

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

LAW SOCIETY GUIDE PLANS UNDER FIRE

The English Law Society's latest plans for a software solutions guide for law firms has been greeted by a chorus of disapproval from the legal technology industry.

Complaints include: a lack of advance notice for the scheme - although the closing date for applications is this Friday (25 May) many suppliers we spoke to last week had only just received their forms.

There are complaints that the scheme has apparently lost its focus. In previous years it addressed the needs of sole practitioners and small firms. *Continued on back page.*

TIKIT HEADING FOR AIM

Legal systems integrator-to-consultancy and best of breed solutions provider Tikit has announced plans to float on the London AIM market. The company, which made a profit before tax of £876,000 on a turnover of £9.3 million in its trading year to 31 December 2000, expects to raise £2 million for the company and £1.5 million for existing shareholders. Assuming the stock market remains stable the admission is expected to take effect in early June. The company will use the funds to provide additional working capital and repay indebtedness. *Continued on back page.*

TFB TO ACQUIRE AVENUE ?

Industry sources suggest that two of the UK's largest legal IT suppliers - Avenue Legal Systems and Technology for Business are close to finalising a merger deal.

Apart from a "No comment at this time" comment both sides have declined to answer the Insider's questions but it is known that Avenue's principle director/shareholders - John O'Neill and Michael Belas - have been wanting to sell their interests in the business for some time. Avenue has also been hit by staff losses in recent months whereas TFB is currently in a cash rich and acquisitive mood - it bought CB Business Systems in Scotland last month.

Both companies' accounts and case management products are firmly aimed at the High Street-to-mid size commercial firms sector however TFB is generally reckoned to be more advanced in the development and roll out of web enabled systems to support online legal services. Both companies also have legacy systems that were written by the same developer (Dave Webber, now linked with Pericom) so there are potential rationalisations to be made on support and maintenance resources.

BAILEY BACK WITH WHITEHILL DEAL

Mike Bailey, who until last year was the UK director of operations for CMS and, as such, largely responsible for getting the CMS Open product on the map in the UK, is back with a new company and a new product.

The company is Aurra Consulting (020 7861 9740), which was founded by Bailey along with David Gallagher and Karen Bailey earlier this year. The services on offer include training, project management, implementation and consultancy - thereby pitching Aurra directly into competition with Baker Robbins and Tikit.

Aurra is already offering a range of services in conjunction with products such as CMS, Elite, Carpe Diem and InterAction. In addition, Aurra has now concluded a reseller deal with Canadian software house Whitehill Technologies that will see the company providing sales, implementation and support services for Whitehill products in the UK.

Whitehill specialises in added value reporting software that can transform text and numerical data from accounts systems into customised spreadsheet, wordprocessing or web documents. Since 1999 Axxia has been offering Whitehill's Wordflow bill formatting software as an optional extra for its Arista and Eiion accounts systems.

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DOTCOM RECESSION HITS LEGAL SECTOR

With major lay offs at a former industry high flier and another company shutting down, the dotcom recession has finally hit the UK legal sector.

Epoch Software, the company behind Desktop Lawyer and at one time the UK's fastest growing legal IT business, has had to lay off 20 staff - approximately a third of its total workforce - because of the recession hitting the dotcom world. Epoch co-founder and joint CEO Richard Cohen told the Insider that because the banks "kept moving the goalposts" the company had not only dropped flotation plans but was also in line for far less money than it had originally hoped to raise in its forthcoming third round of funding. Cohen declined to say how much money was at stake but hinted that it was likely to be less than the £6 million Epoch had raised in the previous round.

Although still bullish about Epoch's future, Cohen said the job cuts were made to reduce the company's burn rate and speed up its path towards profitability. Epoch now expects to be profitable by the end of the year. All the job losses have been in the company's sales, marketing and administrative departments. The company has also cancelled a major advertising campaign it had planned for the small business sector.

Epoch's bad news was topped by that of Geodesia, a UK developer of virtual dealrooms, which has had to close its doors just four months after it launched its WorkRooms extranet application.

Managing director Peter Rouse told the Insider that the company was forced to close because it had run out of money. He is now looking for a job and Geodesia (020 7488 2266) is hoping to sell off its assets, which include portal technology and various IP assets. Rouse estimates it would cost another organisation £1.5 million and twelve months to replicate the company's systems.

Rouse said the "paralysis" gripping the venture capital sector had meant the company had been unable to raise the extra funding it needed to keep trading. But, Rouse reserved his strongest criticism for Microsoft which, he said, had undermined market confidence in the ASP business model used by Geodesia by saying it was unlikely to be viable until the year 2005.

■ The one glimmer of good news, although it may just be the exception that proves the rule, comes from Adrian Miles' Interactive-Law.co.uk company.

In what Miles describes as an "unexpected move" two legal publishers - one in the UK, the other a US operation wanting to move into Europe - have made offers to acquire the business. Talks are currently described as being "at a critical stage". The company (no relation to Centaur's Interactive-Lawyer service) is the parent of an online legal services group running seven web marketing referral networks for law firms. These include the Employment-Solicitors.co.uk and AccidentCompensation.com networks.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ABSOLUTELY SCAN-TASTIC

Meticulus Solutions, the providers of arguably the world's cheapest full function document management system, have formed a strategic partnership with Leeds based document scanning bureau Absolutely Scantastic. The companies say the deal will give their customers a complete legacy and electronic document management solution.

www.meticulus.com

■ AUTONOMY & DOCS INTEGRATION

Legal systems supplier ResSoft (020 7421 4155) has announced the availability of a new best of breed integration module for knowledge management applications. Called DOCS Open Fetch, it offers a seamless link between the Autonomy search engine and Hummingbird's DOCS Open document management system. ResSoft already has an Autonomy integration option for users of the iManage DMS.

■ QUILL SWAPPED FOR AIM

Peterborough law firm Hunt & Coombs has ordered a new accounts and case management system from AIM Professional. The AIM Evolution product will replace the firm's existing Quill accounts system.

■ CARYDAN WIN AT FRUHMANS

Manchester law firm Fruhman Davies Livingstone has placed a £100,000 + order with Jonathan Beck & Associates (0161 941 3790) for JBA's Carydan integrated time recording, accounts and case management software.

■ HUNTERS GO FOR THIN CLIENT

Hunters Solicitors, which is based in Lincoln's Inn and recently merged with another London firm Alexanders, has upgraded its existing character based Technology for Business practice management software by going down the thin client route. Instead of opting for a full Windows solution, the firm will be running TFB's DeskNet web browser application. This will provide Hunters with added functionality but without requiring the firm to replace its existing hardware and network infrastructure.

REED TO DROP BUTTERWORTHS NAME?

Butterworths, one of the oldest and best known names in the UK and Australian legal markets, is to disappear as part of a major rebranding exercise just announced by Butterworths' parent company Reed Elsevier.

As part of a strategy to "unify its legal and information resources under a single brand" Reed Elsevier has launched LexisNexis as the new "masterbrand" for its legal division's operations in 21 countries around the world. Among the operating units in line for the "phased migration to the LexisNexis brand" are Butterworths and Martindale-Hubbell.

We think throwing away a 200 year old brand in favour of something that sounds like a make of Japanese luxury car is folly. There again, Sweet & Maxwell's parent Thomson seems set to do exactly the same thing with the Westlaw name being promoted as its super-brand.

HOAD NEW CMS EURO HEAD

Chris Hoad, the former head of financial systems at Clifford Chance, is joining Solutions 6 on 25th June as the group's new general manager for CMS Europe. During his five years at Clifford Chance Hoad held a number of posts, including head of IT architecture, however prior to that he worked in both sales and consulting roles within the IT industry for companies such as Wang and CAP/Sema.

■ Within Continental Europe, CMS distributor Timesoft Hansco is rapidly sewing up the top end of the Dutch legal systems market with five of the country's largest firms already running implementing CMS Open and a sixth - Stibbe - in the final stages of making a choice between CMS and Elite. Although Timesoft is offering CMS as an upgrade path for its own, now ageing AS/400 system, the company has also been winning business from other Dutch legal IT suppliers such as PS Systems/Fizan who recently lost AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen, the Dutch arm of Deloitte & Touche, to CMS.

The other two main Dutch suppliers are Fidura, with a DOS system for smaller firms, and Klaus Van Bruug with an Access based title transfer system for notaries.

OCTOBER 25 IS WIN XP DAY

Microsoft has confirmed that it will launch Windows XP, the next release of the Windows operating system, on Thursday 25th October 2001. Windows XP will be available on all new PCs from that date, as well as going on sale in full or upgrade retail versions. The new system comes in a Home Edition for the consumer market and a Professional Edition for business users.

■ Next week - 31st May - see the official launch of Microsoft Office XP. This include the new Word 2002 WP application. **See also stories on pages 4 and 6.**

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ELITE ENHANCEMENTS

Elite Information Systems has announced its support for Microsoft's Digital Dashboard and Web Parts technology. Effectively this means Elite users can have a portal consolidating information from multiple sources onto a single screen in Microsoft Outlook or Internet Explorer. Elite also this month formed an alliance with Extensity Inc, a developer of ERM (employment relationship management) systems. The deal means travel planning and expense reporting data can be delivered to users of the Elite billing system.

■ NEW SALES MANAGER FOR TFB

Technology for Business has appointed Gordon Malcolm as its new sales manager with responsibility for TFB's South-East and South-West sales divisions. He was previously a sales account manager with the company and has been instrumental in helping TFB expand into the Scottish market.

■ FREE HOT DOCS USER GROUP

HotDocs users interested in joining an independent user group should contact document assembly training specialist Janet Abernethy of Understand-IT. There will be no charge for membership. Call 01506 202341 for more details.

■ LIBRARY SUPPLIERS MERGE

Legal library software specialists Soutron and Esprit have announced the merger of their two companies.

www.soutron.com

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY JOBS BOARD

If you are a legal systems supplier or a law firm looking for IT staff, including positions in management, development, sales, support and training, you can post your vacancies free of charge on the Legal Technology Insider web site. Email job details to: info@legaltechnology.org

■ Top job vacancies this week include a litigation support systems analyst at Lovells and three support analyst posts for legal IT supplier SOS.

BLACK MARK FOR MICROSOFT REDLINER

Workshare Technology has implemented its DeltaView document comparison/redlining system at Mannheimer Swartling Advokatbyrå, one of Sweden's largest law firms. The firm purchased DeltaView for its offices in Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Russia and the USA.

Although the Insider does not usually report Swedish news, the Mannheimer story is interesting because it was actually Microsoft that first pointed the firm in the direction of DeltaView to solve a bug in Word 2000.

According to Biorn Riese, the Mannheimer Swartling partner with responsibility for the DeltaView project, the need for the system arose late last year when the firm began its migration from Word 95 to Word 2000, as part of its standard desktop. Until then the firm had used Word's own redlining document comparison tool on Word 95 documents, "however when using that function within Word 2000 it became problematic. We began encountering major failures and as a result began receiving complaints from our users within the firm."

"We asked our consultants to look into the problem and it was subsequently discovered that Word 2000 was the cause of the problem - a fact later confirmed by Microsoft themselves. Aware the problem would not be solved easily, Microsoft recommended a number of products, including DeltaView, that would address our document comparison needs," said Riese. DeltaView was subsequently chosen after the firm ran product evaluation tests for a month.

SHEPHERD & WEDDERBURN IN LINE FOR XP SMART TAGS

Edinburgh based Shepherd & Wedderburn expects to be one of the first firms in the UK to implement the Smart Tags facility in Microsoft Office XP. As users of Infographics (01592 750677) BenchMark case management software, the firm has been able to take advantage of the fact Infographics is the only Microsoft Smart Tag solutions partner involved in developing a tag for the legal sector.

In effect Smart Tags are an interactive search facility that can retrieve client information from existing data sources. Infographics Smart Tags will automatically recognise client and contact details to deliver additional information, or to link documents to journal files for indexing and later retrieval.

Shepherd & Wedderburn IT director Angus Mackenzie said he was "sure Smart Tags technology will save us money and time by reducing user training and creating automatic links to other applications. For us, it will specifically mean that when our legal team are working in Microsoft Office XP applications they have the opportunity to be linked to information such as client details, staff roles and project status information through BenchMark."

THE LOTIES ARE BACK FOR 2001

PS Publications, the publisher of *In Brief* magazine and now part of the Longbridge group, has begun the build up to the 2001 LOTIES - the UK's Legal Office Technology Innovation Awards.

Now in its sixth year, the ten LOTIES categories have been updated for 2001 with new awards for knowledge management, litigation support and legal e-commerce projects. This year also see the introduction of awards recognising the work IT departments supporting law firms and inhouse lawyers with categories both for the best implementation and the most innovative use of technology over the past year.

Other categories include best legal office technology product, best fee earner support system, best supplier and best newcomer. There is also an award for legal publishers for the best publication in a new media format.

The Insider's editor Charles Christian will once again be involved with the running of the awards. As in previous years, the LOTIES retains its 'readers choice' two-stage approach with users having the opportunity to first nominate various legal technology products, projects and services for an award - and then to vote for one of the short listed entries in each of the ten categories.

The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony held in conjunction with Imark at the LegalTech London event in November. The awards will also be covered by Legal Web.tv who are one of the event's sponsors.

The closing date for nominations is Monday 25th June. There is an online nomination form available on the web.

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

TUNE IN AND WATCH LEGAL WEB.TV

Sit back and watch the latest webcasts on legal technology and new media law. The new free service from the publishers of the Insider is in streaming video format and requires RealPlayer 8. Keep watching. New content coming through.

www.legalweb.tv

TAKING THE HASSALL OUT OF EXPANSION

Wright Hassall has just signed a deal to implement the Mentor system from Perceptive Technology (020 7556 3400). Mentor will be used to enhance the capabilities of the firm's existing practice management system.

IT partner Andrew Payne said Mentor was a critical component in the firm's growth plans as it provided an e-business toolset and gave users easy access to the firm's existing knowledge base. "The new system is an integral part of our plan to provide clients with value added and personalised services," said Payne. "Mentor has enabled us to speed up our planned growth, through leveraging and building on our existing IT investment, rather than throwing away all the time, effort and expenditure we have invested on systems to date."

Although Perceptive describe Mentor as an "intellectual capital management" system, probably a more accurate term is business intelligence software. This combines aspects of both knowledge management and data mining but with an emphasis on extracting useful information out of existing database records and legacy systems.

www.perceptivetech.com

LOOKING FOR KNOWLEDGE IN THE KNOW HOW WORLD

Managing Partner magazine, in association with Perceptive Technology, has just published the results of a survey designed to assess how knowledge management is being applied within the legal industry. The results tend to confirm the Insider's long held concern that many firms are still relatively clueless when it comes to KM projects.

For example, on ROI (return on investment) although 65 percent of firms in the sample said there had been an ROI benefit, only five percent reported increased revenue and just three percent said profits had increased. Instead, 30 percent talked about the rather more woolly benefits, such as increases in overall efficiency/productivity, while 24 percent cited reductions in research time.

It was also worrying to see that although some firms claimed they were spending over £1 million on their KM projects, 32 percent were not providing any staff training on how to use the system, 12 percent were not providing support staff (including secretaries, legal trainees and assistants) with access to the system, nearly 40 percent did not update the system on a daily basis - and nine percent left the updating to trainee solicitors.

There again, as 53 percent of firms offered their partners no incentives to update the KM system - and many of those that did resorted to short term gimmicks such as handing out chocolate bars, perhaps it is a good thing that only three percent offered their clients access to their knowledge management systems!

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

■ **MAY 31, MANCHESTER.** Online Strategies for Smaller Law Firms. Series of afternoon seminars (1:30pm to 4:30pm) organised by Martindale-Hubbell looking at making the internet work for law firms. Other venues are Birmingham 13 June and London 27 June. The main speaker is Insider editor Charles Christian. The event qualifies for CPD points and costs £75 + VAT. For details call 020 7868 4867.

■ **JUNE 5, MANCHESTER.** Legal Application Integration. First of a series of half-day seminars organised by Pilgrim Systems, in conjunction with iManage, looking at collaboration within legal software solutions. The Manchester event is at the Malmaison, followed by seminars in London (7 June - The Law Society), Edinburgh (12 June - Sheraton Grand) and Birmingham (19 June - Posthouse). For details call Louise Butcher on 0131 555 9700 or email louiseB@pilgrimsystems.com

■ **JUNE 5, REDHILL.** Criminal Defence Services Regulations. Free breakfast seminar (starts 9:00am) organised by Technology for Business looking at ways IT can help deal with the new CDS rules. To book a place call 01932 781120 or email kent.brennan@tfbplc.co.uk

■ **JUNE 19, LONDON.** Knowledge Exchange Forum at the City Conference Centre, London EC2. One day event hosted by Kramer Lee & Associates and co-sponsored by iManage. The event will also showcase the thinkDOCS document assembly system, LegalKEY Technologies and feature the UK launch of Lightspeed Systems' Total Control network traffic management product for Windows. To book a place phone 01268 584666 or email marketing@kramerlee.com

■ **JUNE 20, LONDON.** CMS Open roadshow showcasing new products and strategic business partners at the Chiswell Street Brewery. Starts 10:00am and ends with lunch. For details email: michael.ballard@solution6.com

ONLINE PI SERVICE TO BREAK THE MOULD ?

With legal aid unavailable for most personal injury claims and schemes such as Claims Direct hit by adverse publicity, many law firms have been struggling to find a viable approach to offering litigation services. This month sees the launch of a new service - 121 Legals - that could fill this gap in the market and provide claimants with a no cost approach to litigation.

121 has been developed by Legal Marketing Services (01244 651600), which has been active in the UK legal sector since 1991 and already provides its network of 350 law firms with a referral service for conveyancing work. LMS is now moving into the broader litigation market, starting with the PI scheme that was developed in conjunction with Rodger Pannone of Pannone & Partners.

The scheme, which has been the subject of a six month pilot, attracts claimants through a national advertising campaign (LMS will spend £2 million on TV, press and radio ads over the next 12 months) to a call centre where claims are allocated to member firms on a pro rata basis. Firms pay LMS £350 per case - there are no subscription fees but firms are subject to LMS quality audits - while claimants take out a bank loan to fund conditional fee arrangement insurance. Denise Ballard of LMS says the beauty of the scheme is if the client wins, they get all the award but if they lose they will still not be out of pocket.

On the technology side, clients will be able to log onto an extranet to monitor the progress of their claims but because claims are managed centrally by LMS, through its own STARS software system, the scheme does not require each individual law firm to invest in its own web enabled case management system.

www.121legals.com

GOODBYE OUTLOOK VIRUSES

Over the last couple of years the curse of the emailing classes has been the number of VBS (visual basic script) viruses in circulation - from the notorious Love Bug to this month's Homepage worm - that exploit Microsoft technology to spread themselves around the internet via the contents of the recipient's Outlook address book. But could this problem be about to end?

Among the many new features of the soon to be released Microsoft Office XP suite is Outlook 2002. This new version of the popular email client now has improved security facilities including a lock on the address book that prevents other software applications - such as email viruses - from gaining remote access to the address book without permission.

■ Incidentally, any legal software applications that use Microsoft Outlook as the user interface will also have to be revised and upgraded to accommodate this security enhancement.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ LEGAL ISLAND'S IRISH LAUNCH

The Irish legal portal Legal Island has formally launched its new web site. The site began four years ago as a collection of links to firms in Belfast and Dublin but now contains over 800 links to sites of interest to anyone looking for legal materials, advice or representation in either jurisdiction. Visitors can go directly to legislation and case law relevant to Northern Ireland and the Republic, as well as search for law firms either alphabetically or by region. Future plans include providing direct access to firms for anyone with a personal injuries query as well as expanding on existing information services.

www.legal-island.com

■ ARBITRATORS GET HIGH TECH

Two London ADR organisations - the International Dispute Resolution Centre and the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators - are installing high tech courtroom equipment as part of a new DigitalCourtroom initiative by Smith Bernal International (020 7421 4067) and DOAR Communications. The new facilities, which will be available from early July, include videoconferencing and a LiveNote realtime transcription service. David Goldenberg of DOAR said technology was critical to the future of ADR as "allowing the digital presentation of evidence, along with the ability to conduct remote testimony, provides both sides of an arbitration the tools needed to make a more effective presentation."

■ EYE SEE VIDEOCONFERENCING

With law firms accounting for some 40 percent of its business, videoconference booking agency EyeNetwork (01273 201170) has started a new service - The EyeNetwork Plan - giving regular users of videoconferencing substantial price discounts. Three plans are available - Gold, Silver and Standard - with prices running from £50 per hour for ad hoc usage through to £5000 per year, which pays for all management, handling and booking for an unlimited number of conferences. The only extra is equipment hire which starts from £100 per hour.

www.eyenetwork.co.uk

NEW VIRTUAL DATA ROOM FOR M&A TEAMS

Last year virtual dealrooms were the fad du jour but now Williams Lea Legal Solutions (previously known as Elliott Slone) and online systems developer PeopleDoc (020 7469 4700) have launched the virtual data room concept. It shares the same 24/7 online access to secure information via a standard web browser approach of the dealroom but the data room has been designed with a special slant to meet the needs of lawyers working on corporate finance, commercial property and M&A projects.

One of the problems they face is providing interested parties with an opportunity to view all the documents in a particular matter and the traditional approach has been to hire an office and allow physical access to the documents for a limited period of time. With the virtual data room, parties still get access to the documents but instead of having to travel to a stuffy office - not always a convenient option for international clients - they can visit a secure web site to see electronic copies of the documents.

As such, data rooms are static repositories of material and lack the interactive, collaborative environment of the pure dealroom. On the other hand the data room contains its own interesting characteristics including watermarking to restrict the printing of unauthorised copies of documents and page server technology, which reduces download times by delivering large files to the browser one page at a time.

Williams Lea is providing virtual data rooms as a managed service. Prices start from around £1000 a month for a basic data room, which can be set up in a couple of days. Howard Slone of Williams Lea reckons by reducing time and geographical barriers, a data room can pay for itself by bringing more potential bidders into the frame.

www.peopledoc.com

ASP RECEIVES ANOTHER BLOW TO ITS CREDIBILITY

The ASP (application service provider) business model, which just 18 months ago was being touted as the next big thing in legal systems design, has received another blow to its credibility.

According to Paul Walker, the chief executive of the Sage software group, whose legal products include Carpe Diem and Timeslips, the shift towards renting software over the internet and other forms of ASP "would not happen in the next three to four years, if ever".

Walker said only 700 of Sage's 2.7 million customers worldwide had adopted one of Sage's ASP products. "It was a technology led vision that had a lot of attractions but important parts of the jigsaw were missing, such as people not wanting critical parts of their data to be off site. It was hyped," he added.

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DIGITAL HANDCUFFS ?

Midware, one of Australia's big three practice management systems suppliers, were in the UK last week talking to potential business partners. Although Midware is best known for its mid-range PMS software, managing director Mark Flack told the Insider that it was the company's other products he was hoping to launch onto the global market. These include the Consero web based client relationship management system and a new digital dictation product. Flack said he believes the future of legal IT lies in client focussed systems that add so much value to the professional relationship that they effectively create "digital handcuffs" that will tie the client to the law firm.

www.midware.com.au

LAW SOC GUIDE UNDER FIRE

Continued from front page. This year it has been extended to include a far wider range of products of interest to firms of all sizes, making it just another IT directory.

There are also grumbles about the cost of the scheme. A basic entry in the guide is £3000, while a large supplier with a couple of PMS systems would be facing a total bill of £30,000 for an entry in the main "quality assured listing".

There are complaints about the value of the scheme. One supplier, with a "quality" listing in the current guide, told the Insider they had not received a single lead despite spending over £10,000 to get into the guide. And John Meehan of MSS said instead of wanting more money, the Society should pay a refund to suppliers who went in last year's guide as the Society had not run any of the regional IT seminars that were promised as part of the deal.

Finally, John Wilde of Carydan said he was worried about potential conflicts of interest because the Law Society had made it a precondition of entry into the guide that suppliers must disclose a full list of all their user sites yet the project is being managed by Opportunity Consulting, a business that sells its own IT services to law firms and, as an accredited Amicus Attorney software trainer, apparently also has a commercial relationship with one of the suppliers (Gavel & Gown) in the guide.

TIKIT HEADING FOR AIM

Continued from front page. Tikit's directors believe the flotation will help the company take advantage of existing opportunities for expanding its business and will also enable it to attract and retain key employees.

Tikit's target market is the top 200 law firms in the UK, which currently spend between four and seven percent of their gross annual fee income on IT products and services. Last year the top 100 firms alone had a total fee income over nearly £6 billion, suggesting the City end of the legal market could be spending as much as £300 million a year on IT - although this figure does also include staff. Last year Tikit customers included 9 of the UK's top 10 firms.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SEMINARS FOR CDS

Legal IT supplier Videss says it has encountered a "huge demand" from law firms looking for advice, assistance or software to help with processing criminal contract work under the new Criminal Defence Service (CDS) procedures. In addition to training seminars for existing users, Videss is also scheduling a series of free seminars for other firms looking for advice on how to deal with CDS. To book a place contact Videss on 01274 851577 or email info@videss.co.uk

■ AMICUS USERS GROUP MEETINGS

The Amicus Users Group, for UK and Irish lawyers running Amicus Attorney software, is holding meetings next month at the Quality Hotel, Heathrow (6th June) and the Law Society in Sheffield (20th June). Contact the user group treasurer George Allingham at RTP Williams Solicitors in Haverfordwest for further details about the events.

■ ENLIGHTENMENT FOR BEGINNERS

And finally... Graham Irwin, best known in the UK legal IT market as a consultant and software developer, has a new book out. Called *Enlightenment for Beginners* it is written "for anyone who has ever thought there must be more to life than this". The book costs £7.49 and is published by CityScape Books (020 7237 6356) ISBN 0-9533331-5-9.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

www.legaltechnology.org

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