sites, which will be the subject of a separate consultation exercise in the near future. Responses to the consultation paper are sought by 12th January 2001 - the full text is available on the web at:

www.open.gov.uk/lcd/consult/meta/metafr.htm

SITUATIONS VACANT

■ INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGER - LONDON c £50k plus benefits package

Sidley & Austin, an international law firm, requires an IT Manager, with excellent hands-on technical skills, for their London office. The successful candidate will need to:

- Manage an internal team of 4 people to cover network administration, hardware configuration, help desk and IT training functions;
- Work closely with global IT leadership in the USA regarding technical standards and implementation schedules;
- Provide a proactive, high quality and cost effective IT support and training service to all personnel within the office;
- Be able to initiate and implement local IT initiatives - within the IT strategy guidelines and local IT budgets.

The ideal candidate will possess:

- Up-to-date, hands-on technical skills, experience and accreditations in Microsoft operating environment, local and wide area networks;
- Excellent management and communications skills;
- Experience in meeting exacting user service standards, particularly with regard to high system availability and security in a client led, professional environment;
- Solid experience in change/project management;
- Hands-on experience in the implementation/technical support of Document Management (iManage), Knowledge Management and MS Office applications;
- Degree standard education, with at least 3 years' experience in a similar technical supervisory role and 5 years + in IT.

Applicants should send or email their CV, supported with a short covering letter, to arrive no later than Friday 8 December, to:

Richard Blasdale, Baker Robbins & Co, 126-134 Baker Street, London W1M 1FH. Email RBlasdale@brco.com

■ LEGAL SOFTWARE SALES - MIDLANDS c £40-to-50k salary & commission

Select Legal Systems is looking to recruit a candidate with proven success in the sale of departmental and enterprise level IT solutions to the legal profession. Preferably based in or around the Midlands. The successful candidate can work from home - Select would supply the necessary technology. Competitive package comprising basic salary + commission.

Applicants should email Helen Wilson at: helenw@selectlegal.co.uk

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SOS MOVES INTO SMS COMMUNICATIONS

SOS, best known for its practice management software, has launched, what the Insider believes, is one of the most interesting and useful innovations to come from a mainstream legal systems supplier in recent years.

The new service allows law firms to supply their clients with the latest matter progress reports via their mobile phones. Called Client Inform, it uses the SMS mobile phone messaging system to convert email messages sent from the fee earner's desktop into plain text messages that can be received and read from any mobile phone handset.

SOS sales director David McNamara, who has been previewing the service to prospective users at roadshows over the last few months, says the response has been very favourable, not least because the way the service is configured involves no capital outlay by the law firm.

The way it works is SOS acts as the SMS service provider, so all the lawyer needs is access to an email system to compose and send the messages to the Client Inform server, which is run by SOS. From there, the messages are converted into SMS format and relayed to the intended recipient's mobile phone.

Pricing is based on a £10 per month, per firm subscription plus a charge of 10p for every text message sent. Because it is based on SMS rather than WAP technology it will work with any mobile phone, which means over 50 percent of the UK population can receive it. And, because it does not use proprietary legal PMS software, any law firm - not just SOS software users - can subscribe to the service.

Incidentally, if you are an SOS user there is the added advantage that because the latest version of the SOS Practice Manager software can be set up to automatically generate and email progress reports to clients, it can also be configured to send out those reports as SMS messages.

Assuming a familiarity with email, the Client Inform system requires no special training for the law firm. There is no capital cost. And, in return for a nominal running cost, even the smallest High Street firm now has the opportunity to deliver a leading edge service to its clients.

SOS are currently offering the service on a free trial basis - you can send up to 20 messages free of charge. Full details can be found on the Client Inform web site.

www.clientinform.net

BUDGETTING ON KEYSTONE

Jay Moeller, the man behind Keystone's Net Results data mining and financial analysis tool, will be in the UK next month to run a seminar demonstrating the company's On Budget module, which has just been launched in the UK. The event takes place at the British Library on December 13, from 10:00am until midday. To book a place email:

jonathan.mayo@keystone-solutions.com

BREAKING NEWS

■ AXXIA OUT AT ADDLESHAW

Addleshaw Booth & Co will shortly announce the name of its new practice management system supplier. The two vendors lined up to replace the current incumbent, Axxia, are understood to be Elite and ResSoft, with Tikit likely to win the implementation contract.

■ ESETTLE SETTLE FOR DECEMBER

Judicium, the company behind the UK's new eSettle online claims settlement system, say the service is undergoing beta testing by five leading insurance companies and on target for a formal launch in December. eSettle business development manager Robin Stannard told the Insider that although the service would use the same "blind bidding" approach as the rival US Cybersettle system, which is also scheduled to launch in the UK later this year, he was confident users would find eSettle offered a more flexible service. eSettle is also planning a mediation and ADR facility to help claimants and insurers reach deals.

www.esettle.co.uk

■ PAISNER DECISION SOON

Paisner & Co is expected to reach a decision on the choice of its new PMS system within the next month. Insider sources say the choice is between Elite and Keystone, with the smart money riding on the latter.

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