

Charles Christian's

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

INDEPENDENT NEWS & COMMENT ON LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

OYEZ RETURN TO CASE MANAGEMENT MARKET

After a 15 year gap the OyezStraker group has returned to the legal case management software market with the launch of its Oyez CaseLite system, which was developed in association with the legal software specialist Pracctice.

CaseLite is a low cost but fully featured case management system specifically designed for smaller law firms and practice groups of no more than 10 users. Oyez recommend the software is installed on both fee earners' and support staff's PCs, running across either a Windows NT4 or 2000 network.

The system, which is integrated with the OyezForms electronic legal forms package and features time recording, time ledger, contact manager, full matter details and history, management reports and automated critical date warnings, is based around a series of pre-defined workflows. Workflows available for 2002 including asylum, crime, debt recovery, conveyancing, family & matrimonial, probate, trusts, property management, wills & deeds and fast track personal injury.

Pracctice's managing director John Taylor told the Insider that although CaseLite was aimed at firms with 5 to 10 users, the Pracctice connection meant that if their requirements changed, they could upgrade to the full Pracctice Osprey accounts and practice management system whilst still retaining their CaseLite workflows. Taylor said the software received a very positive reception from delegates visiting the recent LegalTech London event, where it made its public debut.

Oyez, which was one of the UK pioneers of legal case management software in the early 1980s, will be marketing CaseLite through its Oyez Legal Software division (020 7556 3200). The sales director is Matt Garrett who, until recently, headed sales at Pracctice.

THE LEGAL HITLIST IS BACK

The Insider's Legal Hitlist chart of the UK's busiest legal web sites is back in action following some important changes in our methodology. The chart for October can be found on **page 7** together with details of a new interactive data feed on the Insider web site.

SOLICITEC BECOME PARTNERS IN CRIME

Tuckers, one of the largest criminal practices in the country, is teaming up with systems supplier Solicitec to develop a new case management system for handling criminal legal aid/defence service work. The system, which will be pilot tested by over 100 fee earners in Tuckers' own offices in London and Manchester, should be released by the end of this year and will subsequently be marketed to other firms specialising in criminal law.

According to Tuckers' senior partner Franklin Sinclair, who is also the chairman of the Criminal Law Solicitors Association, along with helping firms comply with the latest CDS/legal aid requirements, one of the key objectives of the partnership with Solicitec is to create a system "that will improve the efficiency of our processes at every stage to increase productivity and profitability within our criminal function."

Sinclair said his firm spent six months looking at over 30 different case management systems before deciding to work with Solicitec on the development of the package.

LEGAL TECH REVIEW

This month saw the LegalTech London event make its first appearance at the new ExCeL venue in Docklands. For our review of the new product launches and show report turn to **pages 4 & 5**.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

www.legalnewsmedia.com

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HERBERT SMITH TAKE WORKSHARE SYNERGY

Herbert Smith has just placed a 1500 user licence order for Workshare Technology's Synergy 2.0 document collaboration application. The software, which has been integrated with the firm's iManage DMS and Office 2000 systems, is being pilot tested prior to its firm-wide rollout.

Although the Herbert Smith deal is the first major order for Synergy, Insider sources report that the product is currently being evaluated by most of the top 10 law firms in London. Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe in San Francisco has also ordered the software.

Given the popularity of Workshare's DeltaView redlining software, which is currently the fastest ever selling legal application in the United States, it is hardly surprising that its Synergy product is also being well received. But what exactly is Synergy and what does it do?

Company co-founder and chief technology officer Barrie Hadfield told the Insider that Workshare was focussing on developing what he called "document change management" (DCM) software that was compatible with both Microsoft Word and all the major document systems.

According to Hadfield, while redlining products such as DeltaView let users see changes retrospectively, the role of Synergy is to allow users to collaborate on changes as they happen. This is achieved by creating an environment in which 'contributing authors', such as clients, can work on amendments to a replica of a document but the master copy remains under the control of a 'managing author', such as the partner or fee earner in charge of the matter.

Given that Synergy apparently has the market to itself (its nearest competitors are the 'track changes' feature in Microsoft Word and the 'annotate documents' element in the new Adobe Acrobat 5.0), Workshare could be about to replicate the success of its DeltaView product.

MERGERS - ALL EYES ON THE SOLENT TRIANGLE

Last month's merger between two of the largest law firms in the Solent Triangle - Blake Laphorn and Sherwin Oliver - has prompted speculation that a major new IT contract is up for grabs.

Top 100 firm Blake Laphorn, which has offices in the Portsmouth and Southampton area, is currently the flagship site for Videss systems. However Sherwin Oliver, a one-time pioneer of legal technology (the firm's managing partner Nigel Steward was a director of the IBM system house The Professional Connection back in the 1980s) run an old London Bridge Trial 400 legacy system. Faced with the need to replace the Trial system and create a platform that can support the practice's extended IT requirements, reports suggest the newly merged firm is considering moving to a larger system, such as Elite or CMS Open.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ THOMSON PUBLISHERS COMBINE

Two parts of the Thomson publishing group - Sweet & Maxwell and Gee - are merging to form what they are calling a "powerhouse" in the legal and regulatory publishing market in the UK and Ireland. The new organisation, to be known as the Sweet & Maxwell Group, will employ 700 employees.

■ TFB WINS MAJOR UPGRADE DEAL

Long time Technology for Business systems user Forbes Solicitors in Lancashire has given TFB one of its biggest contracts of the year as part of the firm's £750K overhaul of its IT infrastructure. Forbes will implement TFB's Partner for Windows case and practice management system across 300 desktops in nine offices.

■ IRWIN INVESTS IN WORKFLOW

Irwin Mitchell and its IT partner Axxia Systems have announced details of their latest project: a £50,000 venture to boost systems integration and simplify client and matter inception. The firm will use Axxia's XML based e-Tran system to sit as a smart interface between its various discrete databases and automatically populate them with matching sets of inputted data.

Initially this will focus client and matter inception, a process traditionally requiring a time consuming set up via the accounts system, conflict of interest checking and subsequent rekeying into other practice databases. Irwin Mitchell IT director Richard Hodgkinson describes the new approach as an "intelligent window" using a simple browser form, accessible via the firm's intranet, and requiring client and matter details to be entered once, with e-Tran automatically handling the rest of the process.

■ NEW LASERFORM USER GROUP

Solicitor and long time legal IT user Andrew Lutley is setting up a user group for firms running the Laserform Legal Accounts 6 package. The first stage will be the establishment of a free maillist for users to exchange views and comments. If you would like to join please email Andrew Lutley at: ajlutley@elawuk.com

SYSCORP HOPE GHOST WILL SCARE HOTDOCS

Legal systems supplier Syscorp (01707 824824) is hoping the latest addition to its product portfolio - the GhostFill forms automation and document assembly software - will provide the current UK market leader HotDocs with some serious competition.

Originally developed in South Africa by Korbitec, until now the product has lacked a regular distribution channel in the UK. Syscorp plans to change this and has recruited document assembly specialist Gary Rodrigues (ex Capsoft UK/HotDocs and Rapidocs) to head up the sales operation.

GhostFill is based around Microsoft's COM automation technology, supports multiple file formats including Word DOC, RTF, HTML and TXT and can now handle the automatic completion of PDF forms.

In a related development, Wragge & Co has just announced it is to invest in Syscorp's CaseFlex matter management system. Although this is the first major order for CaseFlex in the UK, it is widely used by law firms in the United States where it is known as LawBase. Wragges will use CaseFlex to streamline the management and processing of work on routine matters by fee earners.

ANOTHER LARGE FIRM SENDS OUT AN SOS MESSAGE

Although the SOS (Solicitors Own Software) practice management system has traditionally been viewed as a middle market product for High Street firms, the last year has seen a growing number of top 100 firms buying the system. The most recent of these wins is Cardiff-based Hugh James Ford Simey which has opted for the SOS PMS product running in conjunction with Solicitec's SolCase case management software.

The system, which is being used by 200 fee earners across Hugh James' six offices, replaces the firm's Pilgrim LawSoft package. Other SOS top 100 wins include part of Bevan Ashford - again in conjunction with Solicitec, Davies Wallis Foyster and TLT Solicitors (created by the merger Trumps and Lawrence Tucketts). Not a lot of people know this but Eversheds in Cardiff also runs SOS, effectively as a middleware accounts system processing data from their case management software before it is posted to the firm's Elite PMS package.

Incidentally, while the two-in-one combination of SOS in conjunction with Solicitec is undoubtedly a key selling point, we are hearing from users that another attraction of the SOS option is that the practice management software includes an integrated marketing and CRM facility that appeals to firms wanting something more than a run of the mill mail merge but not the in depth functionality of a dedicated client relationship management system such as Interface InterAction.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Andrew Murphy has joined the **CMS Open** UK sales team as the account manager for Northern England & Scotland.

Andrew, who was formerly at **Autonomy** and **Knowledge Management plc**, will be based in the Leeds office and responsible for new business sales and account management of the existing client base in the North. Staying with **CMS**, the company's latest win is the Scottish top 10 law firm **Tods Murray**, which has offices in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

DiscLaw Publishing, the company behind the widely used **Emplaw.co.uk** employment law web site, has moved to new offices in York. The postal address is PO Box 586, York YO30 1XN and the phone number is 0870 751 8905.

Gerald Newman, previously the deputy director of communications at the **Law Society**, has been appointed the practice director of the **Cloisters** set of barristers chambers in the Temple.

Dee Wilde has joined **Chester & Miles** (0117 924 9241) - the developers of the Iken workflow/DMS system - with responsibility for business development.

Document management specialist **Kramer Lee & Associates** has appointed **Allan Bower** as its new managing director with effect from 1st January 2002. Bower, currently the IT director at **Lawrence Graham**, will take over from the company's co-founder **Tom Lee**. Lee, who has run the TLA since its inception four years ago, remains a board director and will now focus on business development.

Pilgrim Systems is continuing its expansion plans with the recruitment of 14 additional staff, bringing to a total of 65 the number of people employed in its Edinburgh, Aberdeen and London offices. The recruits range from software developers to account managers.

Finally, more on **Richard Holway** (see last issue) who has recently joined **Berwin Leighton Paisner** as a special adviser. Holway will be involved in helping develop the firm's legal practice in the corporate acquisitions, technology joint ventures and outsourcing fields. The development of the firm's own IT strategy, including extranet links with clients, remains the remit of **Janet Day**, the firm's IT director.

LEGAL TECH LONDON - WHAT WAS NEW ?

Although 2001 may not be remembered as a classic year for product launches, there was still enough good new stuff on show at LegalTech London to make the trip down to Docklands worthwhile.

As reported on our front page, the highlight of the show was undoubtedly the **Oyez/Pracctice CaseLite** system, which hopes to plug the gap in the market for a viable entry level case management system for smaller firms.

Another technology many small firms are looking at as an answer to their IT prayers is ASP. **Axxia** used LegalTech as an opportunity to give its ASP service its first public outing. **DPS Software** was offering sneak previews of the ASP/thin client system it will be launching in the New Year. And, by way of a permutation on the ASP theme, **A M Services** (0151 734 3563) launched the new legal accounts bureau it has set up with **Meridian Legal Systems** (no relation to Bar supplier **Meridian Law**). Called **interACctive**, it effectively outsources all accounting activities but still keeps the practice in touch via an interactive internet link. For more details visit www.interacctive.com

Elsewhere at LegalTech there was further evidence of the impact of the web on systems design. **Norwel** launched its **DesktopOnline** extranet portal "to meet the demands of our clients' clients". And **AIM Professional** used the event to launch **Evolution 1.05d**, the latest version of its PMS system. This latest iteration, which runs on SQL Server, offers a browser based fee earner desktop with full integration with Microsoft Word and Outlook to give users a common interface to their email, web, case and practice management files.

Finally, on the knowledge management front **Solcara Ltd** (0870 3332966) - a new name to us but it has worked with Linklaters, Macfarlanes and Freshfields - launched its **Client Partner** system, while on the **Tikit** stand US supplier **SV Technology** was demonstrating its KMS product. Both share a similar approach to capturing law firm intellectual capital as the **Perceptive Technology Mentor** system which was also being demonstrated at LegalTech.

LAWYER SHOW - WE ARE 14

The Lawyer magazine's Information Systems for Lawyers conference makes its 14th annual outing in London in February. The programme includes sessions on: strategic vision from McKinsey, using IT to win more business, new ways to train lawyers in IT, measuring the ROI on IT investments and e-business offerings and service delivery to clients. There are also two breakout sessions and an optional half day workshop on IT Training. Chaired by Chris Bull from Osborne Clarke, the show takes place on 26 & 27 February 2002 at a new venue - the recently refurbished Hotel Russell in Holborn. For details call 020 7970 4713 or email swarshal@centaur.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ KEYSTONE ROLLS OUT WEB PMS

Keystone Solutions this month begins shipping a full internet version of its Keystone Professional PMS software. In addition to the internet architecture, the latest release includes features required by North American law firms interested in implementing Keystone. The software is available to existing Keystone users free of charge. There are two versions of the software - 2001/1 is its final client server only version, while 2001/2 offers internet or client server deployment.

■ G2 ENTERS UK SPEECH MARKET

The Dutch-based speech recognition company G2 Speech has begun selling its LegalSpeech system in the UK. G2's flagship site on the continent is the international law firm Stibbe.

www.g2speech.com

BUZZWORD CORNER - ERM SOFTWARE

Yet another new type of software and another new TLA (three letter acronym) to contend with. This time it is the ERM system which, according to software developer Extensity Inc (01932 268720 - the UK office is in Weybridge) is shorthand for "employee relationship management" software.

So what can ERM do? Extensity describe ERM as "a new class of software that reduces operational costs by bringing efficiencies to a company's most valuable asset and largest expense: its workforce". The Extensity suite of ERM applications automates travel planning, expense reporting, project time capture and procurement to help firms streamline employee-based activities.

Extensity say a good example of ERM is its Expense Reports system which is currently being rolled out to 2000 users within the US law firm Holland & Knight. Using Extensity, Holland & Knight is moving from a manual paper-based expense reporting process to an automated one. The Holland & Knight deal was won by Elite which resells the Extensity products in the legal market.

www.extensity.com

LEGAL TECH LONDON - THE JURY IS STILL OUT

It is one of the facts of life that legal IT suppliers always complain about exhibitions they attend. But what are we to make of the recent LegalTech London event where, to-date, we have only found one supplier - Practtice - prepared to say it had a good show?

As for the rest? JBA/Carydan and SOS have already told the Insider they will not be going back while a number of others, including Elite, MSS, Solicitec, AIM, Norwel and Axxia, have said they are reviewing their options. Or as one of them put it: "there are a lot of opportunities in the legal IT events calendar, we need to evaluate all the options carefully to get maximum value from our marketing spend."

So what was the event really like? Visitor numbers were marginally down. The organisers say just 50 less than last year, which we reckon is correct although the barn like nature of ExCeL (compared with the Barbican rabbit warren) made the venue look emptier than it actually was. It is also worth noting that all IT events are currently suffering from the economic recession - the organisers of Comdex in Las Vegas this month conceded attendances there were at their lowest since the early 1990s.

What of the venue? In terms of design and facilities, ExCeL is by far the most attractive exhibition hall in the UK today - and the catering facilities in the concourse outside the hall proved popular for people wanting to hold private meetings. But the location? So far to the east in Docklands that one US visitor was told by a cab driver that it would have been quicker to get there from Holland than the Holland Park hotel in London where he was staying.

But, as another delegate pointed out, all venues in London are potentially difficult for out-of-London visitors to reach - and the planned extension to the Dockland Light Railways could reduce journey times next year.

Then there were the seminar sessions. Some, like *The Lawyer* breakfast briefing on the first day were a roaring success whereas others were poorly attended and left speakers grumbling about the way they were run. The blame here lies in part with whoever decided to build the seminar theatres under the City Airport flight path in dimly lit tents with badly arranged seating, no sound proofing and inadequate microphones.

There again LegalTech is not the only event to be guilty of these sins - in fact very few conference organisers seem to appreciate that it helps if both speakers and delegates in a seminar session can see and hear each other.

So what of the future? The organisers of LegalTech say they have taken on board the criticisms and are looking at alternative venues for October 2002. From exhibitors however, on the sticky question of whether London can still support two legal technology shows, the message is "the jury is still out." And it is likely to remain out at least until suppliers have had an opportunity to measure the results of next February's rival Legal IT show.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

■ NOVEMBER 27-29, DEN HAAG, NETHERLANDS. Knowledge Management Europe conference organised by the Ark Group. For details visit www.kmeurope.com

■ NOVEMBER 29, LONDON. The Law Society Law Management Section annual Managing for Success conference at the Mayfair Intercontinental. Speakers include Julian Boardman-Weston, and Andrew Otterburn. Fee £290 + VAT (LMS members £220 + VAT). The event qualifies for 5 CPD points. For details call CLT on 0121 355 0900.

■ NOVEMBER 29, BRISTOL. 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 is a further seminar in London on 6 December. For details call 020 7868 4858 or email seminars@martindale.com

■ DECEMBER 4 LONDON. Knowledge Management. Half day seminar (starts 9:15am) organised by Tikit at their Africa House offices looking at trends in KMS. Speakers include KM consultant Tim Travers. For more details call Eliza Hedegaard on 020 7400 3754 or email Eliza.Hedegaard@tikit.com

■ DECEMBER 11-12, HONG KONG. The 2nd Annual Pan-Asia Legal Systems & Technology Conference & Exhibition. For details visit www.legalsys-tech.com

■ JANUARY 21, LONDON. The Society for Computers & Law's annual IT awards ceremony at The Law Society's Hall.

■ FEBRUARY 4-6, NEW YORK. LegalTech New York (Hilton Hotel & Towers). www.legaltechshow.com

■ FEBRUARY 6 & 7, LONDON. The Legal IT 2002 show at the Islington Business Design Centre. Admission free, doors open 9:30am. www.legalitshow.com

VIRTUAL LAW FIRM TO DO A PRICELINE

Boldly going where no law firm has dared go before, from this week LawGym, the Croydon-based virtual solicitors practice, is offering legal services to business clients using a pricing model similar to that of Priceline's 'name your price' consumer oriented internet e-commerce service.

A prospective client visiting the site can choose whether to buy legal advice at the fee rate LawGym sets or at a price they - the client - wants to pay. In the latter case, visitors can post details of a matter - and how much they are prepared to pay - on the LawGym web site. Within 48 hours LawGym will contact those prospects whose work they decide to handle. If they cannot or will not take on a matter then no contact will be made. LawGym is keen to stress that posting a matter is free and without obligation on either themselves or the prospective client.

Solicitor and LawGym founder Patricia Ogunfeibo told the Insider: "LawGym started out with the aim of making the purchase of legal services easier and cheaper for small businesses. This is another step towards our goal. When we give advice under our 'you set the price' model, we know there will be no dispute over fees."

www.lawgym.com

TWO MORE FOR HOT DOCS

The competition may be on the increase (see GhostFill story in this issue) but when it comes to actually winning sales Capsoft UK, with its HotDocs system, continues to dominate the UK legal document assembly market. Latest deals include Morgan Cole, who will be using it to create precedents, and Sweet & Maxwell, who are extending their use of HotDocs in their CD-Rom products.

COBBETTS EMAIL HELPLINE

Manchester based Cobbetts has set up a dedicated email legal helpline service for one of its fastest growing clients Strategic Systems Solutions which has five offices across the North of England. The service gives SSS staff direct email access to a team of Cobbetts' lawyers who can advise on private client matters including matrimonial, wills, probate, residential conveyancing and financial services.

ONLINE STRATEGIES WHITE PAPER AVAILABLE NOW

A Legal Technology Insider white paper *Online Strategies for Smaller Law Firms* is available now free of charge in either Word .doc or PDF file format. The white paper contains notes and practical tips for firms considering developing a web site or online strategy for the first time. For a copy of the paper email news@legalnewsmedia.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ CPD RESOURCE VIA THE LAWYER

TheLawyer.com, the online arm of *The Lawyer* magazine, is to launch a new service providing a database of all the legal and practice management events taking place in the UK. The service, called the Lawyer Diary, goes live on 1st December and is designed to help practitioners keep track of the hundreds of CPD training courses now on offer.

www.thelawyer.com

■ TWO NEW CONTEXT SERVICES

Electronic publishing specialist Context (020 7267 8989) has launched two new services designed to enable faster and more efficient legal research. The Justis Alerting Service lets subscribers to the Justis.com service select topics they are interested in and then automatically receive email notification of any new documents relating to those topics. The new Justis Daily Cases service provides a daily summary of cases that will later appear as full reports in the *Weekly Law Reports* and *The Law Reports*.

www.context.co.uk

■ LAW FIRM IN WEB TV VENTURE

Holborn firm Sprecher Grier Halberstam is to produce a series of 12 CD and web based legal briefings for its clients. The briefings will be produced as part of a joint venture with Legal Web TV, the multimedia legal news service. SGH has run conventional courses for clients in the past however as part of the new venture the briefings, in the form of 20 minute televised talks plus supporting textual materials, will be distributed on CD. An accompanying web site will provide interactive supporting materials in e-book and streaming video format, plus course notes and a bulletin board discussion forum.

www.legalwebtv.com

■ SCL WEB SITE REVAMP

The Society for Computers & Law has relaunched its web site to provide extra services to members. The site was built by Go Interactive and runs on a SQL 7.0 database. The webmaster is *Computers & Law* editor Laurence Eastham.

www.scl.org

THE LEGAL HITLIST - OCTOBER'S TOP SITES

Welcome to the Legal Hitlist of the UK's busiest legal web sites for October. Since we last published this chart we have made some important changes both to our format and methodology. We now use information supplied by Hitwise UK, which means all rankings are based on objective data (showing web traffic as a percentage of total UK legal internet traffic) drawn from ISP server logs rather than site operators' records.

In addition to the static monthly chart, we also have an interactive realtime feed accessible exclusively via the Insider web site. By pressing the <shift> key and clicking on the browser <refresh> icon, you can toggle between weekly traffic figures, 'clickstream' data showing where traffic comes from and a chart of the 'stickiest' sites that retain visitors for longer than average. RollonFriday is currently one of the stickiest, retaining visitors for just under 10 minutes per session.

As for the October chart, it comes as no surprise to find that Lawtel, Butterworths and the big 'institutional' sites are dominating the field however it is heartening to see a number of independents, including Freelawyer, Henry Scrope's British Employment Law and the Delia Venables sites all still holding their own in the web traffic stakes. In addition the BAILII free case reports plus Law on the Web, LegalCV, JustAsk! and Smith Bernal Casetrack sites are just outside the top 20.

■ Visitors to the Insider web site can also take advantage of a free Hitwise report on their own site's performance.

www.legalnewsmedia.com/hitlistuk.htm

THE TOP SITES FOR THE 30 DAYS ENDING 7 NOVEMBER

1. (14.95%) Lawtel www.lawtel.co.uk
2. (14.25%) Butterworths LEXIS Direct www.butterworths.co.uk
3. (9.35%) The Court Service www.courtservice.gov.uk
4. (5.20%) UK Patent Office www.patent.gov.uk
5. (4.92%) Freelawyer.co.uk www.freelawyer.co.uk
6. (4.92%) Lord Chancellor's Department www.lcd.gov.uk
7. (4.53%) The Law Society www.lawsociety.org.uk
8. (4.06%) HM Land Registry www.landreg.gov.uk
9. (3.94%) CABx Advice Guide www.adviceguide.org.uk
10. (3.33%) British Employment Law www.emplaw.co.uk
11. (2.92%) Solicitors-Online www.solicitors-online.com
12. (2.80%) Bar Council www.barcouncil.org.uk
13. (2.78%) Legalease/International Centre for Commercial Law
www.icclaw.com
14. (2.63%) Delia Venables Legal Resources www.venables.co.uk
15. (2.01%) Divorce Online www.divorce-online.co.uk
16. (1.90%) LawZONE www.lawzone.co.uk
17. (1.85%) Law Careers.Net www.lawcareers.net
18. (1.68%) Sweet & Maxwell www.sweetandmaxwell.co.uk
19. (1.63%) OLPAS (Bar Pupilage System) www.olpas.co.uk
20. (1.51%) Law Society Gazette Online www.lawgazette.co.uk

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DOUBLES FOR ELEXICA AND AIM IN THE LOTIES

The recent LegalTech London show provided the venue for the announcement of the winners of this year's LOTIES - the Legal Office Technology Innovation Awards.

The **MSS AlphaLAW** system won in the best legal office technology product category, the award for best legal office automation product went to Oyez Legal Software for **OyezForms**, and Interface Software's **InterAction** won in the best fee earner support system category.

AIM Professional picked up two LOTIES - the best legal office technology supplier award and best newcomer for its **AIM Postroom** product. Also picking up two awards was the **elexica** service from Simmons & Simmons which won in both the best legal e-commerce product and knowledge management project categories.

Finally, congratulations to Delia Venables, whose **Internet Newsletter of Lawyers** picked up the award for best legal publication in new media format, despite competition from the likes of Sweet & Maxwell and Butterworths.

With both the LOTIES and their organisers *In Brief* magazine now under new ownership, this year's awards ceremony not only ran smoothly (having Insider editor Charles Christian acting as MC also undoubtedly helped) but actually finished ahead of schedule, leaving plenty of time for the reception (definitely the best bash at this year's LegalTech) which was sponsored by Eversheds.

On a more serious note, this year's awards have also strengthened the claim that the LOTIES are now the UK's leading legal IT awards, not least because the winners are actually voted for by legal IT users rather than panels of judges. Or as LOTIES winners AIM put it: "The awards are the benchmark of innovation and excellence in legal IT".

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

New ideas for marketing gimmicks have been in short supply in the legal IT sector in recent months. Mouse mats, baseball caps, coffee mugs and polo shirts? How dreadfully passé and 20th century! While we quite liked those balls that start flashing a coloured light when you bounce them off a hard surface - both Interface and FWBS have been dishing them out at recent exhibitions - for sheer cheek DPS Software's spoof prison postcard from 'Jeffrey Archer' takes some beating. On the front is an arresting picture of one of HM Prison Services' more forbidding institutions, while on the reverse is a note from one of its inmates - identified only as 'Jeffrey' - to his solicitor suggesting that if he had spent more time on the details of the case and less on the paperwork, the author of the postcard might not now be languishing behind bars. The card ends with the suggestion that criminal lawyers might usefully invest in DPS Software's new criminal CDS billing system. Pertinent, novel and amusing to the point of bad taste - we liked it.

IT DIRECTORS - ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP

Whether it is a coincidence or a reflection of growing economic uncertainty but within the last three weeks three of the best known names in the law firm IT world have announced their departure.

First to go was Martin Telfer, who has quit his post as head of IT at the Australian firm Malleson Stephen Jaques. Telfer, who is probably best known for his work with Masons in the UK in the 1990s, is considering a number of offers both from within and outside the legal market. Gerard Neiditsch, who recently joined Mallesons from Blake Dawson Waldron, has taken over Telfer's old job.

Next to say goodbye was Ed Dean, the head of IT at Lovells. Dean, who has also been a stalwart of the Society for Computers & Law, leaves the firm - and the legal sector - at the end of this year to join the Apax venture capital group.

Finally, Brian Collins, the international IT director at Clifford Chance, is leaving the firm at the end of the year. Collins said that "with the international merger behind the firm and the combined systems now largely in place, it was time to move on to new challenges."

■ As reported on page 3, Lawrence Graham is also losing its IT director Allan Bower, who is moving to the systems supplier KLA in the New Year.

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