

Charles Christian's

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

INDEPENDENT NEWS & COMMENT ON LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

ELITE ABOUT TO UPSET THE DMS APPLE CART ?

Is Elite Information Systems, best known for its practice management software, about to give the legal IT world its biggest shock since WordPerfect faded from favour? In a move likely to cause dedicated DMS and legal portal suppliers sleepless nights, Elite this month announced details of its new Encompass portal-based document management system, which has been developed around Microsoft's SharePoint Portal Server (SPS) technology.

According to Elite's chairman Chris Poole, the ability to combine document management and portal capabilities in one integrated system will transform information intensive businesses such as law firms, as well as reduce the cost and alleviate the implementation challenges of purchasing and installing discrete DMS systems.

"We're introducing a more productive way to manage documents by offering advanced features that have been missing from other systems and by leveraging the strength of a portal to gather and organise pertinent internal and external data," said Poole. "As the first supplier to build on Microsoft's vision of incorporating document management into a portal, we are improving the way our clients work. Encompass will make it easier and extremely economical for them to simplify document tracking, collaborate with teams, and maximise firm-wide intellectual capital."

Elite Encompass is currently being beta tested at a number of firms and is scheduled for general availability from January 2002. *Continued on back page...*

TWO MORE BIG WINS FOR CMS

The Solution 6 Group's CMS Open practice management system has won two more major London law firm sites.

Speechly Bircham is taking CMS to replace its old ResSoft FirmControl Unix accounts system. The implementation is being handled by Aurra, with Baker Robbins providing project management. And, top 20 firm Richards Butler has ordered CMS as part of a project to replace the TRAMPS Unix/Ingres-based bespoke system the firm has been running since the early 1990s. The implementation is being handled inhouse but with Baker Robbins once again providing the project management.

FOUR LISTED FOR SCL IT AWARD

The Society for Computers & Law has announced the four shortlisted finalists for its annual IT award for "the most outstanding application of information technology to the law in the UK and the Republic of Ireland".

The four finalists are: Business Integrity's IntellX document assembly system, Elite Information System's Digital Dashboard application, Granite & Comfrey's legal taxonomy methodology for knowledge management applications, and the Searchflow online local search channel, which is part of the larger NLIS electronic conveyancing initiative. The winner will be announced in London on Monday 21st January.

GARY DAY DIES

We are sorry to report that Gary Day, who until earlier this year was responsible for organising the Law Society's annual *Software Solutions Guide*, died last Thursday from a brain haemorrhage.

HOWARD SLONE OUT

Howard Slone, co-founder of litigation support specialists Elliott Slone, which was subsequently acquired by Williams Lea, has left the company "suddenly". At the time of going to press Williams Lea had not yet issued a statement.

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Our web site has become the definitive legal technology news web site, packed with features including breaking stories, the Legal Web TV service, a full diary of legal IT events, an archive of back issues, extensive search engines, virus reports, the Legal Technology Jobs Board and the Legal Hit List of the UK's busiest legal web sites. Also the home of the Legal Technology Solution Finder service and exclusive portal links to the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) and Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators (ILCA) web sites.

TIKIT BUYS AURRA IN BACK OFFICE MOVE

In a move intended to broaden the company's range of services and mark its expansion into the back office sector, Tikit has bought the niche financial and practice management systems consultancy Aurra Consulting. Aurra has now become a wholly owned subsidiary of Tikit Group plc and its three founding directors - Mike Bailey, Karen Bailey and David Gallagher - will continue to be employed by Aurra and have all entered into new service agreements with Tikit.

Commenting on the deal, Tikit managing director David Lumsden said: "Aurra's knowledge of Elite and CMS together with their ability to enhance products such as Whitehill has enabled them to build up a strong following in a short space of time. We see the acquisition as a strategic step towards fulfilling our ambition of being able to support law firms in both the front and back office."

Mike Bailey said he thought the deal would "accelerate the rate of growth of Aurra and enable us to attract other consultants to further strengthen our team".

The RNS data filed with the London Stock Exchange (Tikit is listed on AIM) reveal that the initial purchase price was just over £600,000 in cash and shares, with a further £1.8 million payable if performance criteria are met by June 2003. Aurra was incorporated in June 2000.

TEAMFLO GETS FIRST MAJOR ENGLISH LAW FIRM WIN

Infographics' recently launched Teamflo case and workflow management software has won its first deal with a major English law firm: Morgan Cole. The firm, which has been rolling out the system across most of its divisions over the past few weeks, say the Teamflo has already helped win a significant new client, as well as introduce efficiencies in both matter processing and quality assurance that could cut costs by as much as 15 percent.

Morgan Cole project manager Jeff Wright said along with introducing "significant advances in business process management" Teamflo's ease of implementation and flexibility meant the firm could roll it out "across a number of legal practice areas not traditionally regarded as capable of being subjected to this sort of case management".

Infographics product manager Russell Wood said by "taking a comprehensive, co-ordinated view" rather than the usual piecemeal approach to case management, Morgan Cole has "gained a competitive advantage through greater efficiencies, significant reduction in ownership costs, rapid implementation and improved service delivery".

By coincidence, the new Teamflo system went live almost four years to the day since Mercury Computing, the supplier of the firm's previous case and workflow management system - InControl Legal - collapsed in 1997.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SINTONS TO LOG ON THE TYNE

One of Newcastle-upon-Tyne's fastest growing firms Sinton & Co has chosen Axxia Systems to supply its front and back office systems. Sintons, which has reported a 40 percent growth over the past 18 months, is taking Axxia's Artiion accounts package and desktop software. The firm will also be rolling out Axxia's case management system to 40 fee earners and support staff.

■ CONTEXT IS 15 YEARS OLD

Congratulations to Context, who this month celebrate their 15th anniversary in business as independent electronic legal publishing specialists.

■ TAKE IT ON TRUST

Solution 6, best known in the UK legal market for its CMS Open PMS software, has appointed two account managers to handle the growing demand for its Trust Accounts trust accounting and tax preparation system. The appointments are Mark Steingold, covering the London area, and Bob Atkins.

■ LIBRARY SYSTEM CHECKED IN

Morgan Cole has chosen OLIB7 from Fretwell-Downing Informatics (0114 281 6040) as the basis for its new library management system. It will operate within a multi-site environment and provide a centralised information service to the whole firm via an existing intranet. OLIB7 incorporates a serials module, designed to manage subscriptions to loose-leaf publications, and will also be used to help progress the harmonisation of cataloguing standards following the recent mergers to create the present firm.

www.fdggroup.com/fdi

■ A TERMINAL SOLUTION

Knowledge Technology Solutions (020 8795 2700) has launched a realtime financial information terminal for law firm corporate finance teams. Called MarketTerminal, it can be accessed via the internet on a standard PC or laptop and its use of ASP architecture means it has a low entry level price of £200 per month, per user.

www.ktsplc.com

TFB GETS NEW LOOK AND NEW USER FOCUS

After nearly 20 years with the same image, Technology for Business has treated itself to a corporate makeover. Out goes the old magenta cube logo, a relic of the 1980s, and in comes a new trading name: TFB plc - which is actually what most people call the company anyway. But is this anything more than an exercise in PR spin?

According to TFB managing director Simon Hill there is a serious side to these developments as after two major acquisitions this year - CB Business Systems in Scotland and Avenue Legal - it was essential to make the users of those companies' products "feel part of the same family".

Along with a commitment to support both Avenue and CB's legacy and current product ranges, the new look TFB has retained Avenue founder Mike Belas as sales director and relocated its head office to Avenue's old Fareham offices (01489 609000).

With three sets of users now offering feedback on product development in three jurisdictions - England & Wales, Scotland and the Irish Republic - the company will remain a technology oriented business however Hill believes the factor that will in future differentiate TFB from its competitors is its "customer care culture".

TFB was already the first UK legal systems supplier to appoint a dedicated customer care director (Len Hall) but in early 2002 the company will also be rolling out new call facilities and an interactive customer support web site.

DPS GETS PERSONAL WITH PDS

Over the last few months DPS Software, which is now positioning itself as the champion of criminal law firms in England & Wales against civil service bureaucracy, has been running an increasingly bitter campaign against both the Legal Services Commission and the new Public Defender Service.

DPS has criticised the LSC for apparently planning a U-turn on how CDS7 forms are completed (in relation to whether preparation and attendance times should be recorded separately rather than as a combined total) and the impact this has both on practitioners and the software houses developing criminal case management systems.

According to DPS managing director Osman Ismail "The LSC seem to lack any awareness of the future problems they are storing up for themselves. Surely they would have the foresight to see that moving the problem does not solve the problem."

If the company's latest promotional postcard is anything to go by then DPS takes an even dimmer view of the PDS. The card shows Osama bin Laden holed up in an Afghan cave, surrounded by the US marines, and commenting to his al-Qaeda comrade that as he will need a really good brief to get him out of this scrape, he had better hire "a proper lawyer", not someone from the PDS.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SCANSOFT ENTER THE DRAGON

The US scanning and OCR software specialist ScanSoft (best known for its OmniPage, TextBridge and PaperPort applications) has purchased the Speech & Language Technologies division of Lernout & Hauspie in a bankruptcy auction concluded at the end of November. The deal, which has been approved by the Delaware Bankruptcy Court (Lernout & Hauspie filed for Chapter 11 protection last year) sees ScanSoft acquire a range of businesses, including the Dragon NaturallySpeaking voice recognition software business, for \$39.5 million in cash and shares.

■ A LEGALKEY TO CANARY WHARF

Following a review of its document archiving and storage facilities, prior to its relocation to Canary Wharf, Clifford Chance has chosen the LegalKEY Automated Records Management System to replace its old system. Kramer Lee & Associates (KLA), the UK distributors of LegalKEY, will implement the system. Clifford Chance records supervisor Trevor Hughes says the intention is to eventually roll out LegalKEY to all fee earners so they can search and retrieve records via Outlook or a web browser.

KLA have also won the contract to implement LegalKEY in the offices of Dechert London. The system will be integrated with the firm's Elite PMS system in Philadelphia.

KLA, in association with LegalKEY Technologies, is planning a series of seminars on records management and conflicts of interest commencing in February 2002. For details call Peter Barnes on 01268 494500.

■ SALANS LONDON BUY DICTAFLOW

International law firm Salans Hertzfeld & Heilbronn this month completes the roll out of a DictaFlow digital dictation workflow system to all staff in its London office. The firm reckons the payback period on the completed installation could be as little as ten months and now plans to implement it in other offices. DictaFlow is developed and marketed by nFlow Software (01245 463377).

www.nflow.co.uk

DONNS WIN IT AWARD

Donns, the Manchester personal injury solicitors, took first place in the customer relationship management (CRM) category at this year's *Computer Weekly E-Business Excellence Awards*. Donns won the award for their e-file-access application, which provides clients with extranet access to their case files. The system, which combines inhouse development work with Axxia case management software, has also won insurance industry awards.

SUPPLIERS LINE UP FOR NEW LAW SOCIETY GUIDE

The deadline for applications to be included in the next edition of the English Law Society's annual *Software Solutions Guide* has closed. As at 30 November, 13 legal IT suppliers had put forward their names. The applications will now be the subject of independent market research and consideration by an evaluation panel, with the 2002 edition of the guide scheduled for publication in March.

NEW IT HEAD FOR LOVELLS

Lovells has appointed Ian McFiggans as its new head of IT. McFiggans, who was previously an associate partner and global CIO with the consultancy Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting) takes over from Ed Dean in January.

NO LEGACY IS SELLING POINT

Dixon Keogh Johnson in Northwich and Glaisyers in Birmingham are two of the most recent firms to invest in new office and practice management software from Pericom. Since entering the legal IT market in November 1999, 142 firms have bought Pericom systems, including nearly 1800 user licences for its OMS office automation software and 32 firms taking the PMS package.

With sales of over £1 million won during the last three months alone, Pericom director David Amies reckons an advantage of being new to the market is the company is not held back by the need to support legacy technologies. "At both Dixon Keogh and Glaisyers our software replaced systems from long established suppliers, namely Avenue Legal and Linetime, and in recent months we have also replaced systems from Quill, Sanderson, TFB and Solace."

INSIDER EDITOR TO WORK WITH LEGAL BUSINESS ON IT

Legal Technology Insider editor Charles Christian has been signed up on an exclusive basis by Legalease to write a new monthly IT column for the group's flagship magazine *Legal Business*. The deal also means Christian will no longer be writing his column for *Legal IT* magazine.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ FIRST IRISH IMANAGE LAW DEAL

The iManage document and content management system has secured its first order from an Irish law firm. The leading Dublin-based firm A & L Goodbody has chosen the system and Kramer Lee & Associates (01268 494500) will be implementing the application over the coming months.

■ RAPIDOCX 2 OUT NOW

Epoch Software has launched release 2 of its Rapidocx document assembly software. It is available in a number of different configurations, ranging from the Professional version, which includes authoring tools, through to the Rapidocx Classic document and forms assembly only version for end users. Epoch has also introduced Rapidocx Solo, a single user version of its Professional product which is available for downloading from Epoch's web site for £399, and a web enabled version - RapidocxX - which works within both an Internet Explorer and Netscape browser environment.

www.rapidocx.com

■ AUSTRALIA BOUND

Helen Lewis, the editor of the Ark Group's *Managing Partner* magazine is moving to Australia in February to set up a new office for Ark. Caroline Poynton has taken over as the editor of *Managing Partner* while Emma McCrudden will now run *Managing Partner* events.

BUZZWORD CORNER - SWAGS & FDBS

Ever wondered why your IT projects never come in on time or on budget? Perhaps it is because in your talks with your suppliers you failed to distinguish between the SWAGs and the FDBs?

An FBD is a factual based discussion, involving data everyone can rely on - so no problems there. Unfortunately all too often the IT world relies on SWAGs - sophisticated wide arsed guesses. There again we have also heard IT companies complaining that when it comes to legal fees, their lawyers' estimates clearly owe more to SWAGs than FDBs.

PRESSURE GROWS FOR ONE LONDON SHOW

In the aftermath of last month's less than enthusiastically received LegalTech London exhibition and conference, the Insider is encountering more and more legal systems vendors, including three of the larger companies belonging to the suppliers' organisation LSSA, calling for just one big legal technology event in London each year.

Interestingly, along with the frequently voiced argument that the UK market is not big enough to support two London shows, it is also being suggested that separate events lead to a lack of focus for both product development and marketing purposes. This is in contrast to the heyday of SOLEX exhibition in the early 1990s, when every supplier timed their new product launches to coincide with the show, thereby making it an unmissable event for visitors and vendors alike.

In a further development likely to put more pressure on the organisers of LegalTech London, Cordial Events - who run the rival Legal IT show each February at the Business Design Centre in London - have just announced plans for a regional legal technology exhibition to be held in Leeds on the 9th & 10th October 2002.

The timing is significant as it means the Leeds event clashes directly with the proposed dates for next year's LegalTech London, thereby forcing exhibitors to make a choice of going to London or Leeds. It is a high risk strategy but Cordial say the time has come to blow LegalTech London out of the water and are confident they already have the backing of the market's largest suppliers.

Cordial's move is doubly interesting as it coincides with reports heard by the Insider that while there might be room for one smaller regional exhibition each year, it would be more popular if it was held in or at least rotated between one of the two big northern legal centres of Leeds or Manchester, rather than the current no-man's land of the Birmingham NEC.

MONTE CARLO OR BUST

The organisers of the *The Lawyer* annual conference at the Grand in Monte Carlo have cancelled next year's bash, originally scheduled for early February, and relocated it to the Grand Hotel in Brighton on 11-14 April 2002.

Apparently preliminary market research among some of the inhouse counsel expected to attend the event found that although the proposed conference theme of risk management was popular, their own risk managers were advising them that, given the current international situation, they should not take any overseas flights unless it was really necessary.

This shift of location is a little ironic because, unlike its namesake in Brighton, the original choice of venue of the Grand Hotel in Monte Carlo has never been the subject of a terrorist bombing in the middle of a major conference.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

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

■ JANUARY 29 & 30, LONDON. E-Law Symposium. Osney Media's annual two day conference - the first day is devoted to extranets, while the second (chaired by Insider editor Charles Christian) will focus on knowledge management. For details call Osney on 020 7880 0000 or visit www.osneymedia.co.uk

■ FEBRUARY 1 & 2, BRISTOL. The Society for Computers & Law annual IT & E-commerce Boot Camp. For more details call the SCL on 01179 237393.

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

■ FEBRUARY 6 & 7, LONDON. Legal IT 2002 at the Islington Business Design Centre. Free exhibition with accompanying free keynote speaker programme. Speakers include Andrew Terrett, Gerald Newman, Neil Cameron and Andrew Levison. Exhibition doors open at 9:30am. Register for tickets online at www.legalitshow.com

■ FEBRUARY 12 & 13, LONDON. Knowledge Management in the Legal Profession - two day conference at the Kensington Hilton Hotel with optional session on the role of professional support lawyers. Organised by the Ark Group, publishers of *Managing Partner* magazine, chaired by Andrew Levison and sponsored by Legal Technology Insider. For details call 020 8785 2700.

■ FEBRUARY 26 & 27, LONDON. The Information Systems for Lawyers conference. The event includes sessions on strategic vision from McKinsey, using IT to win more business and measuring the ROI on IT investments. Chaired by Chris Bull from Osborne Clarke, the event takes place at the recently refurbished Hotel Russell in Holborn. For details call 020 7970 4713.

EVERSHEDS - NEW SITE AND NEW APPROACH

Over the past couple of months Eversheds has been previewing its new internet/extranet Eversheds. Complete to clients and business partners. At a cursory glance the most obvious change has been to rationalise all the firm's web sites and online legal services - such as EverDebt - within one corporate offering. However it is the extranet aspect of the site that makes it stand out from the crowd, not least because of the approach the firm has adopted towards its development.

Perhaps motivated by tales that one magic circle firm's virtual dealroom was so complex that clients were being warned they would need a three day training course before they could use it, Eversheds has opted for a consultation process, involving regular meetings with a panel of clients - the Dotcom Advisory Board - to discuss the development of the site and whether the features offered are easy to use or even wanted by their commercial clients.

One topic being considered is the way legal information is organised on the site. Should it be categorised by the firm's practice areas or on a more client-oriented business services basis? There is also the proposal - prompted by Eversheds' realisation that inhouse legal departments are often starved of legal resources - to give clients access to online statutes and case reports from Butterworths. But which materials do clients find useful and - as Eversheds plans to charge a monthly subscription for access - would they be prepared to pay for access and, if so, how much?

Eversheds' head of e-strategy Kevin Doolan says he was keen to have client input from the outset to avoid creating a site packed with resources no-one would use. It is an approach that must be applauded but it is also such a blindingly obvious move that you wonder why more firms have not been smart enough to go down this route?

www.eversheds.com

DEMAND BOOMING FOR WEB ROAD RECKONER SERVICE

Law on the Web is reporting a strong take-up for its new Road Reckoner service, with December set to be its busiest month to-date. By completing an online questionnaire, motorists can be advised by email of the likely outcome of any road traffic matter dealt with in a magistrates court. They can also receive guidance on how to mitigate their sentence, if they should contest a case or accept a fixed penalty and when to instruct a solicitor.

Law on the Web founder Martin Davies says the site aims to prepare people for what can happen in court, so they can make more informed decisions on how to react to a summons. Davies is now recruiting law firms willing to handle referrals generated by the web site.

www.lawontheweb.co.uk/roadlaw.htm

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ FAMILY LAW LIST GOES PUBLIC

Divorce-online (01235 527382) has announced the launch to the general public of its new Solicitors Directory for Family Law Departments. The Directory allows users to search by postcode or town for firms with a family law practice and to then book an appointment with the selected firm. All firms will receive a basic listing free of charge but for an additional £150.00 pa fee firms can buy a 'featured listing' which not only provides additional information about a firm but also ensures it is higher placed in any searched results. All paid for listings will be rotated randomly to prevent the alphabetical disadvantage found in some directories.

www.divorce-online.co.uk

■ VIDESS NEW LOOK WEB SITE

Legal systems supplier Videss has relaunched its web site. New facilities include a software 'walk through' that lets visitors examine the features of the company's new personal injury case management system.

www.videss.co.uk

■ NEW SITE FOR INHOUSE LAWYERS

Martindale-Hubbell has launched a new site providing a range of free resources for inhouse legal departments and corporate counsel worldwide. Along with Martindale-Hubbell's Lawyer Locator system, users can find reports on the proceedings of the *Counsel To Counsel* series of forums that Martindale now runs throughout the United States, Europe and Asia, plus the Martindale-Hubbell Dispute Resolution Directory of organisations offering alternative dispute resolution (ADR) services.

www.corporate.martindale.com

■ ELEXICA PIPPED AT THE POST

Congratulations to Simmons & Simmons and webmaster Jonathan Maas whose elexica.com site was one of the runners up in the web site of the year awards organised by the US magazine *Law Office Computing*. Elexica was pipped at the post by New York lawyers Cravath Swain & Moore in the large firm category.

www.elexica.com

CLS LAUNCHES WEB SITE QUALITY MARK

The Community Legal Service (CLS) has launched its quality mark standard for legal web sites, along with an accompanying 'Web Standards Project' that can advise law firms and other legal services providers on how to modify their sites to meet the quality mark standard.

When we first heard the CLS was planning a quality mark, our heart sank as, frankly, the last thing law firms handling legal aid work need is yet more red tape. Happily, the standard the CLS has now published removes any such concern as its emphasis is very much on the side of practical advice and commonsense rather than needless bureaucracy.

As the CLS explain, the main objective of the exercise is to ensure consumers visiting these sites can have confidence in the information they find there. Thus it must be accurate, up-to-date and authoritative. And, it must be clear who is providing the information, in what capacity and if any costs are involved. The standard also requires firms to have a clear privacy policy, even down to warning clients about the use of cookies and unencrypted email.

On the more technical side of the standard, the CLS wants sites to be accessible to people with disabilities, so sites will eventually have to comply with the so-called 'Bobby test'. Sites will also have to comply with a metadata and content classification scheme. This sounds daunting but is in fact another commonsense measure to make it easier for people searching the web for legal advice to find the areas of law they are looking for.

Firms can apply for the quality mark from today. For details contact your local Legal Services Commission office - there will be a charge for solicitors practices. The Web Standards Project Helpline is on 020 7247 0054.

ORDNANCE SURVEY MAPS TO GO ONLINE BY 2002

Sitescope, the parent of Homecheck, a provider of online environmental risk information to the conveyancing market, has signed a deal with Ordnance Survey that will lead to the creation of the UK's largest online map library.

The project involves scanning and capturing data from thousands of large scale Ordnance Survey maps dating back to 1840 to provide a record of how the country has been developed over the past 160 years. Sitescope believe the maps will provide an essential resource for the property, construction and environmental sectors as well as central and local government.

Sitescope is undertaking the project in conjunction with GIS and data capture specialist InfoTech Enterprises Europe. Sitescope plan to have the data available via Homecheck's web services during the first half of 2002.

www.homecheck.co.uk

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LAWPORT - THE NEXT BIG THING ?

The reference to the US legal IT supplier SV Technology, in the last issue of the Insider, has prompted a number of readers to ask for more details about the company and its products...

SV Technology Inc's flagship product is LawPort. The company describes it as a 'knowledge sharing' application in that it "goes beyond just managing data and allows a firm to share the knowledge that has been accumulated over years" across an intranet or an extranet. SV describe it as a "from the inside out" approach to information, with any data element stored inside the firm capable of being published outside the firm on client extranets or the web.

Like its nearest competitor, the Mentor system from Perceptive Technology, LawPort is both a KM application in its own right and a portal providing access to data held on legacy and other systems within the firm.

In the United States, LawPort has in recent months established itself as one of the fastest selling products in the US legal market, with nearly 8500 seats being sold in one three month period alone. And one user firm - Gibson Dunn & Crutcher in Los Angeles- recently won the *KM World* magazine's 2001 best practice award for its use of LawPort in a knowledge management application.

Here in the UK, LawPort has yet to be used in anger however the hype is already building up, with one consultant recently telling the Insider that he viewed LawPort "as the next InterAction" - in other words the next must-have application to take large firms by storm.

www.svtechnology.com

ELITE AND SHAREPOINT

Continued from page one... Elite's move into DMS supports a theory that has been doing the rounds for a couple of years, namely that dedicated document management software will eventually become redundant as Microsoft increases the functionality of its core operating and office automation systems through applications such as SPS.

Interestingly Elite Encompass, which is compatible with Microsoft Office 97 and above, as well as WordPerfect, also threatens the developers of collaborative systems, such as virtual dealrooms and portals, through its own Deal Room facility which provides extranet access to documents managed by the Encompass software.

YULE SEE US AGAIN IN 2002

This is the last edition of the Insider before the Christmas and New Year holiday season, so seasons greetings to all our readers and we will see you again in January. Until then, you can keep up with the latest UK and international legal technology news by visiting the Insider web site.

www.legalnewsmedia.com

SOLUTION 6 BACK ON ACQUISITION TRAIL ?

Insider sources report Solution 6, the Australian accountancy software group best known in the legal world for its CMS Open system, is back on the acquisition trail and recently had exploratory talks with two UK based legal IT suppliers, Keystone Solutions and Axxia Systems, about possible deals.

Although Keystone's activities and product range would appear to be in direct competition with some of those of the Solution 6 group, the suggestion is Solution 6 wants to acquire a company quoted on the London Stock Exchange. The apparent explanation for the Axxia approach is that Solution 6 is interested in acquiring a 'tier 3' systems supplier with PMS software suitable for those law firms who do not require the group's larger 'tier 2' CMS Open product.

Our sources say the talks with both Axxia, who were asking a reported £25 million, and Keystone have ended.

ORACLE IN TALKS

Simmons & Simmons is reported to be considering replacing its Computron PMS software with Oracle Financials, the same package tipped to win the Clifford Chance contract. Meanwhile Linklaters is still deciding whether to opt for Oracle or SQL Server as the database to support its new SAP PMS system.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

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