



PLC acquires Logistics

The legal publisher Practical Law Company (PLC) has acquired the niche software developer Logistics, a company which earlier this year - *see Insider 138 for first report* - launched the Inform due diligence project management system.

PLC chairman Robert Dow described the deal as "An extremely exciting development. We are well placed to provide workflow tools for lawyers, combining our expertise in know-how and technology. The acquisition of Logistics will significantly increase our momentum in this area." Dow said that along with the Inform application, the Logistics team would also be working on a number of other new software developments including a document assembly/automated drafting system and outsourced knowledge management systems that would allow firms to integrate their own proprietary know-how with generic content supplied by PLC.

As well as obviously being good news for Logistics' co-founders Jeremy Tobias-Tarsh and Jeroen Plink, this is also an interesting development for PLC, as it is yet another example of a legal publisher moving out of pure content provision and into the realms of delivering the software applications needed to manipulate and manage that content.

The Insider web site

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www.legaltechnology.com

TFB back Linux open source alternative

Technology for Business (TFB) has become the UK's first legal systems supplier to offer a Linux open source platform as an alternative to the current - and increasingly expensive - industry standard option of Microsoft with everything.

TFB is keen to stress that this is very much an under-the-bonnet development that will not in any way change how its flagship Partner for Windows practice and case management system looks or operates from the point of view of end users. Similarly, it will not affect any existing Microsoft applications, such as Office or Outlook, that a firm may also be running. But, what it does offer is the potential for significant cost savings on third party software licensing.

In a parallel move, TFB has also announced that the release of Partner for Windows, due in April 2003, will support a series of non-Microsoft desktop applications such as Sun Star Office, Open Office and any MAPI-based products, such as Eudora and GroupWise, as an alternative to Office and Outlook.

TFB's technical director Mark Garnish estimates that by going the open source or a non-Microsoft route, firms may be able to cut their third party software licensing costs by at least 30% but without any loss of functionality or performance.

This view is echoed by Jan Frickel, the IT director at one of TFB's biggest sites Silverbeck Rymer in Liverpool "It is hard to ignore Linux's impact as a rival to more expensive Microsoft solutions. Microsoft licensing accounts for a significant percentage of our IT expenditure. Just by adopting Star Office instead of the Microsoft equivalent, for example, we will save in excess of £20,000 per annum."

Another benefit of open source is it can support a mixed operating environment so that, for instance, a firm needing to expand its current network may now find it more cost effective to run Linux and Star Office instead of going the traditional route of just investing in more Microsoft Windows and Office licences.

As well as supporting the expansion of existing networks, Garnish believes open source will provide an attractive alternative for firms facing a major upgrade from a legacy Windows operating platform because their system has been 'end of lifed' by Microsoft. In this respect TFB will be putting its money where its mouth is and is planning to replace its own end of lifed Microsoft Exchange Server 5.5 system with an open source alternative rather than upgrade to Exchange 2000.

TECHNICAL NOTE: As a result of these moves, TFB's Partner for Windows suite is available, and will continue to be supported, on Windows NT/2000, Novell and now Linux platforms. Windows users can have SQL Server or Sybase as the back end database, while Linux users have the option of Sybase, PostgreSQL and, from Q3 next year, Oracle. A client licence for Star Office, which has most of the functionality of Office 97/2000 (but not XP) costs around £60 per user compared with £300 for Microsoft Office. TFB is also using SAMBA as a file server.

■ TFB's new Linux offerings will make their public debut at the Legal IT London exhibition in February 2003.

News in brief

■ BRIDGE MCFARLAND UPGRADES

Fast growing Bridge McFarland Haddon Owen, which is now one of the largest firms in the Lincolnshire/Humberside region, is upgrading its PC network from earlier versions of Windows and Word to standardise on a Windows 2000 and Office 2000 platform at its six sites. Select Legal Systems is the prime contractor and the project also involves installing high speed datacoms links between the branch offices.

■ TEXTING TIMES FOR MORE FIRMS

Along with Digby Brown in Scotland - see last issue - other firms to have either recently implemented or are currently piloting SMS text messaging services include Dickson Haslam in Lancashire, Levi Mrae & Co in Glasgow and Hammond Suddards Edge. All three are running 'Group txt' SMS software from Cy-nap Limited (0113 234 2111).

■ CONSULTANCY GETS NEW URL

Craig Jones' The Ideas People consultancy (07941 800674) now has a new web site URL.
www.theideaspeople.com

■ 700 JOBS TO GO AT CAP GEMINI

The European IT consultancy Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, which is probably best known in the legal market as the prime contractor for Clifford Chance's new global practice management system project, has admitted that it may have to cut more than 700 jobs in the UK. According to the announcement on the consultancy's web site, the decision to lay off about 10% of its workforce was the result of "a combination of streamlining our structure to better respond to the current market conditions and a harsh operating environment."

■ NEW IT USER DISCUSSION FORUMS

Two new online discussion forums have opened up on Yahoo! for legal IT users. TFB's Southern Area User Group has established a forum for users of the TFB Partner for Windows (P4W) and old Avenue Solomon and Wisdom products, and there is now also a forum for Carpe Diem users. Users can register online to join by visiting
<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/TFBUserGroup>
<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/CarpeDiemETS>

MSS first off the mark with support for Tablet PC

MSS (01252-371121) has become the first legal systems supplier to offer support for the new Tablet PC platform. Users of the MSS AlphaLAW-Vantage practice management system now have the option of entering data via the traditional keyboard or using a stylus and touch sensitive screen to enter 'handwritten' notes that can be converted into conventional text compatible with other applications such as AlphaLAW and Microsoft Office.

Simon Meehan of MSS suggests that along with being able to scribble down memos and attendance notes, the extensive connection and networking options of Tablets PCs, including wireless links, mean users are not tied to their desks and can, for example, annotate documents electronically and then forward them on to other AlphaLAW users for action.

■ The Tablet PC is currently available in two formats: the clipboard-like 'slate' that does not have a keyboard and the 'convertible'. The latter looks like a regular laptop but has either a detachable keyboard or a screen on a swivel mechanism that folds back to cover the keyboard and provide a flat writing area.

Gadget loving lawyers thinking about treating themselves to one of these devices for Christmas might like to note that Acer, Fujitsu, HP Compaq and Toshiba have already launched Tablet PCs. However initial reports suggest that as well as being more expensive than a regular laptop, some Tablet PCs have smaller screens and shorter battery lives. Weight may also be an issue with some convertibles tipping the scales at nearly 4lbs, making that a heavy writing pad to carry for prolonged periods of time.

TFB defies the critics with record results

Although a number of suppliers have been trying to pick off the old Avenue Legal user base after the company's merger with Technology for Business last year, their efforts have clearly not inflicted anything like the damage they may have hoped with TFB last week reporting record monthly sales of £1.2 million for the month of September. The sales include 21 existing customers signing up for upgrades from TFB's legacy systems to the company's new Partner for Windows (P4W) system.

Managing director Simon Hill told the Insider that although there was initially a lot of controversy surrounding the decision to 'end of life' the company's legacy systems "The figures speak for themselves. We have restructured and invested heavily in both systems development and customer care. And, we are now in a healthier position than some of our competitors who are saddled with commercially unsustainable commitments to indefinitely support their own legacy systems."

■ Bells Solicitors in Romsey, Hampshire, is the latest Avenue Legal Systems' user to migrate to TFB's P4W system. Litigation partner Keith Lawrenson said the migration was not a foregone conclusion as the firm evaluated rival practice management systems before deciding to go with TFB.

Peapod enjoying new freedom after MBO

Peapod Solutions' managing director Ian Wimbush says the company is already benefiting from the recent management buyout from its former parent E-Initiative (*for full story see previous issue - Insider 141*) in terms of having greater freedom and flexibility on pricing, promotions and product bundling. Peapod (0870 380 1122) is currently selling its OFFICECase V4 case management system bundled in with free legal accounts and electronic forms software. The all-in price for a 5-user site over a three year finance deal would be around £250 a month.

Wimbush says Peapod is currently winning orders at a rate of ten firms a month from practices in the 3-to-5 user size bracket. The company also has a thriving electronic forms business with its PRINTAForm range including some top 50 users.

LASA AIMS to help advice bureaux sector

Probably the most frequently overlooked part of the whole legal services market is the advice bureaux and law centres sector, where erratically funded agencies usually lack the resources to invest in anything but the most basic IT. One organisation now offering practical assistance in this area is LASA - the London Advice Services Alliance (020 7377 2806) - which along with providing information and training, funded in part by the Legal Services Commission, has also been working on the development of a low cost claims and case management system.

Called the Advice & Information Management System, the first version of AIMS was launched in April this year and allows users to capture data for social policy and reporting purposes, as well as offering a range of functions designed to assist advice agency staff with casework management. The system can also be used to support quality standards. For example, agencies seeking a quality mark under the Community Legal Service framework would find AIMS useful in meeting various audit reporting requirements, providing step by step procedures for dealing with client related problems and making and monitoring appropriate referrals, all within the LSC framework.

AIMS is strictly targeted at the not-for-profit sector with prices starting from as little as £200 pa for voluntary bodies and £300 pa for statutory (ie local council) advice agencies. For agencies working to the LSC not-for-profit sector franchise quality standard (LAFQAS) a more advanced system - AIMS Extra - is available. LASA expects to release version 2 of AIMS early next year.

www.lasa.org.uk/aims/index.shtml

■ The Coventry Law Centre has become the first organisation in England & Wales to be awarded the Legal Services Commission's quality mark for its web site. The LSC quality mark requires legal advice sites to meet a range of standards for clarity, legal content and accessibility, including compliance with the 'Bobby' test for blind and visually impaired internet users.

www.covlaw.org.uk

News in brief

■ **PILGRIM WIN GOODMAN DERRICK**
Pilgrim Systems has won the contract to supply London media law firm Goodman Derrick with a new client relationship and practice management system based around Pilgrim's LawSoft software. The deal is part of a 15 month project at the firm to upgrade its entire IT infrastructure, with the Pilgrim systems due to go live in the early spring.

■ **LAWMAN MANAGES MATTERS**
Timeslice (020 7231 0073) has become the latest legal IT vendor to offer a matter management system to fee earners who need something less rigidly structured than conventional case management software to help organise and process their day to day legal work. The matter management facility is supplied as a modular part of Timeslice's core Lawman practice management system. The company is now also working on closer integration between Lawman's client matter files and popular digital dictation systems.

■ **THIRD GENERATION WITH AIM**
Five partner Northamptonshire firm Smith Chamberlain is upgrading to AIM Evolution and will be rolling out the practice management system across 30 desktops. This will be the firm's third generation of AIM software, which began with the Charter system in 1992. The firm is also installing conveyancing case management software.

Looking for IT staff ?

Looking for IT staff, including positions in sales, development, web services, know-how, library services, support and training? Then post your vacancies free of charge to the Jobs Board on the Insider web site by emailing the details to jobs@legaltechnology.com

■ This week's top jobs include: barristers set **Matrix Chambers** is recruiting for a full-time knowledge manager; **Axxia Systems** has two vacancies on the programming and technical side; **Laserform** is looking for a salesman for its conveyancing case management system; and a law firm in the South-West is offering up to £50K + benefits for an IT manager. We also have some new CV postings. For details of these and other vacancies visit the Jobs Board at www.legaltechnology.com

Strachan royalties to go to cancer charity

Peapod Solutions, which distributes the 32-bit Windows version of the late Jim Strachan's StrongBox accounts system for small firms, is to pay a percentage of the royalties on the software to the Macmillan Nurses charity. Strachan, whose varied career included stints as an electrician and as a jazz drummer before turning to writing software, died of lung cancer last month.

Glen Legal event changes hands

Informa, the publishing and conferences group, has confirmed reports that earlier this autumn it acquired the rights to GPM's flagship Legal IT Forum networking event, which takes place every year at the Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. Informa Group finance director Jim Wilkinson told the Insider that they actually acquired the event - known in the market as GlenLegal - before this year's conference but left its organisation with GPM to ensure continuity. From next year Informa, whose IBC conference division has long experience of running high profile events in the legal, insurance, energy and telecoms markets, will take over the entire management of the event.

Wilkinson said there were no plans to move the event away from Gleneagles and he also clarified the scope of the deal. Thus, although Informa and GPM will work together on Glen Legal for the next three years, Informa has not acquired GPM's own inhouse events division, nor has it acquired any of GPM's titles, which include the *Legal Week* and *Legal IT* magazines. The Legal IT Forum also has no connections with Cordial Events' Legal IT Exhibitions, which take place each year in Leeds and London.

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DDS - DigiScribe and Stat Plus make their mark

Competition in the UK's hotly contested digital dictation market was racked up another notch last week with both Stat Plus and DigiScribe announcing significant new business wins.

Stat Plus (020 8254 5105) has won its biggest deal to-date, securing an order to supply and roll out its SPS Speech Processing Solution to 300 users at Martineau Johnson in Birmingham. The firm's IT director Ken Agnew said two factors influenced the choice of Stat Plus. The first was that as part of the £130 million Oyez Straker group, "We know they are a company who are going to be here today and not gone tomorrow." The second factor was the availability of the new SPS @nywhere product which gives fee earners the option of recording digital dictation files on Pocket PC devices.

The other major development related to the DigiScribe digital dictation and workflow management system, which is distributed in the UK by Peapod Solutions' subsidiary DigiVoice (0870 380 1122). The company has gone public on the first batch of firms to install DigiScribe. The firms are Sykes Anderson in east London, Thursfields in Kidderminster, W G Boyle & Co in Scotland and Dobsons on the south coast.

Despite its relatively small size, in recent years Sykes Anderson has earned a reputation for its innovative use of technology. In the case of digital dictation, the firm will be using the system to help outsource secretarial work to staff located in South Africa. Partner David Anderson reckons digital dictation will pay for itself in three months as "by outsourcing work to secretaries based abroad we can half the cost of a secretary and free up desk space for new fee earners."

■ DigiScribe retails in the UK through DigiVoice's dealer network which includes Peapod, Professional Computer Group and Harford Dictation Systems. (You can keep track of which digital dictation systems the UK's 100 largest firms are running by checking out the chart on the Insider web site.)

NetPilot steers way to lower internet connection bills

Hartnells Solicitors in Exeter reports that since installing the Equinet (01793 603701) NetPilot secure internet server in-a-box 'appliance' in May this year, its phone bills have been slashed, despite the fact it is making more and more use of email and online services.

Prior to May, the firm was spending £300 per month and rising on ISDN whereas with NetPilot and a new 'always on' ADSL broadband connection, the bills are down to £75 a month. Senior partner Norman Hartnell added that whereas the firm had tried alternative systems in the past and "had nothing but problems and network crashes, since May the service has been great, we just turn it on and it works." The system was implemented by local Equinet reseller Professional Computer Group (01202 857000).

The 2002 Loties - all the winners

This year's LOTIES Legal Office Technology Innovation Awards ceremony at the Café Royal in London, attended by over 300 guests, firmly put the awards on the calendar and made the event the closest thing the UK legal IT world has to the Oscars. Once again the awards, which were started back in 1996 by *In Brief* magazine, in association with Legal Technology Insider, are based on the votes cast by the two publications' readers, with this year a total of over 11,000 votes cast. The winners were...

Elite Information Systems enjoyed a double whammy winning both the Best Legal Office Technology System and Best Legal Office Technology Supplier categories. And there was a double for the speech technology industry with **Voicepath** winning the award for Best Fee Earner Support System, while the award for Best Legal Office Automation System went to the TotalSpeech system from **BigHand**.

The **Solicitec** Visualfiles system won the Best Legal Office Technology Newcomer award. **Oyez Legal Technologies** won in the Best Litigation Support System category and **Roll-on-Friday** beat off the rest of the legal publishing world to win the award for Best Legal Publication in a New Media Format.

Turning to law firm client services, Kevin Doolan's team at **Eversheds** won the Best Legal E-commerce/Online Legal Service Project for Eversheds.Complete, while Edinburgh-based **Morton Fraser** won both the Best Legal Knowledge Management and Information Portal and the Best Workflow, Matter or Case Management awards for its commercial property extranet.

AIM Professional's **Anne Mansfield** won the Vendor Personality award. **Janet Day** of Berwin Leighton Paisner was named IT Director of the Year. Nigel Blackwood's team at **Wragge & Co** were the IT Team of the Year and **Reynolds Porter Chamberlain** were the Law Firm of the Year - RPC's IT director Julie Berry accepted the award. Finally, the International Law Firm of the Year award went to **Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw**.

Software compliance at BLP

Faced with a policy commitment to achieve the highest level of FAST (Federation Against Software Theft) certification and with licences for over 250 different software applications to manage, Berwin Leighton Paisner has recently implemented the AssetCenter system from Peregrine Systems (0800 849 2050).

In effect Asset Center holds data on all licences in one central repository and maintains a lifecycle history on versions and upgrade paths for each application. BLP's Kathleen Hanna, who works on the compliance project, said that along with replacing the previous, primarily manual, time intensive process for monitoring when licence updates were due, Asset Center "makes the process of reconciling licences with installations simplicity itself" and provides an automated audit trail "which was a key requirement for us in terms of demonstrating compliance with the FAST rules." www.peregrine.com

LegalTech event gets its act together

After a couple years of floundering with the format, American Lawyer Media has finally got its act together with its London LegalTech event. Rather than trying to go head-to-head with Cordial's Legal IT exhibition, LegalTech Europe has now been reinvented as a high end conference with a programme that seems to have been genuinely well-received by the delegates. In fact some of the delegates attending last month's conference have already been making enquiries about next year's event.

Legal technology events diary

■ DECEMBER 10, LONDON. Customer Relationship Management Seminar highlighting the features of InterAction 5. Further information and online booking can be found on www.kramerlee.com or phone Kramer Lee & Associates on 01268 494500.

■ DECEMBER 11, PETERBOROUGH. SOS regional roadshow at the Haydock Hotel at Wansford. The morning workshops are for existing users to see the latest features in the SOS software. Non-SOS clients are invited to a buffet lunch to meet with firms already using the SOS software and to attend a presentation in the afternoon. For details contact Louise Hamilton at SOS on 01225 787700 or email l.hamilton@sosbath.co.uk

■ DECEMBER 19, EXETER. Digital dictation seminar organised by Stat Plus Speech Processing at St Loye's Conference Centre, Topsham Road - 4:00pm start. The event is co-hosted with the Devon & Exeter Law Society. For details call 020 8254 5112.

■ JANUARY 27-29, 2003, NEW YORK. LegalTech New York at the Hilton.

www.legaltechshow.com

■ FEBRUARY 12 & 13, 2003, LONDON. Legal IT 2003 at the Business Design Centre. The UK's leading legal technology exhibition returns for another year. The event also includes a programme of 5 CPD seminars. Admission to both the exhibition and seminars is free. www.legalitshow.com

News in brief

■ NORTHERN IRELAND WEB WINNER

Northern Ireland law firm Wilson Nesbitt last month won a competition organised by legal systems developer Opsis and internet specialists Legal-Island to find the best legal web site in the province. The judging panel (which included Insider editor Charles Christian) were impressed by the amount of detail the site contained, even down to car parking details and phone numbers for taxis on the contacts/how to find us page.

www.wilson-nesbitt.com

■ WAN SUPPORTS CRIME NETWORK

Ronald Prior & Co in East London is using a VoIP (voice over IP) telecoms links to connect its new criminal practice branch office with the firm's main premises, one mile away in Walthamstow, which house the family law and clinical negligence teams. The firm engaged Professional Technology (01634 815517) to install Cisco routers to connect the two sites over a dedicated kilostream link with ISDN for backup.

■ VOICEPOWER WIN SPEECH AWARD

Speech recognition and digital dictation specialist VoicePower (01943 468000) won the 'Overall Achievement Award 2002' at last week's national speech recognition industry awards, organised by ScanSoft. West Yorkshire-based VoicePower has a growing number of law firm sites including Keeble Hawson and Simpson Millar.

Email - technical tip

With record volumes of viruses and spam swamping email systems, internet expert Delia Venables says one simple precaution is to block any incoming messages that are more than 8Kb in length. "It is pretty good at stopping viruses - and saves a lot of time in cutting short the junk mail too. On the occasions I actually want a long email, I can just mark it accordingly and 'fetch' it again. Venables also warns that one of the annoying habits viruses now have is to pick up an email address from someone else's address book and then send out a virus message as if from that address. It is a form of identity theft and in most cases the notional sender is not infected by a virus and will be unaware their address has been misused.

BT enters the email management business

Speaking at last month's LegalTech Europe conference, Herbert Smith's head of IT services John Rogers predicted that email management - or as he put it "taming the email monster" - would be the key IT challenge for law firms to face in 2003.

Unfortunately, with the exception of a few larger firms that have invested in archiving and management systems like KVS Vault, the technology solutions for effectively managing email have been beyond the budgets of most firms. With exquisite timing, BT has just launched a new business called Open Orchard (0845 602 3832) - the team includes legal IT market veteran Mike Stitchbury - to address the needs of this 'mid-tier' market, including law firms. The service is called BT Ensure and can provide a number of facilities including:

- Email communication/document management, via a central repository for automatically capturing all emails and providing reporting and search facilities, such as the ability to retrieve all email communications relating to a specific client or matter.
- Compliance to policy, via audit trails and the maintenance of clear, permanent records of all client/matter communications.
- Control of sensitive information - at the point of sending an email BT Ensure can identify the nature of the information, such as case material and intellectual property, and warn or block against its transmission to the wrong parties.
- Email process controls - to ensure messages are copied or forwarded to other parties in compliance with a firm's policy, for example, requiring all matter-related communications to be approved by a partner before transmission.
- Encryption and security - enforcing a firm's security policy by notifying or warning users to use digital signatures or encryption based on the sensitivity of information transmitted.
- Disclaimer verification and management - automatically verifying the presence of the relevant disclaimer for different types of email communications, including blocking a transmission where the appropriate email disclaimer is not present or incomplete.

www.openorchard.com

Meet the email monster

Some of the facts and figures disclosed by John Rogers during his LegalTech presentation reveal just how big the email monster has become. Over the last 12 months Herbert Smith has had to cope with 9.1 million messages - which equates to 36,000 each working day or one message entering or leaving the firm every second. The firm also encounters one virus every 15 minutes and anticipates a 25% growth in the number of messages it receives next year and, more worryingly for storage purposes, a 50% increase in the physical size of email traffic thanks to file attachments. Rogers said a further indication of the scale of the management problem is the fact it is not unusual for a single document to be copied between users - and consequently replicated for storage purposes - as many as 25 times.

Web site of the month... Pannone.com

We have all heard the phrase ‘a web site is not just for Christmas’ in the context of ensuring that the content is kept up-to-date but eventually even the best maintained site will pass its sell-by date and require a total revamp to keep pace with changes in browser technology, to avoid looking dated and, most importantly, to keep pace with the evolving needs of the firm.

One practice to recently go down this road is Pannone & Partners (P&P) which over the past year has been working on the redevelopment of its 1999-vintage site. The firm’s director of marketing Deborah Ascott-Jones, who admits she kept a hands on approach throughout the redevelopment project, says the firm’s objectives included: creating an information centre that was appropriate for all the firm’s target markets; providing a platform to support e-business; having a web vehicle that could be regularly updated via an inhouse content management system; providing added value/CRM services to clients, supporting the firms recruitment activities, optimising the site for the purposes of internet search engines, improving navigation and redesigning the whole site “to maintain a professional look but adopting a lighter, brighter, more modern approach” while at the same time not losing the “human face” of P&P through the use of partner/key people profiles and photos.

Such a conceptual build-up is usually a hard act to follow in execution but in this case the Pannone site have achieved these objectives - and more. Instead of the cluttered, smug tones of what is usually little more than a traditional brochureware site, P&P have not so much revamped their site as totally reinvented it as a law firm/legal services search engine portal.

The design is ruthlessly minimalist with a home page containing some simple logos plus a handful of drop down menu headings and extensive search facilities. Yet, despite the simplicity, this interface provides access to probably everything a casual visitor, existing client or prospective recruit would ever need to know about the firm. The services offered are categorised from the point of view of clients (clinical negligence, liquor licensing, French property, residential property & remortgaging etc) rather than the firm’s own practice areas and departments, where relevant there are extranet access facilities for existing clients and it even has one of the best ‘how to find us’ maps we have seen. And all delivered without any hype or gimmicks.

We were impressed. In fact it is one of the few genuinely novel - as distinct from novelty - legal sites we have seen for a long time. We were also heartened to hear Ascott-Jones comment that “No site is ever perfect and there are still areas on ours under development, for example, we are working on each service area enquiry form to tailor it to the appropriate market/audiences’ requirements.” Truly a law firm web site that is not just for Christmas.

■ The Pannone site was developed in conjunction with the Liverpool design agency the Mando Group (0151 281 4040).

www.pannone.com

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Cleaning up the metadata in Microsoft Word

Over the last few weeks we have lost track of the number of reports we have heard of law firms being caught with their proverbial pants down when a client has checked the metadata in an electronically distributed Word file, such as a document sent as an email file attachment, and found that it was originally drafted for another client or even, as in a couple of instances, drafted by a totally different firm and the precedent subsequently 'borrowed.'

Not surprisingly the legal IT industry has responded with software that can erase metadata before potentially embarrassing information reaches the wrong people. First off the mark in the UK was Workshare Technology (020 7481 6100) with its MetaWall software however another product worth looking at - and possibly a more commercially attractive option for smaller firms - is Out-of-Sight 2.0 from SoftWise Consulting in the USA.

This can erase metadata from Word and Excel 97, 2000 and XP documents and integrates with Outlook 97 and 2000 so it will automatically remind users to erase metadata before sending any emails containing Word or Excel file attachments. Pricing starts at \$42 for a single user version of Out-of-Sight, including a 12 month product updates, upgrades and technical support contract, which with volume discounts the price for a 500+ organisation falls to \$15.60 per workstation. The software can be downloaded directly from the web at www.softwise.net

Outsourcing the only option ?

Delivering the opening day keynote presentation at last month's LegalTech Europe conference, John Parkinson, the senior VP and chief technologist for Cap Gemini Ernst & Young US, predicted that for most law firms' IT operations "within a decade outsourcing would be the only option."

While conceding that the very largest global practices, such as Linklaters and Clifford Chance, may still have the option of "going it alone" and developing their own IT systems, the issues surrounding the management of IT would defeat all other firms. Factors Parkinson cited here included: "unsupportable" user expectations, "unachievable" service levels, the "overwhelming cost and complexity" of modern business systems, plus the fact that "maintaining adequate inhouse technology skills will be impossible" for most firms.

Seasons greetings

This is the last issue of the Insider before the annual festival of hangovers, indigestion and visits by relatives who out-stay their welcome, otherwise known as Christmas. We will be back in the New Year, so seasons greetings to all our readers and remember you can keep in touch with any breaking news by visiting the Insider web site or subscribing to our email Newswire service.

Law firm technology fails to impress clients

Last month's LegalTech Europe conference in London provided a resounding vote of no confidence for law firm extranets and virtual dealrooms when inhouse counsel from Cable & Wireless, DuPont and Equitas all criticised law firms for their non-proactive and unimaginative approach towards using technology to help deliver legal services.

When asked what recent innovations in law firm IT had most impressed her, Julie Mazza, corporate counsel at DuPont said "It is so rare that it would be most welcome if they were to offer something new." Judy Baczynski of Equitas added that she felt all the innovations there had been in the delivery of legal services, even including how firms submitted their bills, had to-date only been implemented by firms after her team had specifically requested them.

The comments came during a panel session on looking at technology through the eyes of clients and, interestingly, the inhouse lawyers' views were echoed by many of the law firm IT staff in the audience who complained that although they had the technology, it was still difficult to persuade partners to take such systems seriously. Or, as one IT manager put it "Partners are not interested in IT until they hear several other firms have something they don't. They just don't read memos regarding technology."

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■ **Coming soon:** The next newswires are scheduled for 11 December and 8 January. The next issue of the Insider newsletter (No.143) will be published on Wednesday 22 January 2003.