



'No move, no fee' threat to conveyancers

Solicitors have probably lost track of the number of times it has been reported that "the days of the traditional High Street firm are numbered" because some supermarket chain or similar organisation was poised to enter the conveyancing market. Nevertheless last Friday's report in the *Daily Express* that the gas and electricity utilities group NPower was planning to launch a fast track legal service, that would allow homeowners to buy and sell properties within 10 days, cannot have made pleasant reading.

Leaving aside the obvious criticism that most people would be traumatised at the prospect of moving home within a fortnight, one aspect of this story that is unsettling is the fact NPower does already have an online conveyancing division called MyHomeMove. According to the blurb on the web site, this "does everything a High Street solicitor does during conveyancing... and more" including online quotations, costs agreed up front, remortgaging services and 24/7 extranet access to matter progress reports. Most worrying of all, MyHomeMove.com also offers a "no move, no fee" deal so the client pays nothing if the transaction falls through.

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www.legaltechnology.com

Tikit acquires top KM consultancy

At the end of last week the Tikit Group acquired the Granite & Comfrey knowledge management consultancy. Tikit say the acquisition will complement their activities in the KM field, which to-date has been channelled primarily via IT directors whereas Granite & Comfrey's contacts have tended to be on the library, KM and information services side of law firms.

Granite & Comfrey was set up by Derek Sturdy and Christine Miskin in early 2000 - after they sold their Legal Information Resources business to Sweet & Maxwell - to focus on content development for law firm know-how systems. Unlike other KM consultancies Granite & Comfrey specialises in the "grunt work" indexing and taxonomy aspects of knowledge management. In this context Sturdy has emerged as one of the few experts in this field to openly advocate that the success of a KM project depends more on a firm's use of information specialists to master metadata rather than on how much money is spent on "big software" document management systems.

Videss say outsourcing spells end of best of breed for many

Legal IT supplier Videss has finalised a long term £600k deal with Trethowans that will see the firm, which has three offices across Hampshire and Wiltshire, outsourcing the management of its accounts, case management and document management systems, as well as its technology infrastructure.

Videss, who will replace the firm's current TMA practice management system and Hummingbird DMS with its own Videss Legal Office integrated solution running in conjunction with its 'Computer Facilities Management' (CFM) service, beat off competition from Civica and Elite, among others, to win the order. Videss sales director Chris Rose says the deal confirms the company's belief in the strength of a "holistic" approach to IT and predicts a shift in the way mid sized firms select systems.

"There is clearly a growing desire to select one IT partner, rather than a host of separate suppliers for practice, case and document management plus infrastructure needs. A single source ensures cross-function compatibility and consistency of advice. It is no longer being seen as a compromise," says Rose. "On the contrary, the quality benchmark once set by best of breed solutions is no longer a differentiator, making an integrated solution the favoured option."

■ Linetime has become the latest supplier to join Videss and others in offering law firms the option of a fully outsourced IT solution based on an integrated software package. Linetime is calling its new service 'Managed Service Provision' (MSP) and will take over responsibility for running a firm's hardware and software systems for a fixed cost, per user, per month. Linetime will use thin client technology to manage systems centrally and during the course of a three year MSP contract firms will automatically receive software upgrades as and when they occur.

News in brief

■ SIMKINS TO IMPLEMENT EMSYS

Media and entertainment firm The Simkins Partnership has placed an order to implement the EMSys Pro disbursement and cost recovery system. EMSys Pro, which was developed by ICG Research in Canada, is supported in the UK by Aurra Consulting (0207 400 3723). Aurra say they are in discussions with a number of other UK firms considering switching from their current cost recovery systems to EMSys Pro.

■ LEIGH DAY TO GO WITH AXXIA

Personal injury and human rights firm Leigh Day & Co has appointed Axxia Systems as its preferred technology partner. The firm, which has offices in London and Manchester, will replace its existing Professional Technology Quaestor installation with Axxia's Artiion accounting software, as well as a range of fee earner support applications including time recording and matter management. Axxia beat Pilgrim Systems in the final shortlist to win the contract.

■ A&O TO GET NEW WORKFLOW

Allen & Overy has chosen the Metastorm (0208 9711500) workflow and business process management (BPM) system e-Work to help streamline its business processes and achieve consistent operating procedures across its global organisation. A pilot will be rolled out to a select number of lawyers this September, with subsequent deployment across the firm's 26 major centres and 4700 employees worldwide from later this year.

■ OSBORNE CLARKE OUTSOURCE

Osborne Clarke has outsourced its records and document management operation to Pitney Bowes Management Services (01442 416086). The deal means PBMS now handles a range of services for the firm including mailroom management and document distribution, reprographics, archiving and facsimile management. The Osborne Clarke project also involved the deployment of the PBMS Comet Arrival system, to ensure all sensitive mail is accounted for and that its movements can be tracked and traced around the firm, and the use of a bespoke database designed specifically for the firm to index and manage the off-site storage of archived deeds packages.

www.pbms.co.uk

Case files - we're all matter-centric now

Buried in a press release announcing that Allen & Overy has just purchased the Hummingbird Enterprise system to support the firm's portal, web publishing, document management and knowledge management projects is reference to a concept - the matter-centric case file - that we predict will become one of the hot topics of the next 12 months.

Commenting on the deal, A&O IT director David Burwell said: "With 26 major centres and over 4700 staff worldwide, the fast, efficient exchange and integration of documents and information is paramount. Given the broad range of demands made by internal staff and external clients, we needed an integrated solution which was flexible, open and easy-to-use and administer. One of our main objectives was to deliver a matter-centric environment to every fee earner's desktop." Burwell also added that the firm had considered but rejected a multi-vendor best-of-breed approach in favour of a single vendor solution as it would "substantially reduce" implementation costs.

In fact there is nothing new about matter-centric systems architecture - people like Martin Telfer, then with Masons, were talking about matter-centricity back in the mid-1990s. What is novel is we are finally starting to see suitable systems that can support this approach coming onto the market. For example Hummingbird's arch-rival iManage announced last month that it too was committed to a matter-centric view of the world that would allow firms to create electronic case files. And Solicitec's VisualFiles system promotes the same agenda, albeit with a case/workflow management rather than DMS spin.

CSA adopts HotDocs

The Child Support Agency has adopted the HotDocs document assembly and automation system to help over 250 CSA staff prepare the lengthy assessment documentation that is central to the calculation of the financial obligations of absentee parents. Initial reports suggest the introduction of HotDocs has cut document production times from around four hours to just 25 minutes per assessment.

Given that the CSA currently prepares over 10,000 such assessments each year, there is clearly scope for huge savings but as far as we are aware this is the first time any UK government organisation has implemented document assembly. Perhaps the concept of an IT system like HotDocs, that can come in on time and on budget, is alien to the civil service?

■ According to Wragge & Co's head of strategic development Derek Southall, after implementing a document assembly system based on HotDocs "recent analysis indicates return on investment savings as high as £450,000 per annum."

■ A new release of HotDocs - version 6.0 - should be available in the UK through distributor Capsoft UK (0131 226 3999) within the next couple of months. One of the main enhancements is full integration with the PDF file format.

DMS in a box - Meticulist breaks price barrier

Last month it was First Stop with its dmsconnect system, this month it is the turn of Meticulus Solutions (01249 700555) to throw its document management in-a-box hat into the ring. This offering is based on a full version of the company's Meticulist document management software but packaged as a rentable appliance, complete with server hardware and SQL Server database, so it is ready to attach on to a network.

As a DMS application, Meticulist has some attractive features which deserve closer inspection - particularly when compared with offerings from the two main market players Hummingbird and iManage.

For example, its full text search engine means success in locating documents is not dependent on how much information was recorded when the document was originally profiled. It has integral email security based on a poste restante/recorded delivery approach, making it unnecessary to also purchase a third-party email security system. And, it has full Microsoft Windows and Office integration, so it operates automatically in the background from within an existing application, such as Word, rather than yet another discrete application requiring extensive roll-out and training resources.

Pricewise, for a 70 user installation rented over a three year term including full maintenance and support (and an option to buy outright at the end of the period) the Meticulist appliance comes in at £1370 per month, which is almost a third less than the £2000 cost of a comparable First Stop DMS-in-a-box offering.

DMS - iManage checks in and out

Although lower cost alternatives may be lurking in the wings - *see previous story* - the main focus of the legal document management industry giants iManage and Hummingbird still seems to be scoring points off each other.

From the iManage camp comes news that Gosschalks in Hull has decided to replace its current Hummingbird DOCS Open system with the iManage Worksite product suite. Kramer Lee & Associates is helping the firm with system implementation. Withers is another firm to have recently swapped out DOCS for the rival iManage DMS.

Meanwhile, it was the opposite story at Stephenson Harwood which, despite its recent merger with iManage users Sinclair Roche & Temperley, has decided to stick with Hummingbird as its preferred vendor of DMS, KM and portal technologies.

Knowhow Consulting (01483 776000) was retained by Stephenson Harwood to help with some document management aspects of merger. This included the transfer over one weekend of over 1.3 million documents, sitting on nine different iManage databases, onto the Hummingbird system so they were available for use, complete with all document numbers, audit trails and access permissions/denials from 9:00 am the following Monday morning. The project was completed on schedule and to budget.

News in brief

■ **STREAMLINING DUE DILIGENCE**
IT companies Legistics (020 7482 8860) and Conchango have announced the launch of a new system designed to increase the efficiency and accuracy of M&A work by automating the due diligence process. The application is called Inform and has been developed for the Microsoft .NET platform. Inform brings together the management of all processes involved in due diligence under a single application. According to Legistics founders Jeremy Tobias-Tarsh and Jeroen Plink - both former corporate finance lawyers at Clifford Chance, this allows lawyers involved in the process to view any transaction on a single screen and share information more effectively and accurately with colleagues and clients. Legistics reckon Inform can cut the time spent on due diligence by an average of 25 to 50 percent.

■ **BEPROFESSIONAL SHORTLISTED**
Beprofessional (020 8481 3750) the online tax and legal information service, that began life as a joint venture involving Bewin Leighton Paisner, has been shortlisted in the corporate venturing category for this year's National Business Awards. The award winners will be announced on 29 October in London.

www.beprofessional.com

Looking for IT staff ?

The Long Vacation is over and everyone has vacancies to fill. This week's top jobs include: **Pilgrim Systems** currently recruiting for three senior posts: Client Services Manager, Senior Sales PMS and Pre-sales Business Process Analyst. **JST Mackintosh** in Liverpool which is looking for an IT trainer. **Kramer Lee & Associates** recruiting for an IT consultant and technical resource scheduler. And **Praxis Partners** in Leeds who want an IT analyst. For full details of these and other vacancies visit the Insider Jobs Board at www.legaltechnology.com

If you are a law firm or legal systems vendor looking for IT staff, including positions in sales, development, web services, know-how, library services, support, management and training, you can post your vacancies free of charge to the Jobs Board on the Insider web site. Email to jobs@legaltechnology.com

People & Places

Solicitors Own Software is supporting this year's Solicitors Benevolent Association fundraising parachute jump, which aims to raise funds and awareness for the charity's activities. Hampshire Law Society president **Nick Gurney-Champion** and **Louise Hamilton** of SOS will be taking to the skies later this month.

Tina Jones has joined **Linetime** as the sales development manager for the London and southern counties regions. Jones, who has worked in the legal IT market for over 16 years, joined Linetime from **Pilgrim Systems**.

Solution 6 has promoted **Mark Steingold** to the newly created position of account manager for the sale of tax and trust accounting products into the legal market. Over 70 law firms now run this software in trust, probate and private client departments.

Legato Computer Services has moved to new offices at 1646 Parkway, Solent Business Park, Fareham, Hants PO15 7AH. The new phone number is 0870 1121994.

Opsis Practice Management Solutions, which last year acquired the old **Solace/Stukeley** business, has become the latest legal IT supplier to join the **Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA)**.

Professional Productivity Solutions (PPS), which for the past 15 years has been offering law firms Macintosh-based systems as an alternative to PCs and Windows, now has a new phone number: 07000 777529 - or 07000 PPSLAW if you use the letters on your phone keypad.

Kramer Lee & Associates and **LegalKEY Technologies** have jointly appointed **Keith Dacey** as records management product manager to work on development projects on both sides of the Atlantic. Dacey, who takes up his new appointment in October, has for the past 13 years been the database manager at **Dechert**.

Keep up with the news

Keep up with the latest news between issues of the Insider by subscribing to our free ezine the **Legal Technology Insider Newswire**. It is delivered directly to your desktop as a plain text email and to be added to the distribution list just send a note of your email address, including the word 'News' in the header, to news@legaltechnology.com

Data storage - essential but confusing

Everyone knows having secure data storage backup facilities is essential in a modern law firm. The problem is once a firm moves beyond basic backup methods, they are faced with a bewildering choice of options, the main one being do they opt for NAS (network attached storage) or SAN (storage area network) architecture?

A further complication is that as most storage system vendors have their own preferred approaches, buyers risk being caught up with the type of compatibility issues we used to encounter back in the bad old days when computer hardware suppliers all had different proprietary operating systems.

One company set up to address this problem is City of London-based **Posetiv** (020 7556 7063). The company was formed in 2000 by two ex-Computacenter managers to offer independent consultancy services on not just the selection, integration and technical issues associated with storage but also the business and management aspects.

Currently **Posetiv** is working with two top 20 firms and while unable to go into details, marketing director **Graeme Rowe** says the issues on the agenda include helping them make better use of spare storage capacity on existing servers; consolidating storage - in one project for insurance brokers **Willis**, **Posetiv** helped consolidate storage from 38 data centres to two mirrored sites; and 'virtualisation' whereby one large central facility can be created by linking together existing storage facilities.

www.posetiv.com

■ Copies of **Posetiv's** acronym buster guide to data storage jargon and highlights of recent market research can be accessed on the Insider web site in Word and PowerPoint file formats.

www.legaltechnology.com/bookmark.htm

Speech technology news in brief

■ **HILL DICKINSON START DIGITAL DICTATION PILOT**
Hill Dickinson has commenced a pilot project to evaluate the benefits of digital dictation, with a view to rolling out the system on a practice-wide basis. The firm has chosen the **Speech Recognition Company (SRC)** as its provider and will be running a system based on **WinScribe** technology.

■ **IBB ROLL OUT TOTAL SPEECH**

Iliffes Booth Bennett, which has offices across the Home Counties, has rolled out the **TotalSpeech** digital dictation system from **BigHand**. The firm decided to go for a practice-wide roll out after a pilot in the commercial dispute resolution & litigation group provided a major improvement in staff ratios with nine solicitors now supported by just 2 secretaries.

BigHand is organising an informal seminar on digital dictation and speech recognition technologies at the London SW1 offices of **Campbell Hooper** on 26th September. For more details call **Dan Speed** on 0207 793 8200.

LegalDocs - power steering for WP systems

When LegalDocs first appeared on the market about three years ago, it was just another WordPerfect macro management product. But, since then, it has been completely redeveloped and Version 2 has now emerged as a comprehensive document assembly and file management system. In effect HotDocs meets PC Docs but with the emphasis on the production and management of day-to-day correspondence rather than massive archives and lengthy, complex precedents. Terry Elwell of LegalDocs says one way to view it is as "power steering for wordprocessing" that provides users with a matter-centric electronic case file and can trim the administrative time associated with document creation by between 10-to-20 percent.

Other changes include platform independence - it supports all the later versions of Word and WordPerfect. It can manage digital dictation and speech recognition files and will run on Windows, Citrix thin client and even, as at one law firm, Unix workstations. And, it has a full relational database back-end - the standard package comes with a free Access runtime licence but it is also compatible with SQL Server and Informix. Pricing starts from around £300 per user including installation, customisation, training and support. For more information contact LegalDocs UK Ltd on 020 7501 8516 or visit www.legaldocs.uk.com

Law Society guide closing date

The closing date for suppliers wanting to be considered for an entry in next year's edition of the Law Society's popular *Software Solutions Guide* is Friday 13 September. For further details contact Sue Cummings at the Law Society on 020 7320 5804 or email sue.cummings@lawsociety.org.uk

News in brief

■ VRISKO SIGNS LINKLATERS TO ALERT SERVICE

Vrisko (020 7891 2628) has signed up Linklaters to its News Tracker service, which allows firms to manage the huge volumes of incoming email news alert messages fee earners now have to contend with. Vrisko reckon that over the course of a year lawyers within a magic circle firm could waste around £500k in fee earning time sifting through email news bulletins.

■ CONTEXT LAUNCHES LEGAL CITATOR

Electronic publisher Context (020 7267 8989) has released a legal citator service. Called JustCite, it is a fully cross-referenced index to a collection of key legal resources including extensive links to full-text documents on Justis.com, Context's own online legal research service. Sources currently indexed include case law from the Law Reports Index, transcripts from the Court of Appeal and Administrative Court and UK statute law. Further content will be added over the next few months.

Legal technology events diary

■ SEPTEMBER 11, EDINBURGH. Benefits of a Modern Practice Management System. This half day seminar (AM) at the Scotch Whisky Heritage Centre will examine the business benefits that can be gained from the deployment of a modern PMS. Delivering Best Value in Legal Services - this half day seminar (PM) will examine, in the context of Best Value how improvement can be made in the delivery of legal services to internal and external customers. For details call AIM Professional Systems 01482 326971. There is a similar event in Newcastle on 24 September.

■ SEPTEMBER 18, LONDON. Legal Knowledge Management for 1st Tier Law Firms. ResSoft and Autonomy are hosting a complementary lunch seminar at the One Aldwych Hotel. The session includes a user case study and a live demonstration of Autonomy. For details call Ana Zotti on 0207 421 4159 or email azotti@ressoft.co.uk

■ SEPTEMBER 18, LONDON. Digital dictation solutions seminar, organised by StatPlus Speech Processing Solutions, at the New Connaught Rooms, Covent Garden. For details call StatPlus on 020 8254 5112 or visit www.speechprocessingsolutions.co.uk

■ SEPTEMBER 19, LONDON. Records Management Forum centred on the LegalKEY's Records Management System and including user experiences. For more details visit www.kramerlee.com or phone Kramer Lee & Associates on 01268 494500.

■ SEPTEMBER 19 & 20, NEW YORK. LegalTech September/NY, Hilton. www.legaltechshow.com

■ SEPTEMBER 26, LONDON. DOCS Open to iManage seminar focusing on migration methodologies. For details call Kramer Lee & Associates on 01268 494500.

■ OCTOBER 9 & 10, LEEDS. Legal IT 2002 at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. Free exhibition plus free educational seminar programme organised by the Insider. For more details call Cordial Events on 01491 575522 or register for tickets online at www.legalitshow.com

News in brief

■ DMH TURNS TO THE SORCE

DMH Solicitors (previously Donne Mileham & Haddock) has chosen the SORCE system from Definitive Applications (01635 551553) as the basis for its new intranet portal to deliver data, documents and applications to its offices in London, Brighton, Crawley and Worthing. Gateley Wareing in the Midlands also runs a SORCE intranet.

■ ZEN AND THE ART OF NETWORKS

Wragge & Co has implemented Novell's ZENworks centralised desktop management system. Wragge's head of strategic development Derek Southall says ZENworks has already proved itself as a way of delivering applications to the desktop. "We were able to deliver our new time recording system automatically overnight whereas previously we would have had to visit each of 600 users individually to install the software, taking about 20 minutes per user. We saved at least 28 days using ZENworks."

■ EASY TIGER

Sheffield firm AMS Law has launched its new e-zeetiger online debt recovery service. Clients can place new instructions online and there are extranet links providing access to matter progress reports.

www.e-zeetiger.com

■ SPEECHLY WIN FOR DESPATCHBOX

Speechly Bircham has become the latest firm to install the DDX secure email system from DespatchBox (01296 398100). DDX, which is compatible with Outlook, GroupWise and Notes, works from within an existing email system and does not require recipients to install or download additional software.

White paper downloads

The Insider web site now has a download facility containing the full text of white papers and case studies that are too large to reproduce within this newsletter. The facility currently includes a position paper on electronic discovery and litigation support and a case study on how Midlands firm Lawson West is using artificial intelligence to manage matter and client data. Both documents are in a Word DOC file format.

www.legaltechnology.com/bookmark.htm

Sweet & Maxwell buy Lawtel from Lawyer group

Sweet & Maxwell has acquired the Lawtel online information service from Centaur Communications, the publishers of *The Lawyer* magazine, for an undisclosed sum. The deal marks the continued expansion of Sweet's online services which already include Westlaw UK, New Law Online and Consult GEE.

Because Lawtel is widely used by individual practitioners as a current awareness service, Sweet & Maxwell managing director Wendy Beecham said they approached Centaur about selling Lawtel as they could see it would complement rather than compete with Sweet's primarily black letter law offerings. In particular, Beecham saw the benefits of a service that reached directly to the desktops of lawyers in smaller firms, local government and inhouse counsel, whereas Westlaw tends to be used as an in-depth research service by librarians, PSLs and information services specialists in mainly top 100 firms.

As of last month all Lawtel's staff (with the exception of Lawyer Group managing director Rachel Lesiter who remains at Centaur) transferred to Sweet & Maxwell. Beecham is keen to stress there are no plans to close Lawtel - in fact the name will continue to be used and within the next few weeks a new interface platform, with more powerful search facilities, will be rolled out to Lawtel subscribers.

Instant intranets from Solcara

Solcara (0870 333 2966) has launched a new instant intranet in a box product called i-Net. Solcara reckon a law firm can have an intranet, complete with full text searching, content management, staff and departmental directories plus full security and audit trails up and running within 10 days.

■ The name Solcara may not be familiar but the business has actually been operating in the legal market since early the 1990s and the present company is the result of a recent MBO by staff and directors of Dataware Europe which over the years acquired both the BRS/Search and Status IQ text retrieval systems.

New web site of the month award

The Insider is looking for the best legal web sites. Each month we will highlight our web site of the month according to criteria based on content, usability, design, focus - does the site address the needs of its target market, and USP- are there any special features that make the site stand out from the crowd.

The award is open to legal practices, publishers, online services and IT suppliers. To submit a site for consideration, email us here at websites@legaltechnology.com and, where possible, provide some information about the type of technology used, who built it & supports it, what are the business objectives behind the site and what have been the results to-date in terms of benefits, winning new clients, ROI etc ?

Voicemail - are law firms not hearing the message?

Back in the early 1990s voicemail systems linked to DDI direct lines were being pitched as the ideal solution for busy law firms as they would remove the need for switchboard operators while simultaneously freeing fee earners and their secretary/PAs from the disruption of answering phones and taking messages.

Ten years after and views have changed dramatically with some surveys suggesting that as many as 75% of callers hang up without leaving a message when they hear a voicemail response. And it is not just the callers who are unhappy - a survey of law firms and other professional services users found that 82% said their firm's voicemail systems were complicated and time consuming to operate.

One company that thinks it has an answer is Outcom Limited (0845 0800 283) which was set up by Milan Zala, who as a former City lawyer has personal insights into the problem. According to Zala, what firms should instead be doing today is outsourcing their call messaging services to companies like Outcom.

This may seem an odd argument given that voicemail was originally intended to cut administrative overheads but Zala says that once firms start to do the maths, the potential return on investment from outsourcing is obvious and enormous.

Industry figures suggest it takes about 90 seconds to retrieve each voicemail message, so just 10 messages a day mean 15 minutes of fee earning time wasted on administration. Not much but when multiplied across a whole firm, every day of the year and taking into account hourly rates, it becomes serious money.

One alternative is do away with voicemail and have secretaries deal with messages but with most firms trying to cut back secretary-to-fee earner ratios or else redeploy support staff in fee earning roles, one secretary serving two or three lawyers could easily spend the best part of an hour each day taking messages and writing 'while you were out' memos. And the reality in many firms is that because secretaries are not available on a 24/7 basis they have the worst of both worlds with voicemail supplementing the activities of secretaries.

Outcom's solution is for calls to be outsourced to their organisation, where they will then be answered in the firm's name and a copy of the message immediately emailed directly to the fee earner in question's desktop. Even budgeting for the cost of using a service like Outcom - depending on volume about 60p per call (more for out of hours calls) - Zala reckons that in fee earning time freed up, most firms will cover the cost of outsourcing within the first eight weeks of an annual contract. And that does not even take into account avoiding the aggravation clients and lawyers alike encounter with voicemail.

www.outcom.co.uk

The Loties - still time to vote.

The closing date for voting for this year's LOTIES awards is Tuesday 1st October. You can vote online at www.inbrief.co.uk

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Pilgrim puts accounts software on the fast track

Pilgrim Systems (0131 555 9700) is now shipping its FastTrack system, a specially packaged version of its LawSoft practice management software.

Pilgrim CEO Benny Placido said FastTrack was designed to "bring PMS within the reach of 20-to-40 user firms" by reducing the systems implementation element "because much of the configuration work has already been done and the databases are already built... We felt that the time was right to bring the power of LawSoft to a wider audience and we also believe FastTrack does exactly what it says on the tin."

FastTrack users will be able to take advantage of all the main features of LawSoft including a web client, time recording and a complete financial accounting system. There is also an upgrade path for firms wanting to move to the complete LawSoft package at a later date.

Conveyancing news in brief

■ COUNTRYWIDE OUTSOURCES CONVEYANCING IT

Residential conveyancing group Countrywide Property Lawyers has signed a £10 million, five year IT outsourcing deal with Logica. The deal encompasses CPL's five regional centres and will see Logica taking over responsibility for CPL's CRM and workflow management systems.

■ SOLCASE HELPS SECURE FIRST MORTGAGE DEAL

Northamptonshire firm Turner Coulston has won the contract to act as the sole legal provider for First Mortgage Options. The deal, which should generate approximately 1500-to-2000 instructions a year (including sale, purchase and right-to-buy) has prompted Turner Coulston to review its IT infrastructure and upgrade its existing Solicitec SolCase system to SolCase V7. The firm's office manager Simon Tappenden said: "We strongly believe the main reason we won the business is that with SolCase we are in a position to electronically transfer data directly to First Mortgage Options."

■ NLIS SEARCHFLOW VERSION 2.2 OUT NOW

NLIS channel provider Searchflow this week launched a new release of its NLIS Searchflow local authority online search service. The main enhancement of the new system - version 2.2 - is a 'pause and resume' facility giving users improved flexibility for dealing with interruptions, timing search requests and obtaining authorisations before proceeding. Searchflow marketing manager Simon Coulthurst says the net result is "users can jump in at almost any point, do part of the work and then simply pause the system, returning later at a time that suits them to carry on where they left off." Existing Searchflow users will find the new facilities automatically available when they log on to the service this week.

www.searchflow.info

T V Edwards to go PMS with AIM Professional

TV Edwards, one of east London's best known criminal practices (the firm also handles a large volume of civil LSC block contracting work) has announced plans for a major £100k overhaul of its IT systems. This will include the replacement of existing manual administration methods with a new time recording and practice management system from AIM Professional. Finance partner Caroline Chambers said one of the reasons the firm decided to invest in the new 65 user network was the need for a more effective management tool to ensure accurate cost analysis, data collection and work in process calculations for ongoing matters.

■ Steed & Steed, which has two main offices in Suffolk, has also announced plans to migrate to a new Evolution Client/Server practice management system from AIM. The firm was previously an Avenue user.

Ashursts launch client KM facility for DrKW

Ashurst Morris Crisp has launched a new extranet know-how/dealroom facility for its German banking client DrKW Finance, a division of Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein. Called The Centre, it provides a secure, document-centric collaboration environment and was developed inhouse by Ashursts.

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