Charles Christian's

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY İNSIDER

INDEPENDENT NEWS & COMMENT ON LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

UK SET FOR BIGGEST LEGAL IT ORDER YET ?

The City law firm Linklaters is on the verge of placing what is believed to be the biggest single order seen to-date within the UK legal IT market.

Legal Technology Insider sources suggest the firm has already exchanged letters of intent with the proposed supplier of its new practice management infrastructure. But, while it is no secret that Linklaters has for some time been planning to replace many of its current IT systems, what is surprising is the choice of supplier and the size of the budget set aside to implement the project.

Eschewing the usual legal PMS suspects - CMS, Elite, Keystone and its incumbent supplier ResSoft - Linklaters has settled on SAP, a systems house better known as a developer of ERP (enterprise resource planning) systems for the commercial market. Interestingly, the other name on the final shortlist was JD Edwards, another ERP supplier from outside the traditional legal systems market.

The budget reportedly set aside for the project is £18 million, which sounds huge until it is set in the context of the fact that large law firms typically spend 6 percent of their annual turnover on IT - and Linklaters last year had a turnover of in excess of £500 million.

Linklaters decision to go the ERP route also lends some credence to the view that the big global law firms have outgrown conventional legal PMS products, which tend to be restricted to financial management, and now require systems that can help manage all their resources.

LEGAL TECHIES WIN PRIZES

The Society for Computers & Law has launched its 2002 award for 'the most outstanding application of information technology to the law in the UK and Republic of Ireland'. The closing date for entries is 12 November and the winner will be announced in London on 21 January 2002. There is an online nomination form on the SCL web site.

■ Voting has closed for the LOTIES, the UK's other major legal IT awards. The LOTIES (Legal Office Technology Innovation Awards) winners will be announced at a reception on 31 October at the LegalTech London event.

www.scl.org/award

THE INSIDER - SIX YEARS OLD TODAY

As Legal Technology Insider celebrates its sixth birthday this week, we dug out out our first issue to see which stories were making the headlines back in October 1995. Our lead story reported that Scotland's Dundas & Wilson (now part of the Anderson Legal network) had decided to replace its 130 users Windows for Workgroups peer-to-peer network but had opted for Novell NetWare 4.1 because it felt Windows NT "was not robust enough" for its needs.

Elsewhere, Berwin Leighton had just chosen Norwel to supply its new practice management system. By contrast earlier this year Berwin Leighton merged with another Nowel site - Paisner & Co - and switched to Elite. Legal aid specialist Fisher Meredith was singing the praises of its new Dart accounts system. Dart subsequently folded and the firm has since installed AIM's Evolution system. And, Sweet & Maxwell was in the final stages of beta testing a Windows 95 version of the *White Book* on CD-Rom.

We had a three partner Blackpool firm asking if it was time to migrate from a Uniplex wordprocessing system, on Unix, to WordPerfect running on Windows 95. And, we noted that a Dell Pentium 75, with 16Mb of RAM and an HP LaserJet, seemed excellent value for money at just £1650. For the same money today you could buy two Pentium 4s, each with 128Mb of RAM, huge hard disks, DVD drives and still have enough change leftover to buy a laser printer.

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www.legalnewsmedia.com

Visit the new look Legal Technology Insider web site for ▸ regularly updated news reports ▸ the Legal Web TV service ▸ a comprehensive diary of legal IT events ▸ an archive of back issues of the Insider ▸ virus reports ▸ the Legal IT jobs board ▸ the Legal Technology Solution Finder service ▸ exclusive portal links to the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) and Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators (ILCA) web sites.

FIRST STOP AIMS TO BE THE FIRST STOP

Gateley Wareing in Birmingham recently announced that in conjunction with its 'IT partner' - First Stop Computer Group - the firm would be rolling out the iManage content and document management system on a practice wide basis. Well we have heard of Gateley Wareing and are familiar with the iManage system but who are First Stop?

In fact the privately held company has been around since the mid 1980s acting as a reseller and systems integrator in the general business market - and in the process generating an enviable £24 million turnover - but it was only in the spring of 2000 that it made a concentrated move into the legal sector, when it acquired the Resolutions Systems business from ResSoft and recruited Paul Hoffbrand as its legal business manager.

Since then Surbiton based First Stop (020 8974 3545) has begun to carve itself a niche as a systems integrator and infrastructure solutions provider, in the JMC IT, MIL, Tikit and Ramesys mould, with a client list that includes Freshfields, Rowe & Maw, Mills & Reeve, Campbell Hooper, Lawrence Graham and Taylor Joynson Garrett.

Along with the iManage system, First Stop is also a reseller for Workshare's DeltaView redliner software but it is in the field of data storage and disaster recovery that the company believes it has the edge on its competitors.

As the distributor of products such as Network Appliance's NetApp Filer and KVault's Enterprise Vault, First Stop has been able to develop a range of solutions to meet modern network and data management problems. For example Gateley Wareing is also installing a NAS (network attached storage) system to provide, in the words of IT manager Dee Scarlett "fast, resilient and simple access to our documents". Other firms are running First Stop's REVS (Resilient Exchange Vault Service) to overcome some of the problems associated with relying on Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5 to handle large volumes of email traffic, including archiving and server crashes.

www.firstop.co.uk

BAILII TO REPORT ON STATUS

The British & Irish Legal Information Institute (BAILII) is holding a meeting in London tonight (10 October) to report on the latest progress of its "free the law initiative" to make primary legal materials more freely available both to lawyers and members of the public via the internet.

It is now two years since the initiative was launched and while the cynics here on the Insider believe this is a well meaning but ultimately doomed venture - because it apparently defies all commercial reality - some credit must be given to the people who are putting a lot of energy into trying to make the project work. We will be reporting on the outcome of the meeting in the next issue.

www.bailii.org

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **FIELD FISHER BUYS iMANAGE**
Field Fisher Waterhouse has chosen the iManage system to provide its new platform for internal document and content management. The firm also plans to use the system to help improve the provision of information to its clients. Kramer Lee & Associates will carry out the implementation. KLA's new phone number is 01268 494500.

■ **INFOGRAPHICS SYSTEM PREVIEW**
Infographics is running a seminar at the London Stock Exchange on 7 November (9:00am to 1:15pm) to preview the company's new case and business process management application Teamflo. Andrew Levison, of Baker Robbins, will give a keynote speech on best practice. For further details visit
www.teamflo.com

■ **NEW ONLINE PENSIONS SERVICE**
Butterworths Tolley has launched pensionsPro.com, a new online service providing legal information, current awareness materials and downloadable forms for lawyers, accountants and other professionals working in the UK pensions market. A seven day free trial of the service is available.
www.pensionspro.com

■ **LINETIME USER CONFERENCE**
Linetime is hosting a one day conference at Citrix's High Wycombe offices on Wednesday 7 November (10:00am to 3:30pm) on the theme of how to make IT earn its keep. Topics covered include: getting the basics right, future proofing IT investments and the role of IT in marketing. Speakers include Insider editor Charles Christian and Allan Carton of the Practical Solutions consultancy. For details call 0113 250 0020 or email **info@linetime.co.uk**

■ **THIS BIRD HAS FLOWN**
Geoff Hornsby has been appointed the new business development manager for the iManage system in the UK legal sector. The move follows the departure of Tom Bird, who has quit the software market to set up his own coaching and consultancy business.

ZED HOPING TO BRING 24/7 ACCESS TO INFO

Of the suppliers exhibiting at the LegalTech London event later this month (*for details see page 5*) Zed for Business (020 8606 6000) may have one of the more unusual names but it also has one of the more novel products.

As a subsidiary of the Finnish telecoms group Sonera, the company has drawn on this background to develop a new managed service that can deliver real time information to fee earners, anywhere and at any time, via any WAP compatible device, including mobile phones and PDAs. The service also supports web mail delivery to browsers.

Zed's UK manager Robert Silver is keen to emphasise this is a managed service for businesses, as distinct from just another glorified text messaging service for consumers, and that in addition to delivering emails direct to a mobile phone, the service can also handle third party commercial applications, including calendars and contact databases.

To this end Zed, which plans to focus on vertical markets including legal, has been piloting the service with at least four top 20 London firms over the past few months to determine which types of fee earner application could benefit from being wireless-enabled.

Zed for Business, who will be demonstrating the service on Stand 427 at LegalTech, has also appointed Tikit as a UK legal market reseller. The Insider understands Tikit is now investigating the viability of delivering access to the Carpe Diem time recording application via the Zed service.

http://business.zed.com

NO SURPRISES FROM TIKIT

The Tikit Group plc, which floated on the AIM market in June, has published its interim results for the six months ended 30 June 2001. The results contain no big surprises with a turnover of £4.7 million (2000 - £4.9m) and operating profit of £460k (2000 - £500k) only marginally down on the previous year. The company also reports that levels of activity have exceeded initial expectations, with a good growth in higher margin and recurring revenue business and a strong balance sheet including a cash inflow of £0.72m from operating activities.

Despite concerns that the wider UK economy is heading into recession, Tikit's executive chairman Mike McGoun remains optimistic, commenting: "The pipeline of opportunities remains visible, though we are seeing some early signs of tightening in the market, in particular on third party software sales. Although there is a great deal of uncertainty in the economy, the larger UK law firms have shown great resilience in the past in maintaining their fee levels and continuing to invest in systems that improve productivity or provide competitive advantage and at this stage the board does not anticipate that the tightening of the market will have a significant effect on prospects for the second half."

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **FENNEMORES GOES WITH AXXIA**
Milton Keynes-based Fennemores is embarking on a major overhaul of its IT infrastructure with Axxia Systems. The project, valued at £250,000, will see the firm rolling out its Artiion accounts, automatic billing and fee earner desktop software to 180 users this autumn, with the installation of a case management system planned for next year. The firm was previously an Avenue user.

■ **ANOTHER TFB SCOTTISH WIN**
The Anderson Partnership, which has has nine partners and 50 staff in offices in Glasgow and Edinburgh, is the latest Scottish firm to install a Technology for Business Partner for Windows integrated practice and case management system.

■ **PRACCTICE JOINS LSSA**
Pracctice Limited has joined the Legal Software Suppliers Association, the UK legal IT industry body. Pracctice quality director Richard Sorensen said a determining factor for joining was the fact LSSA is now working on an XML standard that will allow data definitions to be shared among suppliers and could also meet the requirements of the LSC and Criminal Defence Service.

www.lssa.co.uk

■ **NEW VERSION OF CMS OPEN**
Solution 6 has released CMS OPEN Version 4.3. It supports Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 and 2000 database servers and has over 30 enhancements including an OmniLedger facility. This allows general ledger data storage and reporting hierarchies to be manipulated so firms can report in numerous countries while maintaining optimal consolidated reporting structures.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY JOBS BOARD

If you are a law firm or systems supplier looking for IT staff, including positions in management, development, support, sales and training, post your vacancies free on the Insider web site. Email the details to **news@legalnewsmedia.com**

LATENT DMS MARKET WORTH £20 MILLION ?

Speaking at the company's recent value added reseller (VAR) conference Gordon Olson, the chairman of low cost document management systems developer Meticulus Solutions, said he believed the latent market for legal DMS software in the UK was worth at least £20 million in licence fees alone.

Olson said although traditional DMS products, such as PC Docs, were perceived as not affordable by most law firms, there was a growing recognition - among the so called late majority market - that document management was desirable as it could deliver productivity and quality management benefits, providing the price was right.

Explaining the Meticulus decision to sell its systems indirectly via resellers, Olson said that as most of these firms rely heavily on 'trusted suppliers' of IT systems and support services, they are therefore more likely to buy a DMS product from the existing supplier of their accounts and office automation software than a specialist best of breed systems integrator.

■ Although Olson describes his company's Meticulist system as the "Model T Ford of the document management market" it is actually a sophisticated product that draws on the company's lengthy track record in this field, going back to the Kinesis system in the early 1990s. The system sells for around £350 a seat, including the "SQL Server 7 in a box" server side software and is fully integrated with the Windows desktop, with the 'Find' command launching all search functions.

Along with conventional reseller deals, Meticulus (01249 700050) is running a 'referring partner' scheme for organisations, such as scanning bureaux, who are in the document business and can generate sales leads but do not handle technology implementation projects.

AVOIDING THE PYRAMIDS OF WORDPROCESSING PAIN

Jamie Wodetzki of SpeedLegal, the Australian supplier in which Wolters Kluwer/CCH now has a shareholding, was recently in the UK to give presentations on the company's XML based SmartPrecedent document assembly software.

So why use XML? According to Wodetzki, the key benefit is it allows content to be stored in a structured fashion, in a vendor neutral format that is not dependent on any underlying technology.

Wodetzki compares this with the situation prevailing in the legal market since the 1980s where every change of wordprocessing platform - from Wang to WordPerfect to Word 6 to Word 97 - has also forced users to recompile their content and macros. A switch to XML, says Wodetzki, could avoid what he calls these "pyramids of pain".

www.speedlegal.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **ADDED SECURITY FOR E-WORK**
Metastorm, the developers of the e-work workflow system used by a number of law firms including Herbert Smith, has enhanced the security of its software by incorporating Biometricate's fingerprint recognition technology.

Typically when e-work users reach the approval stage in a particular process or application, a fingerprint will be requested to verify the approver's identity. If confirmed, the document is digitally signed and a record stored in a database, to create an audit trail of all transactions, whether approved or rejected. It may sound OTT in terms of security but Metastorm (020 8971 1500) say traditional password based security is inherently insecure with up to 50 percent of all passwords being misused.

www.metastorm.com

■ **TIMESLICE LATEST UPGRADES**
Systems supplier Timeslice (020 7231 0073) which this year celebrate 30 years in the legal IT market, has added three new enhancements to its Lawman 2000 practice management system. Matter Manager is a comprehensive case management tool specifically designed for the legal profession. Fee Earner Workstation is an easy to use desktop function handling all aspects of time recording, information management, bill generation and reporting. Finally, Lawman 2000 now also incorporates a full marketing database.

■ **OSBORNE CLARKE ROLL OUT UMS**
Osborne Clarke has rolled out a unified messaging system across the firm's UK and international offices. The new system will allow Osborne's staff to access their voicemail, email and faxes, as well as help desk support, from their remote laptops and mobile phones. With the exception of the Palo Alto office, the implementation work was handled by Twickenham based Korus Systems (020 8407 4222). The technology behind the system is based on CallXpress UMS and RightFax networked fax software, with messages in all formats delivered into a single Microsoft Exchange inbox.

www.korus.com

LEGAL TECH LONDON THREE WEEKS AWAY

The LegalTech London conference and exhibition opens its doors for business in Hall N6 at the Docklands ExCeL centre in three weeks' time - *see admission details below*.

Having finally moved from the bunker environment of the Barbican, the event organisers have taken advantage of the new venue to expand the scale and scope of the show.

The free exhibition has stands from just about every supplier serving the UK legal IT market - in fact so many exhibitors will be present that the original floor plan has been redrawn to accomodate them. The Insider will report on the new product launches in its 21 November issue.

In addition the event also includes a comprehensive, and very reasonably priced, conference programme. This is split into three simultaneous tracks: strategy & technology, communications & technology, and administration. Topics covered in the first two tracks include: client extranets, online legal services, the use of XML in litigation, case management, online dealrooms and the creation of the paperless court. The administration track includes presentations by the BIALL law librarians group and the Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators (ILCA).

Although both days start with free breakfast briefings featuring major commentators, including Martin Telfer from Mallesons in Australia and Jay Jaffe from the USA, the conference timetable has been constructed to still give delegates plenty of time to visit the exhibition stands.

■ LegalTech London runs for two days - Wednesday 31 October & Thursday 1 November - at ExCeL in Docklands. You can reach ExCeL via road and plane (the venue is about 5 minutes from London City Airport) but probably the most convenient way is to use the Docklands Light Railway, travelling to Custom House, Royal Victoria or Prince Regent station. You can join the DLR from the Jubilee line extension to Canning Town or directly from the London Underground at Bank, Tower Gateway, Bow Church and Stratford.

The opening hours for the free exhibition are 10:00am to 5:00pm (Wednesday) and 10:00am to 4:30pm (Thursday). The conference starts at 8:45am with the free breakfast briefings, followed by the pay-for sessions at 10.00am to 4:30pm. Admission is £140 (+ VAT) per session or you can buy a carnet ticket allowing an organisation to send delegates to a total of 20 sessions for £850 (+ VAT).

www.imark.co.uk/legaltech

ARK RETHINKS LSE OPTIONS

After consultations with exhibitors, the Ark Group, the organisers of last month's Legal Solutions Europe event at The Hague, is reviewing its plans for LSE 2002. Originally scheduled to take place in Jersey in mid-October, Ark is considering alternative dates and locations, with Paris now emerging as a more popular venue.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

■ OCTOBER 9, THAMES VALLEY. One day seminar on use of Kommunicate's RightFAX and messaging systems in conjunction with Lotus Notes and Domino. Takes place at IBM Bedfont Lakes, Feltham. For details call Kommunicate on 01962 835004.

■ OCTOBER 16, HARROGATE. Lexcel accreditation seminars for law firms and local government legal departments. Organised by Axxia, call Heidi Cranfield on 0118 960 2602 for details.

■ OCTOBER 17, NEWCASTLE. Laserform Roadshows demonstrating a range of products including forms, legal accounts, case management & criminal billing systems. The seminar series ends in Manchester in November. For details call Andrea Priestley on 01925 750025 or email **andrea.priestley@laserform.co.uk**

■ OCTOBER 24, LONDON. Web Strategies for Smaller Law Firms. Half day seminar organised by Martindale-Hubbell and featuring Insider editor Charles Christian looking at the ways law firms can use the internet as part of their business development strategy. There are subsequent seminars in Leeds (15 November), Bristol (29 November) and London (6 December). For more details call 020 7868 4858 or email **seminars@martindale.com**

■ OCTOBER 31 & 1 NOVEMBER, LONDON. LegalTech London, Hall N6 at the ExCeL Centre in Docklands. The organisers - American Lawyer Media and Imark - aim to make this the UK's leading legal IT conference and exhibition. Keynote speakers include Martin Telfer from Mallesons Stephen Jaques in Australia, Brian Collins from Clifford Chance and Jay Jaffe from the USA. Session topics include: client extranets, online legal services, the use of XML in litigation, case management, online dealrooms and the creation of the paperless court. For more details call 07000 763896 or visit **www.imark.co.uk/legaltech**

HUMAN RIGHTS COURT BUYS TIKIT PORTAL

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has bought a range of document and knowledge management products and system development tools from Tikit that will provide the foundations for Phase II of the Court's existing Court Management Information System (CMIS).

In addition to supplying software, Tikit is also working with the ECHR on the development of Phase II. This will see CMIS integrated with an upgraded version of the Court's current public information system (HUDOC) to create an internet portal providing the 800 million members of the public within the Council of Europe's 43 member states with web access to an extensive database of information about the Court's activities. This will include the current progress of the thousands of cases commenced each year, through to judgments and the status of measures adopted by governments to implement the Court's judgments.

www.echr.coe.int/

IS MICROSOFT IIS SECURE ?

In the wake of a number of recent, well publicised virus security scares, including the Nimda (aka W32.Minda) and Code Red worms, IT analysts Gartner have issued a warning that they believe Microsoft's Internet Information Server (IIS) is inherently flawed and that the only way to ensure ongoing network security is to dump IIS and replace it with alternative web server software from suppliers such as iPlanet and Apache.

Although Gartner's advice has been criticised on the grounds of practicality - IIS is used to power over eight million web sites worldwide - these latest scares have prompted Microsoft to release a free 'lock down wizard' security patch for IIS, NT 4, Windows 2000, XP and Explorer. It is available on CD (if you have a user passport) and as a free download from the Microsoft web site.

McAfee, the well-known developer of anti-virus systems, has also launched its own solution, called SecureIIS. The company claims this offers a proactive approach that will offer protection against future intrusions by protecting against entire classes of hack attacks, rather than looking for specific and known attack signatures.

www.microsoft.com/security
http://corporate.mcafee.com

NEW SEARCH ENGINE FOR INSIDER WEB SITE

The Insider has added the Infolaw search engine to its web site. This free service allows users to search the legal web for legal resources, organisations, goods and services.

www.legalnewsmedia.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **LAWTEL SPECIALIST BULLETINS**
Lawtel has launched a series of specialist bulletins that are delivered weekly by email and provide a detailed round up of the latest developments from the UK and EU. Bulletins are available in the following areas: employment, TMT, intellectual property and competition. Bulletins can be printed off or browsed as an online resource so users can take advantage of hyperlinks to the full text of documents held on official UK and EU web sites.

www.lawtel.com

■ **WESTLAW BRANCHES INTO CRIME**
Sweet & Maxwell has launched a new online criminal law service called Westlaw UK Crime. Along with daily updates, the service includes online access to leading criminal practice texts, including *Archbold*, the *Criminal Law Review* and the *Criminal Appeal Reports*. The launch is timed to coincide with the imminent publication of Sir Robin Auld's review of the operation of the criminal courts system in England & Wales.

■ **LSC NOW RUNNING JUST ASK!**
Responsibility for running and managing the Just Ask! Community Legal Service web site has been transferred from the Lord Chancellor's Department, who were responsible for the development and April 2000 launch of the site, to the Legal Services Commission.

www.justask.org.uk

■ **CONTEXT-HAMMICK RETAIL DEAL**
Electronic legal publishers Context have teamed up with Hammicks Legal Bookshops in a new retail venture that will allow customers to buy Context's Justis CD-Rom range off the shelf from Hammick's Fleet Street outlet. Shop customers will also be able to take out subscriptions to databases available through Context's internet service Justis.com. Amazingly, this is the first time digital legal titles have been sold indirectly. Hammicks customers will still receive all the benefits enjoyed by direct customers, including support from Context help desk and training staff.

www.hammickslegal.co.uk

COURT TV - LIVE AND KICKING AT THE HAGUE

Although the OJ Simpson trial is widely reckoned to have killed off any chance of the Lord Chancellor's Department ever approving the regular televising and broadcast of court proceedings in the UK, one place where court TV is still very much alive and kicking is within the armed fortress-like environs of the UN International War Crimes Tribunal at The Hague.

The Insider recently had an opportunity to see this service in action and the contrast with OJ could not have been more striking. Instead of providing a macabre form of reality TV entertainment, the object of the exercise at The Hague is to ensure justice is clearly seen to be done - a key factor given the political controversy surrounding the trial of people like Slobodan Milosevic and the geographic remoteness of the court from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia.

Inevitably precautions must to be taken to protect the safety of witnesses, including distorting voices, blanking out faces and even introducing a 30 minute gap between filming and actual transmission as a final safeguard against witnesses being inadvertently identified.

Despite these restrictions, thanks to a battery of remote controlled but unobtrusive cameras in every court, the employment of producers from the TV industry and an investment in control rooms and mixing desks that would be the envy of many professional TV production companies, the way the proceedings are televised makes for an objective legal viewing experience that even most conservative English judges would find hard to criticise.

■ Smith Bernal/LiveNote Technologies, whose LiveNote real time transcription system is in use at The Hague (and who organised the Insider's visit to the Tribunal) have released Version 8.0 of the LiveNote software. New features include real time messaging between courtroom and back office support users of LiveNote, a portable case file format to batch import/export LiveNote transcripts, and enhanced file replication between local hard drives and networks.

LONDON FIRM PIONEERS DIGITAL SIGNATURES

London property and IT lawyers Kaltons have notched up what they believe is a legal first by deploying the ViaCode (part of Royal Mail) digital signature system to streamline confidential client communications. It will initially be used to safeguard internal communications prior to using it to secure direct client contact by email. In addition to digital signatures, Kaltons will be using a ViaCode web server certificate to protect web/extranet based transactions. Kaltons senior partner Maitland Kalton said the security move is seen as particularly important for property conveyancing, an area traditionally tied up in paperwork.

www.kaltons.co.uk

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BPM - THE NEXT NEW NEW THING ?

Its been a while since we have had a new craze in the legal IT market but we think we have just identified the next new best thing since sliced bread in the shape of business process management software. It even comes complete with a handy TLA (three letter acronym) namely BPM and already we are hearing the clatter of consultants' feet as they scramble to get on board this latest bandwagon.

So what is BPM? At the moment it appears to be little more than a new name for a workflow system and in fact at least one supplier has already rebranded its existing case management software with the new BPM monicker.

Of course there is a serious side to this in that for many years one of the holy grails of all legal software developers has been to devise workflow or matter management systems that could help improve fee earner productivity by automating those recurring aspects of day-to-day legal practice that do not lend themselves to the high volume, sausage machine approach of the traditional case management system.

The question is: does BPM add anything new to this situation or is it just an excuse for a rebranding exercise, in much the same way that in the early 1990s the humble legal accounts package sprouted a few extra bells and whistles to become a practice management system.

Perhaps we are being unduly sceptical but it does also seem a convenient coincidence that BPM should come along just as the online legal services/e-commerce bubble has clearly burst and interest in the current fad for knowledge management systems has probably peaked.

DLA's IT director Daniel Pollick once famously observed that the legal world was "blown along by more technology crazes than Toys 'R' Us". BPM looks to be the next one.

WE HAVE WAYS OF MAKING YOU TALK

Following on from our story in the last issue about European law firms apparently being happy to work with English language legal software, the managing director of one UK systems supplier told the Insider this trend was most graphically demonstrated during the course of a recent product presentation he gave to a German law firm. When the question of language came up, the supplier was dumbfounded to hear the firm's managing partner say they had solved the problem by introducing a policy of sacking all members of staff who could not learn English.

Stephen Murphy of Hummingbird has a different perspective on this issue. He told the Insider it was a little galling to know his company had spent hundreds of thousands of dollars developing foreign language versions of products like PC Docs, only to discover that most European firms only wanted the English version.

DID KEYSTONE START EALING COMEDY ?

Keystone has advised the London Stock Exchange that contract negotiations are underway with Clifford Chance and that the company has been selected as joint preferred supplier (with Oracle) for a new practice management system. No further details will be released until the deal is complete and a contract signed.

The news has not stopped Keystone's shares from bumping along near their 12 month low although it is unclear whether this is a result of the general depression in all TMT stocks, the aftermath of the WTC attack or reports that Linklaters (*see front page*) will not be turning to Keystone for its new PMS.

The news also prompted speculation that Chris Hoad's recent resignation as general manager of CMS Europe was linked to CMS failing to win the Clifford Chance order. While it is true Hoad spent the last five years at Clifford Chance, latterly as head of financial systems, he only joined CMS in late June, by when it was already an open secret that Clifford Chance and Keystone were in talks.

We suspect the timing was purely coincidental and that the official reason given for his departure - the difficulties of commuting daily from East Anglia to Ealing and Hoad's desire to return to consulting in the City - is genuine. In the meantime perhaps CMS should consider reopening its office in the City of London.