

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

92 PERCENT ANTI ASP

According to independent market research, conducted on behalf of Keystone Solutions, 92 percent of law firms are currently reluctant to adopt an ASP (application service provider) approach because of concerns about security.

Keystone chief executive Graeme Frost told the Insider that although the company had completed development work on an ASP version of its software and was fully confident in the benefits to law firms of being able to lease or rent software, rather than purchase it, Keystone had decided to delay the launch of an ASP offering "until a move in market acceptance of ASP is detected".

SUPPLIERS FOR SALE - BUT THE PRICE IS NOT RIGHT

The Insider has now identified at least six UK legal systems vendors whose directors or shareholders have in the past 12 months expressed an interest in selling their companies, or at least the legal IT arms, to third parties. But, if the discussions the Insider has had with would-be purchasers is any indication, most are unlikely to find a buyer.

One problem is with what has been described as these companies' "ludicrously high" valuations. In the current market the most buyers are prepared to offer is five or six times annual earnings yet some suppliers are seeking a sale based on valuations of 30 times annual earnings.

A possibly bigger problem is that even if the price is right, many suppliers lack a 'succession management' structure to run the business when its founders retire. The result is purchasers are only interested in talking to those companies where the current management is also prepared to commit to staying on for a five year buyout period.

EVERYFORM CHANGES HANDS

Butterworths Tolley has acquired Everyform, the internet service providing lawyers with access to free downloadable legal forms. Butterworths plan to integrate Everyform with its Law Direct free legal information portal so lawyers reading of changes in the law will be able to download copies of the latest forms implementing these changes.

Butterworths say the Everyform deal will provide lawyers with a compelling reason to use the Butterworths' portal for all their legal information requirements. Founded 18 months ago, originally as part of Russell Shepherd's Capsoft UK group, Everyform now has 12,200 registered users including an estimated 39 percent of all UK law firms.

MORE PORTAL FAILURES ON WAY ?

Speaking at a keynote seminar at this month's Legal IT 2001 event, Baker Robbins consultant Andrew Levison predicted that the next year would see a number of other UK legal portals "go the same way as Law.com/uk," which closed its content service just before Christmas, at a cost of over 10 jobs and £2 million. Levison said such services - and he identified one well-known portal - were doomed because they had no obvious business rationale and had to rely on advertising for their sole revenue stream.

LEGAL IT JOBS BOARD NOW LIVE

The Insider has launched the Legal Technology Jobs Board, a new facility for legal systems suppliers and law firms looking for IT-related staff, including developers, sales personnel, trainers, web designers and support staff. Individuals looking for new jobs are also welcome to submit CV details and can opt to remain anonymous. There is no charge for posting details, nor any introducer fees or agency commissions. Email vacancies to info@legaltechnology.org and we will post them onto the web at:

www.legaltechnology.org

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY **iNSIDER**

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Keep up with the latest developments in legal technology and new media law by visiting the Legal Technology Insider web site. Along with regularly updated news, there are web bookmarks, a diary of legal IT events, the latest virus reports, an archive of Insider back issues, extensive search facilities plus links to the ILCA, Infolaw, LSSA and Solution Finder sites.

IS CITRIX TOO COSTLY ?

Linetime customers Hay & Kilner, which has offices in the Tyneside area, and Punch Robson, which has offices on Teesside, are among the latest firms to opt for a thin client approach, based on Citrix MetaFrame, to provide remote access to centrally stored practice management data.

But, while Citrix is an attractive option for users and suppliers wanting a quick thin client solution that does not involve rewriting software as a web based application, the Insider is hearing a lot of complaints about the licence fees charged by Citrix. John Taylor of Pracctice said the main reasons he attended the recent Citrix conference in Florida was because he hoped to tackle the company on this issue yet at a session where licensing was on the agenda, he was disappointed to see company officials refuse to even discuss the pricing policy for MetaFrame.

DAC LICENCE CASE PLANNER

Davies Arnold Cooper is to start using a case planning application called Feesability. The program was developed by members of the litigation practice at Lovells and is now widely used within that firm to provide costs estimates and case plans to clients. Davies Arnold Cooper is the first firm, other than Lovells, to be licensed to use the software.

Dan Tench, the solicitor who designed Feesability (he is now with Olswang) said: "Feesability was developed very much with lawyers in mind. Other project management software is available commercially but we considered it not especially appropriate for use in litigation. We also thought it important that the development of case plans and costs estimates was integrated closely into the normal running of a case. This would not be achieved if technical staff were needed to operate the software and the program is therefore designed for hands on use by practising lawyers."

Feesability is written in Microsoft Visual Basic 6.0. It works on any computer running 32-bit Microsoft Windows 95,98, 2000 or NT and, as an .EXE application it requires no software other than Windows to operate. The entry level for pricing is in the region of £100 per user. For more details email: feesability@talk21.com

IN SPREADSHEETS WE TRUST

According to a new survey of UK law firm private client departments, preparing trust & estate accounts and associated tax returns, almost two-thirds do not use purpose built applications. The survey, conducted by Solution 6, found most firms still use Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and then re-enter investment details into a tax package or form-filling software application.

By contrast Wilsons in Salisbury estimate that using dedicated trust accounting software cuts 25-to-45 percent from the time required to produce accounts, while integrating the tax and accounts elements can save about 30 percent of the normal time taken to produce SA900s.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ COBBETTS CHOSSES iMANAGE

Manchester law firm Cobbetts has chosen iManage to replace its GroupWise document management system. The order, for a 300 user contract worth £136,000, was won by iManage sales partner Kramer Lee & Associates.

■ ACUMEN SMALLER FIRMS LAUNCH

Acumen Business Solutions (020 7486 4956) has launched a new version of its Aware file tracking document management system for small to medium sized firms. Call Aware Access, it is based around Microsoft Access and designed for firms with up to 20 partners. In terms of functionality, the only differences between the Access product and the full system (already in use in the dispute resolutions department at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer) are price and the volume of documents it can handle.

■ HUMMINGBIRD IN WESTLAW DEAL

In the USA, Hummingbird has formed an alliance with the legal publisher West Group that will see the two companies providing customised research and knowledge management portals for law firms and inhouse legal departments. The deal involves the integration of West's Westlaw Intranet Solutions range with Hummingbird's EIP enterprise information portal. The Insider understands Westlaw UK is also keen to forge alliances with portal and intranet suppliers, to ensure the integration of its online information services with practice wide networks and know-how systems.

■ SOLICITEC SHORTLISTED

Solicitec has been shortlisted for this year's northern region Deloitte & Touche awards for fast growing IT companies.

■ WEIGHTS WEIGHS ANCHOR

Ken Weights has taken early retirement from Napthen Houghton Craven, in Preston, where he had been the firm's practice manager. His successor is Bob Kipling. Weights was also the chairman of the northern branch of the Avenue Legal Systems user group although the firm has been evaluating alternative systems suppliers since last summer.

ANOTHER FM CONVERT

Copley Clark & Bennett, based in Sutton, Surrey, has become the latest UK law firm to convert to the facilities management doctrine and outsource its entire IT systems and services. The nine partner firm has awarded an initial three year contract to Ramesys Professional Services, who now have responsibility for the day-to-day running and ongoing support of a 50 seat network located across three offices. Along with providing the firm with a full time systems manager for its existing IT, Ramesys will also be supplying advice on future system enhancements.

BKL SPINS OFF A SINGLEVIEW

North London-based accountants Berg Kaprow Lewis, who first appeared on the legal systems scene 18 months ago when they previewed their legal intranet-in-a-box system at the old SOLEX show in Manchester, has spun off the software business as a separate company.

Now called Singleview Ltd, the company's managing director Jeremy Hyman says he believes the product - also now called Singleview - offers a 'keep it simple' approach to intranets and knowledge management. According to Hyman, the system pulls together all the elements, from scanning incoming paperwork through to document and contact management, in a way that will not only save law firms time and money but also avoids the complexity of top of the range KM products.

Pricing starts at £10,000 for a 10 user system, including scanner and Singleview (0870 789 4570) has appointed Laserform as its legal market reseller, while Solution 6 resells the system into the UK accountancy sector.

www.singleview.co.uk

VALID WIN TAX OFFICE DEAL

Valid Information Systems has won a major contract from the Inland Revenue, that will see the company's litigation support technology going into both the IR Solicitor's Office and the Special Compliance Office (Investigations). The system will also be used to support prosecuting counsel in complex tax fraud trials. The Inland Revenue's outsourcing advisers EDS carried out a technical evaluation of all the rival systems pitching for this contract.

KEOGHS TO ROLL OUT CASE

Keoghs has placed an order with Axxia Systems which will see the Greater Manchester firm rolling out Axxia's Case Manager product to over 300 fee earners and support staff. Commenting on the move, the firm's chief executive officer Paul Smith said "It's not enough just to offer legal advice. Insurance companies now expect the highest levels of customer relationship management too. We regard matter (or case) management as one of the keys to delivering consistent service excellence."

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ DELTAVIEW INCREASES RANGE

Workshare Technology says the latest 2.5 version of its DeltaView redlining and document comparison software is compatible with all Microsoft Office environments from 97 to 2000, Windows 2000 and WordPerfect versions 6.0 to 9.0. The system can now compare different versions of a 300+ page document in under one minute.

www.workshare.net

■ THE MACS ARE BACK IN TOWN

Despite being written off by the legal systems market years ago, the Apple Macintosh is currently enjoying a revival in the UK. Nicholas McFarlane-Watts of Professional Productivity Solutions (01865-201801) - the company produces software for both Windows and Macs - says he has had more inquiries from Mac using lawyers in the last six months than in the last six years. He says the ease of running iMac networks is attracting a lot of interest from smaller firms (Latimer Lee in Manchester is one of the latest to go this route) who have had problems in the past with Unix and Windows. Latest US figures suggest the Mac still has about a 9 percent share of the small law firms market.

■ NORTON ROSE PICKS AFARIA

Norton Rose has chosen the Afaría system from XcelleNet Inc (020 8538 5826) as the basis for its new 'mobile systems management solution'. This is intended to improve communications links and the delivery of content, such as the latest revisions to legal documents, to staff working in remote locations around the globe. Norton Rose plans to expand the system to include SMS messaging and integration with PDAs.

www.xcellenet.com

■ WINDOWS XP DUE IN Q3

Microsoft's replacement for its Windows 98 operating system - Windows XP (previously codenamed Whistler) - will be launched "in the autumn". Exact timing and pricing details are not yet available and US IT industry analyst Henry Blodget has described XP as a "nice to have rather than must have product".

BUTTERWORTHS ONLINE LEGAL TV NEWS MOVE

Butterworths Tolley, who were the first legal publishers in the UK to launch an online daily news service, Law Direct, have now extended the service to include a free digital television service. Called the CPD Direct Digital Television News Service, it is intended to bring lawyers face-to-face interviews with the leading figures involved with the daily news stories reported on Law Direct. The interviews are presented in the form of short film clips, with links to the associated articles and a discussion forum.

The service has been developed in conjunction with Semple Piggot Rochez, who also work with Butterworths on the multimedia legal training web site, CPD Direct, which was launched last Autumn. The production is by Rollingball, part of the multimedia production unit owned by Semple Piggot Rochez.

The service is delivered over the web by the RealPlayer streaming video system and can be viewed reasonably well using a 56 kbps modem although best results will be achieved via ISDN, ADSL or leased line. Users of the service can obtain RealPlayer 8 Basic free of charge from www.real.com. A Windows Media version of the featured video clips will be available shortly. CPD Direct Digital Television News Service can be viewed at

<http://macdonald.butterworths.co.uk/micro/digitaltv/cpdtv.html>

NEW MOVES AT LAWTEL

With Centaur Communications rumoured to be heading for a £70 million stock market flotation later this spring, the group's legal publishing division - responsible for the LAWTEL and interactive-lawyer.com services - has just announced two new facilities.

From March, Blackstone's Civil Practice Online will be available exclusively through LAWTEL. Published in association with Blackstone Press, the subscription based service will provide a fully searchable version of the complete text from *Blackstone's Civil Practice 2001*.

LAWTEL is currently offering a £250 discount on Civil Practice Online to all LAWTEL subscribers and purchasers of the hardcopy version. For details call 020 7970 4834.

Meanwhile the interactive-lawyer.com portal has signed an alliance with the GroupTrade 'e-procurement' service that will allow registered users and LAWTEL subscribers to take advantage of the bulk purchasing deals GroupTrade can offer.

GroupTrade says its purchasing power will enable it to pass on substantial discounts to smaller law firms buying standard stationery products, office furniture and generic IT equipment online. Discounts will normally be in the region of 10 to 25 percent but GroupTrade reckons that for some office stationery it can offer savings of over 50 percent.

www.lawtel.co.uk/blackstone

www.grouptrade.com/interactive-lawyer.com

PUBLISHING NEWS

■ WESTLAW GOES SURREALIST

In its latest attempt to build up some brand awareness for its Westlaw UK service, Sweet & Maxwell has dropped the 'blue haired ladies' advertising campaign it has been running for the past year and from tomorrow (1st March) will commence a new campaign featuring 'surrealist' images in its advertising and promotional material.

■ NEW CITY MEDIA TO CLOSE

New City Media, the independent legal publishing business formed three years ago by the QD legal recruitment group, has closed. Although New City produced a number of useful *Legal 500*-style mini directories, last year it lost its editorial director Catrin Griffiths to *The Lawyer* and in July it was effectively orphaned when it was not included in the takeover of the QD group by TMP Worldwide.

■ HEMSCOTT TO DROP THE NET

Hemscott.net, the business information provider best known in the legal market for its HemscottLegal.com portal, has reported an operating loss of £11.7 million on revenues of £4.2 million for its trading year to the end of 2000. However the AIM listed company still has £12.5 million cash in the bank and is expected to halve its losses in the coming year. Interestingly, the company has decided to change its name, dropping the 'NET' element to become plain Hemscott plc.

BUSINESS MOVES

■ The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) has moved to 11 Castle Quay, Nottingham NG7 1FW. The phone number remains 0115 958 0585.

■ Norwel has relocated its London office to Gainsborough House, 33 Throgmorton Street, London EC2N 2BR. The new phone number is 020 7861 9633.

■ Omtool Europe, the distributors of LegalFax, has moved from Kingston to new offices at Cobb House, 2-4 Oyster Lane, Byfleet, Surrey KT14 7DU. The new phone number is 01932 334456.

DOCUMENT ASSEMBLY MARKET HOTS UP

For most of the 1990s, the UK document assembly market has been synonymous with the Capsoft HotDocs products but that could be about to change.

Currently the main contender is Epoch Software's Rapidocs, which last month saw the release of a major upgrade. Called Rapidocs Professional, this not only addresses the limitations of the original Rapidocs, which although widely used by online legal service sites, such as Desktop Lawyer, was always perceived as a stand-alone product for ad hoc applications, but also moves it into the mainstream law office automation environment. For example Rapidocs can now be integrated with Microsoft Office, document management and email applications and is compatible with Adobe Acrobat forms.

Epoch's Mike Gilpin says the new version is more flexible and intuitive - "making it easier to use than any other comparable application" and contains the security and web-enabled features needed to support e-commerce applications. Reflecting this shift of emphasis, Epoch is now being marketed as a solution for large law firms and the corporate sector, all previously the preserve of HotDocs which, for example, provides the document assembly element in Allen & Overy's Newchange virtual dealroom.

But, Rapidocs is not the only HotDocs challenger on the radar. Terry Lawley, previously with HotDocs distributor Capsoft UK, is rumoured to be in talks with the South African developers of the GhostFill document assembly system about bringing that product to the UK. OyezStraker is talking to the US JetForm group about linking its product, already in use with Ashurst Morris Crisp, to the OyezForms electronic legal forms range. And, SpeedLegal of Australia, whose financial backers include legal publisher CCH, is poised to launch its SmartPrecedent product. This is an XML and browser based document assembly and knowledge management system. SpeedLegal CEO Jamie Wodetzki (jw@speedlegal.com) is interested in talking to prospective UK distributors for SmartPrecedent.

LEGAL IT SHOW TRAFFIC UP

The feedback from the Legal IT 2001 event, which took place in London in early February, has been generally positive, with most of the suppliers we spoke to happy with both volume and the quality of the visitors coming their way. For example Axxia, who took the brave step of having some of their users present on their stands, recorded over 230 presentations at seven workstations during the course of the two day event. Although not immediately apparent, because the event was housed in a larger hall, total visitor numbers (2034) were marginally up on last year. The majority of visitors (65 percent) came from law firms, with 53 percent working in firms with between 1-to-10 partners. Next year's event takes place on 6th & 7th February 2002.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

■ MARCH 7, LONDON. Knowledge Management - Breakfast Briefing organised by ResSoft and Autonomy at the The Law Society. Starts 8:30am. For details phone 020 7421 4140 or email marketing@ResSoft.co.uk

■ MARCH 13-to-15, BIRMINGHAM NEC. Solicitors - the National Legal Office & Legal Services Exhibition. Three day exhibition of both IT and more general legal office services. Times: 10:00am to 6:00pm (Thursday 15th until 4:00pm). Admission is free. For further details or to pre-register for tickets call Nationwide Exhibitions on 0117 907 1000.

www.nwe.co.uk

■ MARCH 15 & 16, LONDON. Knowledge Management for the Legal Profession. Two day conference on KM looking at the issues associated with knowledge management projects. The event is organised by *Managing Partner* magazine, for details call 020 8785 2700.

www.kmmagazine.com/Events

■ MARCH 20, LONDON. Martindale Hubbell Counsel to Counsel Forum on increasing case management efficiency. Westbury Hotel, 4:00pm to 8:30pm. The event is chaired by Scottish & Newcastle legal director Andrew Vellani. For details call Fabienne Meyer on 020 7868 4858.

■ MARCH 20, EDINBURGH. Paperless Law Firms. An evening seminar (starts 6:00pm) at Murrayfield organised by the Scottish Legal Group of e centreUK. For more details call 0131 200 1057.

■ MARCH 26 & 27, FOREST OF ARDEN, ACUA (AIM Computer Users Association) National Conference . Two day event at the Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel, near the Birmingham NEC. The theme is the convergence of marketing, e-commerce, case management and risk management in the running of a profitable law firm. The event qualifies for 12 CPD points, the full delegate rate (including accommodation is £340 (+VAT) . For details call the ACUA on 01789 296096.

LAWYER LOCATOR TO LAUNCH AT NEC

Martindale-Hubbell, part of the same publishing group as Butterworths, is to launch its new LawyerLocator service at the upcoming Solicitors National Legal Office Exhibition at the Birmingham NEC (13th-to-15th March).

This builds on Martindale-Hubbell's Lawyer HomePages service, which has already been responsible for the design of over 16,000 web sites for smaller US law firms, and links it to the LawyerLocator.co.uk search and marketing engine to provide businesses and individuals with an easy method of identifying the law firms that best suit their needs.

Along with providing smaller firms with a professional approach to developing sites that are already e-commerce enabled, so they take instructions and payment online, Martindale say the benefit is the LawyerLocator element will help drive visitor traffic to their sites. Martindale is also planning alliances to place LawyerLocator on third party sites (the Territorium online conveyancing service has already signed up) whose users are likely to need lawyers.

META DATA CONSULTATION ENDS AMID APATHY

The Lord Chancellor's Department's recent consultation exercise, on proposals for a meta data and content classification scheme for legal advice web sites, has drawn to a close, to the apparent total indifference of almost the entire legal web developing and surfing community.

Two months of consultation produced 35 responses, including just one from a member of the public and only one from a law firm - despite the fact the 2000 plus law firms in England & Wales with web sites are likely to be at the sharp end of any proposals. However, the LCD can take heart from the fact it did receive comments from the representatives of one Commonwealth government and the members of a sixth form college.

David Lock MP, the junior minister responsible for IT at LCD, said he was pleased to see that "Most responses were broadly in favour" of the consultation paper's proposals. This is not quite correct as in fact only 14 people bothered to comment on the consultation paper as a whole - as distinct from specific, detailed issues. Of these 14, just eight were in favour of the proposals. As for the remainder, two were opposed and four non-committal.

It is also worth noting that a number of respondents had concerns about the proposals in their present form. Three of the most frequently mentioned reservations were: the need to offer web site owners an incentive to adopt the proposed standards; the importance of ensuring this project was compatible with other government meta data initiatives, such as the Office of the e-Envoy working party; and the fact greater priority should be given to the creation of content than to its classification.

ONLINE NEWS

■ CALL FOR LAW SOCIETY ACTION

Speaking at another Legal IT 2001 keynote session, Epoch Software's joint CEO Richard Cohen said that as a result of the deals it had concluded with legal expenses insurers, including Royal & SunAlliance in the UK and ARAG in the USA, the Desktop Lawyer online legal service was "on its way to becoming the largest legal practice in the world".

As a former practising solicitor, Cohen said he could sympathise with High Street firms but felt they could still use the internet to their advantage as there would always be clients who valued their local knowledge or who wanted face-to-face legal advice. Cohen also said the English Law Society should be more proactive in terms of helping solicitors gear up for e-commerce.

■ PROTECT THAT BRAND

This month saw the London launch of RioBrand, a new online system offering a global resource for brand managers and IP lawyers wanting to protect brand names and trademarks against both innocent and malign infringement. There is no charge for searching the database but organisations wanting to publish details of the brands must pay a £250 fee.

www.riobrand.com

■ CHARGING FOR EMAIL TRAFFIC

Copitrak Europe (020 7234 3000) has extended its portfolio of costs recovery and expenses management products by the addition of the Zixtrak system for tracking and charging back secure email messaging costs.

■ CLYDE & CO INSTALLS ERICSSON

Ericsson has been awarded a contract worth £900,000 by Clyde & Co to install a 900 user integrated voice and data communications network at the firm's London and Guildford offices. The data network uses Cisco router and switching equipment, while voice services are based on Ericsson's MD110 platform, giving the firm the option of moving to a cordless telephony system at a later date. Voice mail is currently being rolled out and there are plans for a unified messaging service integrated with Lotus Notes.

LASERFORM LAUNCH "PROPER" CASE SYSTEM

Laserform has launched a generic version of its CaseControl system to allow larger firms to develop their own case management applications on an SQL platform.

The system has already been in use in one "top practice" for over a year and Laserform is confident individual law firm departments can create and maintain their own applications without needing special programming skills. According to managing director Barry Hawley-Green, the system fills "a gap that exists for a proper case management application builder in the SQL server environment".

Laserform has also released a new version of its Property Case Management System. This contains ready to use workflow modules, complete with documents, letters and forms, for domestic conveyancing, commercial conveyancing, re-mortgage and plot sales.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ WARE & KAY SELECTS TFB

North Yorkshire law firm Ware & Kay has awarded Technology for Business a £66,000 contract to supply the firm with a new Windows NT-based practice management system. The firm says that once the PMS has been implemented, the next phase of its IT strategy envisages web-enabling the practice so clients have direct access to their files via an extranet.

■ TIKIT TO SHIP NEW COST RECOVERY SYSTEM

Tikit is to distribute the EMSys Pro cost recovery system in the UK. The system, which was developed by ICG Research in Canada and is marketed as the Partner Cost Recovery System in North America, enables automated tracking and management of all major disbursement types. According to Tikit's Liam Flanagan, the product also contains a number of more advanced features that make it stand out from other cost recovery systems, such as Equitrac and Copittrak. ICG marketing director Randy Henderson added that it was a conversation with Legal Technology Insider that led to the company originally contacting Tikit.

www.emsyspro.com

■ CMS OPENS UP THE BILL GALLERY ARCHIVE

CMS is now shipping the Bill Gallery Archive, a new utility for handling the archiving of billing documents, to simplify the maintenance of working directories and conserve space on network resources. The viewer element permits users to view billing documents in their original format even if they lack security access to the main CMS OPEN billing module. A browser-based viewer will also be available from March for firms wanting to provide clients with direct extranet access to the archive.

<http://acts.cmsopen.com/>

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KEYSTONE RAISES £11m AS MAJOR DEALS NEAR

Keystone Solutions is raising £11 million via a fully underwritten share issue on the London Stock Exchange that is expected to be confirmed at an EGM on 12th March. In addition, Keystone has also announced an immediate cash placing to raise £357,000 for the company. The funds will be used to strengthen the balance sheet and provide working capital to support the company's commercial operations.

With Keystone already the dominant systems supplier amongst the largest law firms in Australasia, the company will be focussing its efforts over the next year on increasing its share of the UK legal IT market and rolling out the US version of its software to its North American customers. Since acquiring BISPoint Software last year, Keystone now has over 180 US law firm sites, using the Javelan time and billing product, that it hopes to convert to Keystone users. The system is due to start shipping to US firms in the third quarter of this year and a number of firms have already signed up for it under a 'first mover' scheme.

Keystone is also engaged in a major cost reduction exercise, focusing on the overhead cost structure inherited with the BISPoint acquisition and implementing measures to consolidate operations globally, that over the next twelve months is expected to halve the company's current £400,000 a month burn rate.

Keystone chief executive Graeme Frost told the Insider the combined effect of the latest fundraising round, the cost reductions and a "more conservative" approach to business, after the rapid expansion of the past three years, would transform Keystone from a relatively small company with global ambitions, to a company with a strong balance sheet and a real international presence.

The latest announcements from Keystone also say it "expects to sign two major contracts shortly". Although Keystone is remaining tight lipped about these orders, market rumour suggests the two firms are Linklaters, where Keystone's competition includes the incumbent supplier ResSoft, and Clifford Chance, where Keystone is down to a two horse race with Elite. At both firms Keystone is involved in a joint bid with Oracle Financials.

FACIAL HAIR IN COMEBACK ?

Is facial hair making a comeback? We know minimalist goatee beards are popular among the web design fraternity but one of the odder details spotted at February's Legal IT event was that not only had IT consultant Andrew Levison regrown his beard but Axxia managing director Stuart Holden has suddenly sprouted a full beard. And then there is Mark Errington, a technical author at Pracctice, who is regrowing his beard - having shaved off the original before Christmas so he could play the Dame in a pantomime production put on by his local theatre group!

CRM NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ELITE ENTERS CRM MARKET

Elite Information Systems is to challenge Interface's InterAction product in the law firm CRM systems market, with the launch this month of its Apex customer relationship management application. Apex is the first all-new Elite product built using the company's Enterprise development tool set, thereby giving Apex an international, multi-language capability, screen customisation and Microsoft VBA macro language integration. Apex product manager David Djulich says that along with its ease of use, thanks to the use of 'wizards' and a Microsoft Outlook-style interface, the main benefit of Apex is that it is a full relationship management and marketing automation system whereas "other products in this market are primarily simple contact management tools".

■ ASPORA LAUNCHES CRM SYSTEM

The US legal market application services provider (ASP) Aspora has just launched a 'contact relationship management' (CRM) system. It is based around the Scout Aptus product and delivers CRM information via a standard web browser. Although Aspora is best known in the US market, the company is interested in moving into Europe and last year won a contract from Linklaters to supply litigation support services via ASP.

www.aspora.com

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

www.legaltechnology.org

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