



Record numbers apply for Law Society guide

Although the publication of the Law Society's annual *Software Solutions Guide* is almost inevitably accompanied by a chorus of disapproval from the legal IT suppliers it does not feature, the credibility of the service is clearly going from strength-to-strength. When the deadline for applications from suppliers wanting to be considered for an entry in the next edition closed earlier this month, the total number of applicants stood at 16, compared with the 13 who applied for the 2002 edition. The next edition of the guide will be published in February 2003.

SCL award deadlines

The closing date for nominations for the Society for Computers & Law's annual IT award is Monday 18 November. Short-listed entries will be judged in December and the winner will be announced on 20 January. Nominations should be sent to the chairman of the judging panel Andrew Levison at alevison@brco.com and a copy of the nomination form can be found on the SCL web site at www.scl.org/award

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www.legaltechnology.com

Law firms facing data standards conflicts

Are law firms about to be swamped by conflicting demands from their clients and industry organisations that they format and supply accounts and matter information in accordance with a raft of different data standards?

The problem was first drawn to our attention by a firm on the panel of a major international insurer who were given just four weeks to ensure their time recording and disbursements data was submitted electronically in a format that complied with the standards laid down by a new legal bill review system, used by the insurer, or else risk being thrown off the panel.

In the event their legal systems supplier - TFB - was able to implement the changes within the required time scales, so the story had a happy ending - however there is a wider dimension to all this that could have an impact on many more firms.

In this instance the insurer was using the CSC Legalgard system (*for first report see Insider 130 of 6 March*) which has an XML-like standard requiring panel members to submit bills with all time and disbursement data contained within about 30 to 40 lines of an electronic form. But, by our reckoning there are at least half a dozen other electronic data interchange (EDI) systems out there - including Timemetrics, Serengeti, Appareo, E-council/Bridgware, Amtool and Dispatch - all offering similar services to Legalgard.

And, if this were not enough to contend with, the Legal Services Commission has its own initiative for the electronic submission of legal aid claims. Vendors like Solicitec and Axxia have devised their own EDI-type systems for law firm panel management. LMS has its STARS system for its conveyancing panel. And when the NLIS initiative moves into its next phase, with the two way exchange of search requests and results, there will be another three standards - one from each of the three NLIS channel providers - to contend with.

Perhaps instead of trying to devise a set of XML standards for the exchange of data between different suppliers' case and practice management systems, an organisation like the Legal Software Suppliers Association (*LSSA - see also page 7*) might make better use of its resources working towards co-ordinating the competing EDI standards of third party organisations.

Cordial hoping to replicate Legal IT event success in Leeds

Exhibition organiser Cordial Events is hoping to replicate the success of its market leading Legal IT event, which takes place in London each February, with its first regional show. Called Legal IT 2002 Leeds, the event takes place at the Royal Armouries next month (Wednesday 9 and Thursday 10 October) and offers a combination of a free exhibition and a series of free CPD seminars. The Leeds event is sponsored by *Legal Week* and the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) and is being held in association with Leeds Law Society. *For full preview see page 5.*

News in brief

■ TWO FIRMS AIM TO UPGRADE

AIM Professional has reported major systems upgrades by two of its established users. Long time AIM user Mullis & Peake, which has two offices in Essex, is to implement a 70 user AIM practice and case management system, and Pellys in Hertfordshire is extending the use of its AIM Evolution case management system. The conveyancing department already uses the system for residential sales, purchases and remortgages, the matrimonial department uses it for divorce work and will soon be going live with an ancillary relief procedure, and the probate department is now planning to roll out case management.

■ JUST THE FAX AT FRANKLINS

Franklins Solicitors have invested in a Zetafax fax server system from Equisys (0207 203 4000) to handle the high volumes of fax traffic still going in and out of the firm. With two offices - in Northampton and Milton Keynes - and 130 staff, the firm averages 800 faxes a day. Zetafax, which can also deal with longer term archiving, is compatible with both Microsoft Exchange 2000 and the FWBS office management system in use at Franklins. The direct inward dial (DID) routing facility means incoming faxes can be delivered straight to the recipient's PC.

www.equisys.com

■ MINI BRIEFINGS PROVE A HIT

West Midlands-based Professional Computer Solutions (PCS) is reporting a high take up for the series of 90 minute mini-briefings on the latest developments in legal IT it has been running for law firms in its region, with over 200 representatives from 150 firms attending sessions over the past four months. Mike Pettet of PCS said he recognised the difficulty busy lawyers had in finding time to keep up with technology, particularly given the pressures of fee earning, and so designed the briefings to not only be free of charge but also tightly focussed so delegates could be back at their desks within a couple of hours. PCS, which is probably best known in the legal market as a reseller of the DPS case management system, will be running another series of briefings throughout the Midlands between now and February 2003. For more details call Jayne Marshall of PCS on 01675 470774.

Cancel the Lexus, you can only afford a Skoda now

Any IT vendors out there still hoping that their next company car will be a Lexus had better start looking for something cheaper as, according to the results of a new survey to be published in the October issue of *Legal Business* magazine, the spending plans for the UK's top 100 law firms look like being put on hold for the next 12 months.

Although the survey, which was carried out in conjunction with the Insider, found that firms spend on average 5.6% of their total fee income each year on IT, only 25% of firms were planning to spend more on IT over the next 12 months, with 53% freezing budgets and 22% intending to spend less.

The survey results also suggest the bubble may have already burst for knowledge management and legal e-commerce services, with just about everyone who wants them having already made their biggest investments in these types of system. Virtual dealrooms, speech recognition, case management and CRM/marketing systems, as well as "anything to do with portals," were all cited as over-hyped technologies that had not lived up to expectations. *See also Tikit story on page 4.*

Consultancy offers 'no savings, no fee' guarantee

Legal management consultancy Practical Solutions (0161 929 8355) has launched a new service for larger (150+ user) firms that boldly puts its money where its mouth is and includes a 'no savings, no fee' guarantee.

According to Practical Solutions' Allan Carton, the service aims to audit a firm's IT operations and identify areas - such as communications, document storage and printer/copier strategies - where costs can be made and improvements in efficiency realised. The service, says Carton, is backed up by a guarantee that if Practical Solutions "do not identify convincing solutions that will enable (the firm) to bill or save at least three times the consultancy fee within 18 months, we will refund our fees, including expenses, in full."

Zed dead for business in UK

They came, they saw and then they went back to Finland. Yes, Zed for Business, which last year promised to change the face of corporate mobile data by providing fee earners access to email and practice management information via their mobile phones and PDAs, has ended its deal with Tikit and closed for business in the UK after Finnish parent Sonera had to write off €4 billion in losses as a result of its involvement in 3G telecoms licence bids. The Zed consumer entertainment operation is still thriving in the UK, offering downloadable ringtones and similar services for mobile phones, but as far as Zed for Business is concerned, in the words of the movie *Pulp Fiction* "Zed's dead baby."

Portals versus KMS - any which way you can

Delivering the keynote presentation at last week's Tikit Group conference on portals and knowledge management systems, independent technology consultant Neil Cameron said there were currently too many competing products and strategies "wanting to own the fee earner desktop and make it the starting point for access to information".

According to Cameron, although matter-centric portals were a logical approach, they also fell into the "definitely maybe" camp as fee earners did not always want matter related information. Cameron's view is that instead of picking a static viewpoint, a more flexible multi-centric portal approach is needed whereby data can be accessed from the point of view of matters, documents or knowledge management.

This portal approach also makes more sense when you recognise that other people, such as clients and a firm's own administrative staff, also need to access this data but from an entirely different perspective - and usually via different applications - to fee earners.

To bring it all together, Cameron suggests that along with technical issues such as hyperlinking and common standards for different portal technologies, a key element is a practice-wide taxonomy (or indexing system) for all types of data including not only documents and knowledge but also accounts and practice management information.

Concluding, Cameron acknowledged that it was one of the ironies of technology that while the ideal legal system should be "fast, cheap and good" in reality you could only ever have permutations of any two of these features at any one time.

Digital dictation question time

Digital dictation may be the hot topic at the moment but just how do you get lawyers to give up their personal secretaries in exchange for what is in effect a virtual typing pool? Can digital dictation be fully integrated with practice management systems? And will speech recognition ever take off?

Legal Technology Insider is holding a Digital Dictation Question Time on Thursday 28 November at the offices of Reynolds Porter Chamberlain in London, when readers will have an opportunity to put these and other questions to a panel of experts, including Julie Berry, the head of IT at RPC, Berwin Leighton Paisner IT director Janet Day, Rooks Rider finance director David Higdon and Baker Robbins consultant Andrew Levison. Insider editor Charles Christian will chair the event which is being sponsored by nFlow Software, developers of digital dictation workflow software for the legal market.

The event starts at 6:00pm for 6:30pm. Refreshments will be available and admission is free. Spaces are limited so you need to book in advance either online at www.nflow.co.uk/events or via email questions@legaltechnology.com - you can also submit your questions in advance by email to the same address.

News in brief

■ JMC ASSIST COBBETTS MERGER

Manchester based Cobbetts have used systems integrators JMC.IT (0161 925 7777) to help with the firm's recent merger with Read Hind Stewart in Leeds. JMC's role was to help create a single integrated infrastructure that could support both offices and solicitors working from home or on the move. The JMC solution utilises Citrix 'thin client' technology and now supports some 450 users within the combined practice.

■ LEVENES CHAMPION DPS

Case management specialists Project Champions (01525 270147) have successfully completed the development and implementation of a bespoke personal injury application for Levenes based around the DPS case management system. The firm has reported an immediate increase in productivity however Jill Bazalgette of Project Champions says even where firms do not have Levenes' benefit of being able to start from scratch with a new system "we would expect that tuning an existing case management application would allow fee earners to handle at least 10% more work."

■ PATENT ATTORNEYS PICK ELITE

Patent attorneys Forrester Ketley & Co have signed contracts with Elite and Solicitec to implement their integrated practice and case management system. The firm said it chose the Elite PMS because it could handle the specialist billing requirements associated with patent and trademark practice and had a multi-currency capability that could address dealings with Forrester's sister practices that handle patent matters at the European Patent Office and within Russia and the ex-Soviet states. Forrester Ketley will be using Solicitec's Visualfiles system for a number of tasks including monitoring patent and trademark application deadlines.

■ LEGASTAT OPEN ALL HOURS

Legastat (020 7405 9178) which next year celebrates 50 years in the legal office services business, is now offering a 24 hour copying and printing service for lawyers. Documents can also be scanned, OCR'd and converted into PDF files for forwarding on to users via email. Pick up and return of documents in central London is free of charge.

www.legastat.co.uk

People & Places

Professor Richard Susskind is now working in a part time strategic consultancy capacity with **Linklaters**.

Timeslice has opened a new Northern area office headed by sales manager **Chris Hawkins**, who recently joined the company from **Meridian Legal Systems**. The office phone number is 01642 314143.

Solution 6 has appointed **Alison Thorpe** (Northern England & Scotland) and **Richard Connock** (Southern England & Ireland) as account managers on its **CMS/Keystone** team. Both previously held similar positions at **Axxia Systems**.

Hummingbird has opened a dedicated UK support facility at its Wokingham offices (support was formerly based in Paris). **Rob Yates** is the manager and **Gavin Meek**, previously with **Tikit**, has joined the company to work on technical projects. **Mark Fagan**, previously with **Open Text**, has also joined Hummingbird as vice president for professional services for the EMEA region.

Staying with **Hummingbird**, **Andrew Terrett**, the author of the Law Society's book *The Internet - business strategies for law firms* and more recently with **Baker Robbins** until he moved to Canada, is now working as a consultant with Hummingbird in Toronto.

Wordprocessing and VBS specialists **Integrated Office Solutions** are now based at Burnhill Business Centre, Provident House, Burrell Road, Beckenham, Kent BR3 1AT. The phone number is 0208 249 6530.

Looking for IT staff ?

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

■ This week's top jobs include: **AIM Professional** is recruiting for two senior posts: a software sales consultant for the West Country and a technical services sales consultant. Also, London based document management and litigation support bureau **Legastat** is looking for sales staff. For details of these and other vacancies visit the Insider Jobs Board at www.legaltechnology.com

Still accessible after all these years

Access Legal Systems (01476 573718) may have had a low profile in recent years but far from sinking into obscurity the Cheshire based company, which has been active in the legal market since the late 1970s, has been redeveloping its entire software suite to focus it around a single Microsoft SQL Server database.

As is becoming increasingly the trend among products aimed at the broader 'High Street' market, the new system is a fully integrated suite of applications with legal accounts, time recording and a fee earner oriented practice and client database, including deeds register and effectively case, matter and document management, all under one roof. This integrated approach gives users extensive query facilities and the ability to drill down from information for any perspective. Other highlights include the ability to set up new matters and clients by either fee earners or the accounts department, the option of automatic conflict of interest searching and, for long running matters, the ability to report on accounts data over a three year period.

Workshare previews MetaWall

Next week Workshare Technology (020 7481 6100) will preview its soon-to-be-released MetaWall system. This is described as a 'document control and protection tool' and the first version will address problems with metadata in Microsoft Word documents. Workshare has also released version 2.8 of its DeltaView document comparison and red lining software. Enhancements include a revised user interface and faster comparison times.

Tikit interims a sign of the times

AIM-listed Tikit has published its interim results for the six months to 30 June 2002 and the group's figures echo the *Legal Business* survey's findings - see **page 2** - that the legal IT market has currently stalled. Tikit's turnover was down 20% to £3.73 million, compared with £4.70 million last year, producing an unaudited profit before tax and goodwill of £268,000 (2001: £450K). Tikit attributes the entire shortfall to reduced software sales and associated training, whereas services and support revenues actually grew by 8.5% during the same period.

Commenting on the results, chairman Mike McGoun said law firms were "taking an increasingly cautious approach in committing to major IT expenditure" with expenditure on CRM and document management projects "below expectations".

■ Tikit has introduced economies to cut costs by £500K per annum and McGoun anticipates improved trading conditions during the second half of this year. Here on the Insider we hear growing interest in the LawPort portal Tikit sells in the UK, not least because it offers a 'multi-centric' approach to information so users can opt for a matter-centric, practice-centric, document-centric or any other view of the files they want to access.

Legal IT Leeds preview

The Legal IT 2002 Leeds exhibition opens for business in a fortnight's time featuring stands from over 30 of the UK's leading legal software suppliers and law publishers.

In terms of new names and new products, **G2 Speech**, one of the newer entrants in the speech technology field, will be launching a new version of its G2 Organiser digital dictation workflow management system which is now in use at Stibbe in Amsterdam and DJ Freeman in London. The company will also be announcing details of a flexible pay-as-you-go price structure.

LexisNexis Butterworths is launching a new integrated online legal information service at www.lexisnexis.co.uk/law that for the first time will bring together all Butterworths' services under one umbrella with a common interface, one point of access and unified search facilities. By the end of this year it will encompass most areas of legal practice however we think the aspect that will most appeal to smaller firms is the Legal Updater current awareness service. The annual subscription is from just £295 per user and along with the service's own extensive content and summaries also links through to the full Butterworths resources on a subscription or pay-as-you-go basis.

TFB is launching its PartnerAlert business information and risk management system, which can automatically warn law firm managers when key events are about to happen, and its PostRoom system for scanning incoming mail, converting it into an electronic format and notifying fee earners of its arrival.

Among other exhibitors, **AIM** is showing its ClientConnect e-commerce system in conjunction with Sheffield firm **AMS Law** who based their e-zeemoves.com online conveyancing service on the system. **Videss**, making its first appearance at an exhibition for several years, will also be showing a new case management system that supports e-conveyancing. **Axxia** will be highlighting its new browser based interface for fee earners - the Personal Knowledge Centre (PKC) and its EDRMS electronic document and records management system.

■ Opening hours: 9:30am to 5:00pm on Wednesday 9 and Thursday 10 October. Admission is free. The venue is the Royal Armouries. The event also includes free CPD seminars that have been organised by **Legal Technology Insider**. The speakers are **Neil Cameron** (Wednesday 10:30am) on squeezing extra benefits from IT, **Nicola Webb** of Osborne Clarke (Wednesday 2:30pm) on internet marketing, **Andrew Levison** (Thursday 10:30am) on formulating an IT strategy and **Brian Blackwell & Allan Carton** from Practical Solutions (Thursday 2:30pm) on e-conveyancing.

Event: lunch with the Insider

Next Thursday (3rd October) Legal Technology Insider editor Charles Christian, in association with enterprise storage specialist Posetiv, is hosting an executive lunch and panel debate on business continuance, document management and email archiving at the Blossom Street restaurant in the City of London. For more details phone Hannah Coveney at Posetiv on 0207 556 7221 or register online at www.posetiv.com/events.html

Legal technology events diary

■ OCTOBER 3, LONDON. Free afternoon seminar looking at the impact of speech recognition when combined with document management, focusing on a case study of Silverman Sherliker, a firm with 15 fee earners but no secretaries. Products featured are Docman and DragonDictate. Venue 7 Bath Place, EC2. For more details contact Bernard Stebbing on 07771 625468. The seminar is repeated on 10th October.

■ OCTOBER 9 & 10, LEEDS. Legal IT 2002 at the Royal Armouries. Free exhibition plus free seminars qualifying for up to 4 CPD points. Times 9:30am to 5:00pm both days. For details call Cordial on 01491 575522 or register online at www.legalitshow.com

■ OCTOBER 15, BIRMINGHAM NEC. Laserform Open Day seminar looking at how to increase billing and avoid negligence claims. The guest speaker is Insider editor Charles Christian and the event qualifies for 4 CPD hours. The times are 8:30am to 1:30pm and the event includes refreshments. There are further seminars in London (24 October), Leeds (7 November) and Bristol (20 November). For details call Laserform on 01925 750020 or visit www.laserform.co.uk

■ OCTOBER 16-18, GLENEAGLES. Legal Week's annual networking beano for law firm IT directors - the Legal IT Forum, better known as GlenLegal. The delegate rate is £975 +VAT including travel, accommodation and entertainments. Call 020 7566 5612.

■ NOVEMBER 12 & 13, LONDON. LegalTech Europe at the London Hilton Metropole. More details about the conference next issue. www.legaltechshow.com/Europe

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News in brief

■ ONLINE ELEMENT BOOSTS SALES

The Royal & SunAlliance insurance group reports that since introducing online legal services as part of its More Than family legal protection product, sales have increased by 25%, with over 50% of policyholders opting to take the online element in addition to the core legal expenses package. The online services, developed by the Epoq/Desktop Lawyer group, include access to over 200 interactive legal documents covering everything from making a will to getting an undefended divorce. The latter is the most requested document - a bit ironic since this is meant to be a family legal service.

■ SJ BERWIN SIGN UP FOR THE VAULT

SJ Berwin has selected the Enterprise Vault email management system from KVS to address the issues of escalating email volumes and helping to improve the overall reliability of Microsoft Exchange. Vault, sold via KVS distributor First Stop Computer Group (0208 974 3572), also features a matter search and retrieval capability, providing a cost-effective solution to the firm's need for an email archiving storage system. Herbert Smith is another big user of the KVS vault and the firm's IT director John Rogers will be discussing email storage issues at the LegalTech Europe conference which takes place in London this November.

■ WATCH WHO YOU 'CC' TO

According to professional indemnity insurers Alexander Forbes, most negligence claims stemming from the use of email within law firms relate to the inadvertent release of sensitive information. Typically this is when confidential material is sent to the wrong party because the sender has not checked whose name appears in the 'to' or 'cc' address boxes. Forbes say some firms are tackling this problem by prohibiting the full text of emails from being forwarded and requiring fee earners to only send a précis of the original message.

■ AWARD FOR EVERSLEDS

The Eversheds client extranet portal Eversheds.Complete won the 'Best Use of Technology' category at the annual MPF (Managing Partners Forum) European Practice Management Awards, which were announced earlier this month.

Seeing red over law firm web site projects

Over the years we have reported on various initiatives meant to make it simpler and cheaper for law firms to create and update their web sites on a regular basis without the paralysing delays and costs associated with having to employ their own inhouse technical staff or rely on third-party designers.

The inhouse option is a non-starter for most firms on the grounds of resources but with external bureaux charging on average £55 to £65 per hour - assuming you can find one willing to handle small ad-hoc projects - it is hardly surprising so many law firm sites fall into the 'cobweb site' category. Unfortunately the feedback we hear on the Insider is many of the 'self build' or 'off the shelf' alternatives intended to overcome such problems are themselves too complex to use or too restrictive in their approach to design and content, so back to square one.

Or is it? Last week saw the launch of a new web content management system - called Red Emanager - that claims to be "easier to use than common wordprocessing packages." The Red system has been developed by web designers Mosaïque New Media (you can see their work at www.mosaicque.com) and, unlike other off the shelf packages, uses a bespoke approach so each site is individual rather than a variation of a fixed template.

A basic site, including design, hosting and the content management system costs from £2000 however Red can support more ambitious features including chat rooms and e-commerce facilities. It is also backwards compatible so existing sites can be adapted to accommodate the content management system (this costs from £1000) letting firms take advantage of the technology without having to redevelop all their current web content.

www.redebusiness.com

Web site of the month - infocus

Although the Infocus web site, set up by the IP and e-business division of Trethowans in Southampton, was only launched in June, so it lacks the extensive content of older sites, it already provides an object lesson in how to design web pages. Plenty of white space, a modern minimalist look, simple navigation - the colour coding of the different practice areas is a nice touch, no irrelevant multimedia and a strong corporate image.

In terms of content, material is divided into three distinct types: guidelines providing brief summaries of broader subjects, articles providing more in depth information, and archives of older materials. All content is searchable on a full text basis and we also liked the fact the firm has not lost sight of the full scope of their clients' legal requirements. Yes, the site is designed for clients in the IT and creative industries but, in the words of partner Owen Santry "the service is not just about IP/e-business specialisms, but also about other needs for this sort of client - so it covers standard legal practice areas such as property and employment but in a high-tech or sector-relevant way."

www.i-infocus.co.uk

New approach to CPD training - and pricing

In a fortnight's time Semple Piggot Rochez will launch *The Legal Practitioner*, a new CD Rom/online hybrid designed to provide smaller firms with continuing professional development training. The service features a twice yearly legal update on CD containing six 30 minute audio visual presentations, plus full supporting transcript, by experts in family, crime, litigation, employment, property and welfare law practice. The CDs are complemented online at www.legalpractitioner.co.uk by additional material and updates in a magazine format.

Each presentation on the CD is accredited for one hour CPD bringing the service's annual total 12 hours CPD. Although the annual subscription is £499 + VAT, this is on a per firm basis with no limit on the number of individual users. It is therefore possible to put the CD on an intranet and train the entire firm for less than the cost of a single traditional face to face training course. For more details call John Pitman on 0208 742 1357 or email johnp@spr-law.com

XML news in brief

■ **STANDARDS: PISCES NOT THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN**
 Contrary to reports in circulation earlier this month, PISCES (the Property Information System Common Exchange Standard) is not the legal XML world's "only game in town" and the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) has not thrown in its hand with PISCES rather than continue to develop its own standard. LSSA's XML working party chairman Neil Ewin told the Insider that: "We are participating in the PISCES standard development and hope to keep them complementary but the two standards (LSSA and PISCES) have entirely different objectives."

"We are keen to work with other groups within the legal environment, partly to avoid duplication but also to keep all the various standards reasonably harmonious. LSSA anticipate conveyancing will be one of the first areas of legal practice where application to application integration becomes commonplace and developments within the PISCES group could be central to this process. The involvement of LSSA with PISCES will lead to the early adoption of the standard and so ensure its success."

■ **CALVIS EXTENDS PISCES PORTFOLIO**
 Calvis (01748 813900) has launched PropertyIdeal, a new PISCES based application designed to reduce the time taken to complete the due diligence process for commercial property transactions, starting initially with Replies to Enquiries. The system was developed with advice and assistance from Dundas & Wilson and SJ Berwin will be the first firm to trial the service. The system is based on the CPSE (Commercial Property Standard Enquiries) devised by the London Property Support Lawyers Group. PropertyIdeal is available on monthly subscription with electronic replies used in the first 20 transactions priced at £99 each. Discounts are available for volume users. www.calvis.com

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Berrys notch up three more DDS deals

Following its recent success at Halliwell Landau, Berrys Digital Solutions has clocked up three more wins in the legal digital dictation stakes. The biggest order comes from Barlow Lyde & Gilbert, who will be rolling out digital dictation and WinScribe workflow management on a practice-wide basis. Before placing the order BLG extensively piloted the system to test its compatibility with Citrix, different versions of Windows and the firm's own network security. BLG also plans to link digital dictation to its ProLaw DMS and practice management system.

The other orders come from Farrer & Co, who will be rolling out WinScribe and digital dictation in conjunction with Windows 2000 from the end of October, and Stringer Saul, who have ordered a small digital dictation network based on the Philips Speech Mike Exec system.

■ Following the recent appointment of Mike Coxall as head of sales, Berrys' digital dictation business is now based out of the company's Holborn Kingsway offices (0207 405 6231).

Digital dictation news in brief

■ RPC ORDER FULL ROLL OUT OF DIGITAL DICTATION

Reynolds Porter Chamberlain has placed an order with nFlow Software to roll out its DictaFlow digital dictation and workflow management system to all 352 users in the firm's Holborn and City offices. The order follows a pilot that demonstrated both the resilience of DictaFlow's distributed server architecture and its ability to minimise bandwidth usage by reducing the distance sound files travel on a network.

■ TSB - DDS PAYS FOR ITSELF IN SIX MONTHS

Travers Smith Braithwaite has rolled out BigHand's TotalSpeech digital dictation and workflow management system to fee earners and secretaries in its property and litigation departments after a pilot earlier this year showed the system could deliver cost savings and effectively pay for itself within six months.

Competition: find the best TLA for digital dictation technology

If there is one thing the legal IT world really enjoys, it is a good TLA (three letter acronym) for a piece of technology - PMS, KMS, DMS, CRM take your pick. But what about digital dictation systems, any advances on DDS? We want you to tell us what else you think would make a good TLA.

The Insider is offering a bottle of champagne, courtesy of digital dictation workflow specialists nFlow Software, for the most original digital dictation TLA and another bottle for the most amusing TLA relating to digital dictation. The closing date for entries is 31st October and the winner will be announced in our November issue. Email entries to tla@legaltechnology.com

What next - a world without Microsoft ?

With law firm IT budgets apparently stalled - **see story on page 2** - and under increasing pressure from Microsoft's new licensing regime, the Insider is once again hearing growing interest in the concept of open source alternatives to Microsoft platforms. Two of the UK's leading legal systems developers have already indicated that Linux/Sun StarOffice/MySQL alternatives to the classic Windows/MS Office and SQL Server combination could be on the cards for next year - a move that could cut end user costs of ownership by as much as 80%.

■ IBM last week announced plans to increase its support for Red Hat's version of the Linux operating system across all its main server products, as well as its DB2 database and Lotus Notes platforms.

NPower empowered by Teamflo's FloSuite

Following our report in the last issue that the utilities group NPower is planning to launch a fast track conveyancing service next spring, the Insider has since learned that the process automation aspects of the service, including the MyHomeMove.com web portal for conveyancing clients, are powered by the Teamflo (01592 750677) FloSuite case and workflow management system.

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■ For all editorial, subscription and reprint enquiries contact:

Legal Technology Insider, Ferndale House, Harling Road, North Lopham, Diss, Norfolk IP22 2NQ, United Kingdom

Publisher & Editor: Charles Christian

Tel: 01379 687518 - Fax: 01379 687704

Videophone: 01379 687690 x2

Email: news@legaltechnology.com

■ **Coming soon:** The next newswire is scheduled for 2 October. The next issue of the Insider newsletter (No.140) will be published on Wednesday 23 October 2002.