



## Sweet & Maxwell move search based charging

Sweet & Maxwell is moving towards a fresh pricing model for its Westlaw family of online information services. The company's new director of its legal online business unit Jitendra Valera (JV) told the Insider that whereas US law firms charge everything back to the client, including legal research, in the UK subscriptions to services like Westlaw are almost inevitably treated as a cost and added to the library's overheads.

According to JV, market research suggests the real issue for UK firms is not the price but the chargeability of the research, because the pricing models for online services vary from cost per case, to cost per view and cost per printout.

To avoid this confusion, Westlaw is introducing a new pricing model based on the cost per search, which JV hopes will become the "single currency" for all legal research. Backed up by better reporting, so it is easier for firms to allocate research work to individual matters, JV believes this will "encourage more firms to adopt a charge back mentality for content, in the same way as they already do for disbursements."

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# Price wars hit digital dictation market

With competition heating up in the digital dictation systems market, as more and more new entrants try to grab a slice of the cake, the first signs of a price war are beginning to emerge with the prices falling from over £1000 per seat 12 months ago to under £300 a seat today. And, with at least one more overseas DDS supplier set to enter the market this autumn, the prediction is that prices could be as low as £100 per seat by Christmas.

Two of the biggest cost cutters are DigiVoice (0870 770 1717), the UK distributors of the DigiScribe system, and iDOiNK Technologies (01473 405000) with their VoiceFLO product. DigiVoice, which has just won a major contract from a Yorkshire firm, is currently running a promotion for 5-to-25 user firms of £395 per seat including hardware, software and support. For larger sites the price falls to £295 per seat.

Meanwhile iDOiNK (pronounced eye-doh-ink) is offering a special promotional deal of £175 per seat. Commenting on the price, the company's head of marketing Lesley Huskisson told the Insider that with all digital dictation systems offering broadly the same functionality (or as Huskisson put it, taking a leaf from Gertrude Stein, "a DDS is a DDS is a DDS") any new supplier entering the market "had to look at ways of differentiating themselves from the competition. We decided to do it on price."

Huskisson added that, unlike some suppliers who might only have one source of income from selling digital dictation into the legal market, because iDOiNK had other products in other markets, it could afford to charge a lower price without hurting either product development or its customer support services.

Most suppliers are keeping tight-lipped about the impact of the price war but the Insider knows of one site where a DDS supplier had to cut its price from £900 to £275 per seat to win the order. And, in another recent tender, one WinScribe reseller told the Insider they were certain they had won the deal when they quoted £20,000 against a competitor's price of £30,000, only to see the contract awarded to another supplier who quoted £14,000.

## Law Society starts application process for 2004 guide

The Law Society of England & Wales has started the application process for systems suppliers wanting to be included in the next edition of its annual *Software Solutions Guide*, which is due to be published in spring 2004. The application period opened on 14 July and closes on Friday 5 September.

The guide is open to all suppliers of accounts and practice management systems selling to English & Welsh solicitors practices however applicants must go through a rigorous vetting procedure - this includes extensive market research into the views of their current users as well as an examination of their accounts records and financial health. The application forms can be found online at [www.it4law.co.uk](http://www.it4law.co.uk)

## Integrating document capture with DMS

Intech Solutions (a new face to the Insider) has supplied an integrated document capture system to Lewis Silkin. Although the firm already used a Hummingbird DMS to manage documents created in Microsoft Office, it also wanted a system that would allow staff to capture externally originated documentation without reorganizing the way they worked. IT director Jan Durant subsequently selected Intech's File-it Image Capture system. This uses scanners linked to the firm's LAN by Axis network document servers - a cheaper alternative to dedicating a PC for scanning in each workgroup. Users enter client/matter numbers at an Axis box and File-it then scans the document and files the image in the DMS. For details call Steve Whitfield of Intech on 020 7553 2581.

## News in brief

### ■ NEW SERVICE FROM CALVIS

Property software specialist Calvis has launched a managed document scanning service for the real estate and legal sectors. Called REDScan, the concept is to provide law firms with a speedy way to search for and retrieve information, without having to go through the long winded process of locating the original hard copy documents. The cost of the service depends on the size of the project with prices quoted on a job by job basis. Calvis, best known for its involvement with the PISCES XML initiative, is also a Hummingbird partner. [www.calvis.com](http://www.calvis.com)

### ■ PETERBOROUGH AIMS TO EVOLVE

Peterborough City Council has contracted AIM Professional Systems to supply and implement a new Evolution case management, time recording and invoicing system for its legal division. The decision to order AIM was fuelled by a need to replace a legacy application with a new system that could support invoicing for chargeable work for both internal and external clients. Users will have an Outlook interface to the system and the legal division also plans to roll out AIM's Post Room utility (which supports the electronic processing, management and retention of documents) at a future stage.

## Hummingbird buys Valid for £18 million

Hard on the heels of last month's acquisition of Kramer Lee for a reported £4 million, Hummingbird has now bought Bill Cannings' electronic document & records management company Valid Information Systems for £18 million.

Formed in 1989 - and originally called Ymijs - Valid and its R/KYV software has evolved from a relatively simple DIP (document image processing) system into a compliance & records management system that is widely used by major corporations as well as central and local government authorities and related governmental agencies.

Commenting on the deal, Hummingbird chairman & CEO Fred Sorkin said "With Valid joining the Hummingbird family, we are now one step closer to becoming the leading provider of government solutions globally. In the UK alone, there are over 1.2 million government seats that require records management compliance within the next two years. With the Valid acquisition, Hummingbird is now well poised to take advantage of this market opportunity."

Hummingbird acquired the shares of Valid for an initial consideration of £10 million in cash and an additional consideration of £8 million payable over two years, based on performance targets. Valid will operate as a wholly owned subsidiary of Hummingbird, continuing to support and maintain all customer implementations. Hummingbird will continue to sell the Valid products in the UK without interruption. The existing Valid management team and employees will remain with their current responsibilities and positions.

■ In related news, Valid (020 8215 1414) has added a standalone workflow design toolkit to its core R/KYV v9 product. The new module, which has a drag & drop interface plus Java script error checking, is designed to allow both non-IT business managers and IT staff to create document based business processes.

## Tikit bullish on future prospects

The AIM listed Tikit Group last week published an update on current trading trends for the first half of the year ending 31 December 2003. With its talk of "current trading strong" and the "outlook very encouraging", Tikit's announcement is likely to cause dismay among some of its competitors who have been reporting stagnant trading conditions.

In his statement Tikit chairman Mike McGoun said trading during the first half had "been robust, with demand for higher margin consultancy and support services continuing and the order book for these services remains strong. As a result Tikit has had an excellent first half of the year with sales and profits showing significant growth from the corresponding period last year and ahead of budget expectations. Entering the traditionally stronger second half, the outlook for the group is very encouraging." Tikit's interims will be released on 11 September.

## Pilgrim back in profit after its "annus horribilis"

Pilgrim Systems is back in the black for the first nine months of its 2002/2003 trading year and expects to report a profit when its current fiscal period ends on 30 September. What makes this data all the more newsworthy is that it follows on from the worst ever trading period in the company's 25-year history when it posted a loss of £850,000 for its year to September 2002.

Pilgrim chairman Jim Cummings described the period as "our own personal annus horribilis" when a series of factors coincided to knock the company back. These included a recruitment drive ahead of expansion and IPO plans that did not materialise, two very large orders being put on ice when the firms in questions' own circumstances changes, and restructuring and redundancy costs. In addition, during this same period, and by way of further adding to its overheads, Pilgrim also actually increased its spend on new product development by 15% to just over £700,000 or 36% of revenues.

Pilgrim CEO Benny Placido admits the company did not anticipate the depth and duration of the post-Y2K recession and says that although there is significant new business out there "it just takes a lot longer to complete than ever before". However Placido believes "there is an upside to all this and the slow down in new implementations allowed us to focus heavily on providing new services to our existing customers. We also refused to reduce investment in product development. Instead we increased it, adding functionality in CRM, time recording and billing, with the result that LawSoft is now one of the most powerful and functionally rich systems in the market today."

Turning to the current trading year and future prospects, according to Placido this is "bouncy back year" with orders coming in from both new business - including one still to be announced major deal from outside the traditional law firms' sector - and Pilgrim's existing user base. And all won without having to make the same 40% price cuts one of Pilgrim's competitors has recently been offering. ...*continued on page 7*

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## Two new papers from the LSC

The Legal Services Commission has published two new advisory papers. The first is a guidance for suppliers regarding completing Family Mediation returns. The LSC has clarified some points in the guidance for completing monthly returns however no substantive changes have been made to the contract, forms, codes or other requirements.

The second is the LSC proposals to amend the Criminal Contract in response to the LCD's (now Department for Constitutional Affairs) own recent consultation paper. The paper indicates that the single fixed phone fee for police station work will be extended to all suppliers as part of the proposed changes.

Any questions relating to these papers should be directed to Tim Colliou, head of CDS Supplier Management (020 7759 0458).

## News in brief

■ **CARTMELLS UPGRADE WITH AIM**  
Cumbria's largest law firm - and long time user of AIM software - Cartmell Shepherd is about to roll out the Evolution integrated case and practice management system from AIM Professional (01482 326971) as part of a major revamp of its IT infrastructure. The firm has been running AIM software since 1987 when it installed the Charter II system.

■ **EIGHT GO WITH PACE PRO**  
Pace Professional Systems (08000 837651), which was formed last year by Ronnie Paton and Derek Bruce on their departure from Pilgrim, now has eight reference sites in Scotland for its PacePro accounts and practice management system for small firms. The firms are Cairns Brown, Craig Wood, Allan McDougall, Douglas McVean, Shaun Pringle, MacAndrew Jenkins and Cooper & Hay. Pace is currently negotiating an English distribution deal for the PacePro system.

[www.paceprosystems.com](http://www.paceprosystems.com)

■ **SILKINS ROLL OUT CALLXPRESS**  
Lewis Silkin has completed the roll out of a CallXpress integrated messaging system, which the firm will use to provide fee earners with greater flexibility for accessing email and voicemail from different devices and locations. The system was supplied by Kommunicate (01962 835000).

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## Cripps Harries looking for new head of IT

Kent-based Cripps Harries Hall - is looking for a new head of IT to replace Tanya Collett, who is leaving the firm later this summer. Current projects include digital dictation and a new HR database and one of the first projects, slated for 2003/2004, that the new head of IT will need to tackle is a new practice management system. Collett is moving to Masons to take up a project management role. Full details of this and other vacancies can be found on the Insider jobs board at [www.legaltechnology.com](http://www.legaltechnology.com)

■ Looking for legal IT staff, including positions in sales, development, support and training? Then post your vacancies free of charge to the jobs board by emailing the details to [jobs@legaltechnology.com](mailto:jobs@legaltechnology.com)

## People & Places

### ■ RICHARD BOOTY JOINS SOLICITEC

Richard Booty has joined the sales team at Solicitec. Booty joins after three years with IBM, prior to this he spent 10 years with Axxia Systems, where he was rated by the competition as Axxia's most effective salesman. Booty's initial role will be to sell Solicitec's Visualfiles case-to-KM-workflow management system into larger City firms.

Commenting on the move, Booty said "In my three years with IBM, it has been interesting to watch the league table of movers and shakers in the legal supplier community change with a refreshing pace. Traditional sole suppliers are perceived to have stood still and even lost share whilst best of breed suppliers such as Solicitec, Elite & SOS are moving in for the kill. I am looking forward to accelerating Solicitec's rising fortunes and to further cement its position as the supplier of choice."

### ■ ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to Mark Riddick, the CEO of NLIS Searchflow, who earlier this month was named Entrepreneur of the Year at the National Business Awards in Brighton. In a conveyancing search services versus sex aids and naughty knickers battle, Riddick beat Jacqueline Gold, the chief executive of the Ann Summers chain, to win the award.

### ■ PROMOTIONS AT TFB

As part of TFB's 'client facing initiative' the company's support manager Miles Osborne has been promoted to the TFB senior management team. And Adrian Jones, who comes from the Avenue side of the business, has been promoted from commercial manager to the newly created post of product & development manager within TFB's R&D department.

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## BigHand launches into the Scottish market

BigHand (020 7793 8200) has made its debut in the Scottish legal market, securing an order for its TotalSpeech digital dictation system from Morisons. The firm, whose initial objective was to reduce the number of temps it employed and improve document turnaround times, has already rolled out TotalSpeech to 67 users in its Edinburgh, Glasgow and Livingston offices.

Although Scotland does have one local supplier (the WinScribe reseller Voice Technologies selling to law firms - its flagship site is Shepherd & Wedderburn) in the light of the comments made about differentiation in our lead story (*see front page*) it was interesting to see Morisons' systems manager Andrew Getley's reasons for going with BigHand. "We knew that digital dictation was the logical direction to choose in order to leverage the benefits of our new computer infrastructure and improve the workflow between offices. Hence the only choice was between suppliers. The primary differentiator in favour of BigHand was the direct supply chain, which means that, as developers, they provide us with the expertise, code access and technical input we could not have received elsewhere."

## Speechly Bircham is first DDS win for Tikit/DictaFlow combo

Speechly Bircham has become the first major firm to select the DictaFlow system as its digital dictation workflow solution since DictaFlow developer nFlow appointed Tikit (020 7400 3764) as the product's exclusive reseller.

Following the completion of a pilot project which is now underway, the firm anticipates rolling out the system on a practice-wide basis to 170 users later this summer. Tikit will also be working with Speechly Bircham on the integration of DictaFlow with the firm's document and practice management systems.

## Voice technology news in brief

### ■ WINSCRIBE FORUM NOW ONLINE

Users of the WinScribe digital dictation system can now share their views with other users via an informal online forum. For more details email [UKWinscribeUserGroup@groups.msn.com](mailto:UKWinscribeUserGroup@groups.msn.com)

### ■ ARRAY MIKES NOW AVAILABLE

Volexia (01246 267710) is now marketing Acoustic Magic's VoiceTracker array microphone as an alternative to handheld and headset mikes for users of speech recognition software. An array mike sits either on top or just in front of a VDU monitor and gives the user greater freedom of movement when dictating. VoiceTracker has been approved by Dragon and IBM for use with their speech recognition systems.

## PortBlue brings expert systems to KM arena

Expert systems were last seriously in vogue in the legal world in the 1980s (which is when a still young and fresh faced Richard Susskind first cut his teeth - see *Expert Systems in Law*, OUP, 1987) but apart from popping up in some rule-based document assembly systems, such as Linklaters BlueFlag, they have generally faded from the scene. But, is this about to change?

Recently Paul Dimitruk, the founder and CEO of the PortBlue Corporation (in the 1980s Dimitruk was the partner-in-charge of the London and Paris offices of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher) was in London to talk about PortBlue's Knowledge Capture Tool (KCT) and the way it can be used "to elicit, capture and disseminate the know-how of recognised experts".

According to Dimitruk, the traditional weakness of all expert systems has been the time and costs involved when it comes to capturing the expertise of the experts, particularly when the main business drivers are to build such systems quickly and inexpensively. PortBlue's approach, in the words of Dimitruk, is to "turn knowledge into software" by allowing people without programming skills to develop web-based modules that capture and codify complex know-how and decision making processes.

Essentially PortBlue eliminates the amount of custom software development that needs to be done, removes the knowledge engineer's dependence on software programmers and allows the knowledge engineer to generate a fully fledged expert system application in real time in front of the expert.

The net result is instead of each stage in the process involving delays while the expert's input is incorporated into the system, this can be done almost on the fly, thereby making better use of the expert's time and reducing the number of appointments (as well as the inevitable delays associated with gaining access to busy experts) that need to be made with them. In projects already undertaken, PortBlue has shown its potential to reduce total development times from months to weeks and in some instances from days to hours.

To-date PortBlue's work has primarily been with defence, security and law enforcement agencies in the United States, including the new Homeland Security anti-terrorism bureau, however last month it signed a deal with the Practising Law Institute (PLI) in New York to develop a continuing education and practice development system for US patent lawyers.

Dimitruk sees the PLI deal moving PortBlue in a new direction as it can take someone from learning something to actually doing it. More pertinently, it sees PortBlue addressing precisely the same type of issues law firms face when it comes to developing their own inhouse knowledge management systems, namely when you only have limited access to a high value expert how can technology help make the best use of their time.

With PortBlue still evolving - development plans for 2003/04 include making the process simpler and faster - Dimitruk is keen to hear from any companies interested in partnering KM-related projects for the UK legal market. [www.portblue.com](http://www.portblue.com)

## Pillsbury Winthrop to roll out OpenSource

US top 30 law firm Pillsbury Winthrop has begun implementing the OpenSource document analysis system as part of its KM infrastructure. Clients will also have access to it via an extranet link. As reported in our LegalTech New York review earlier this year (see *Issue 144*) OpenSource is a web based analysis and collaboration tool designed specifically for lawyers working on lengthy contracts. OpenSource vice president Eva Mineva said it had the edge on its nearest competitor Workshare Synergy because, along with the benefits managing document changes in a collaborative environment, its automatic analysis and hyperlinking facilities create what is in effect a knowledge management system for contract precedents.

Pillsbury's chief information officer Warren Jones said OpenSource "was the only solution we found that could analyse both third-party paper based agreements and internally drafted materials as a collection."

[www.opensourceinc.com](http://www.opensourceinc.com)

## Recruitment news brief

### ■ PHILLIPS JOINS GRAHAM GILL

Wendy Phillips, previously with the LFI Longbridge group, has joined the legal recruitment consultancy Graham Gill. One of Phillips' and her colleague Tamara Beasley Suffolk's main responsibilities will be the creation and development of a dedicated legal IT division. The Graham Gill consultancy has recently moved to new offices at 63 Lincoln's Inn Fields. The phone number is 020 7430 1711.

[www.grahamgill.com](http://www.grahamgill.com)

### ■ EUTOPIA STRATEGY WINS PRIZE

Craig Coverman's recruitment services company Eutopia Solutions (020 8387 4060) won the Growth Strategy of the Year Award at the recent National Business Awards in Brighton. The judges' panel said Eutopia, who beat an online betting exchange, an internet service provider and the Just Deli catering company to win the award, had shown "agility in meeting the needs of customers and adapting to a changing market place".

## Legal technology diary - advanced planner

- AUGUST 18-to-21, BOCA RATON. Annual LawNet event. [www.peertopeer.org](http://www.peertopeer.org)
- SEPTEMBER 16 & 17, NEW YORK. LegalTech Fall. [www.legaltechshow.com](http://www.legaltechshow.com)
- SEPTEMBER 18, LONDON. The e-Loties awards. [www.inbrief.co.uk/eloties2003/](http://www.inbrief.co.uk/eloties2003/)
- SEPTEMBER 25 & 26, LONDON. The Law Society's annual conference.
- OCTOBER 15 & 16, LEEDS. The Legal IT Leeds exhibition. [www.legalitshow.com](http://www.legalitshow.com)
- OCTOBER 15-to-17, GLENEAGLES. The 'GlenLegal' Legal IT forum at the Gleneagles Hotel in Scotland. [www.legalitforum.com](http://www.legalitforum.com)
- OCTOBER 27-to-29, BARCELONA. The Hummingbird European & Legal CIO Summit [www.hummingbird.com/summit](http://www.hummingbird.com/summit)
- NOVEMBER 4 & 5, LONDON. LegalTech Europe at the Royal College of Surgeons. [www.legaltechshow.com](http://www.legaltechshow.com)
- NOVEMBER 13, LONDON. The Loties awards. [www.inbrief.co.uk/loties2003/](http://www.inbrief.co.uk/loties2003/)
- NOVEMBER 13-to-15, BARCELONA. The Lawyer Group's European Legal Summit. [www.thelawyer.com](http://www.thelawyer.com)
- NOVEMBER 28, MANCHESTER. The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers IT fair at the Crowne Plaza. [www.apil.com](http://www.apil.com)
- JANUARY 20 & 21, LONDON. New UK legal IT event - details to be confirmed.
- FEBRUARY 2-to-4, NEW YORK. LegalTech at the New York Hilton - the leading US legal IT conference & exhibition. [www.legaltechshow.com](http://www.legaltechshow.com)
- FEBRUARY 11 & 12, LONDON. Legal IT 2004 at the Business Design Centre, the UK's main legal IT event. [www.legalitshow.com](http://www.legalitshow.com)
- MARCH 1 & 2, AMSTERDAM. The Ark Group's Lex Connect. [www.lexconnect.com](http://www.lexconnect.com)

## Secure email - is SSL set to beat PKI approach ?

Although most of the waves currently being generated in the UK secure email systems market are as a direct result of the fierce competition between Meticulus, with their RedLetter software, and DespatchBox with their rival DDX product, there is another issue bubbling under the surface involving security standards.

Currently PKI (public key infrastructure), in which the actual message is encrypted, has the reputation for being the most secure system. Unfortunately it also has the reputation for being the most onerous in terms of administration because it requires the maintenance of 'pairs' of keys - the sender's public one and the recipient's private one - for every set of users.

This explains why one 100-user Scottish law firm was recently quoted a price of £60,000 a year for a PKI-based secure email system. And also why Nicholson Graham Jones said one of the advantages of DespatchBox DDX - which is not based on PKI - was it allowed firms to exchange encrypted emails "without the need for a costly PKI-style user authentication model."

Both DDX and RedLetter use variations of server based security (or SSL - secure sockets layer technology) in which the transmission channel rather than the message itself is encrypted. In contrast to PKI, SSL has the double benefit of being both very simple to implement and requiring no additional software to be installed on the recipient's desktop.

So where does that leave PKI? In its latest research notes, the Gartner Group warns that "PKI generally had failed to deliver on its promise" and "will continue a near-term decline".

## Security news in brief

### ■ MONITORING SERVER EVENTS

Legal database specialist ClaimBase (01708 736660) has won UK sole distribution rights for the EventSentry server management system which allows firms to automatically monitor the event logs of multiple servers. ClaimBase technical director David Copper says EventSentry is particularly useful for firms providing extranet access to their systems as it can notify them of login and user authentication problems as well as any attempted security breaches. Prices start from under £100.

[www.claimbase.com](http://www.claimbase.com)

### ■ RED LETTER DAY FOR UNIX

Meticulus Solutions has announced the availability of its Red Letter secure email system on the Unix platform. Previously delivered as a Linux appliance it is now also available as standalone software for the Sun Solaris, IBM AIX and HP-UX operating systems. Meticulus CEO Ivan Harris said the Unix version was introduced for larger firms where the IT department wanted to be closely involved in the detail of system implementation rather than simply purchase an appliance.

[www.redletteremail.com](http://www.redletteremail.com)

## Intranet & extranet news in brief

### ■ NEW CONTENDER IN THE INTRANET RING

InPress Marketing (01488 73737) is the latest entrant into the intranet solutions for law firms market with ISES. Christopher Bose of InPress says the USP of the ISES system is its ability to provide users with a single gateway to all their databases, including legacy systems, regardless of structure and content. InPress also provide design, development and implementation services for firms wanting database-driven, dynamic content web sites. [www.intranet-portal-solicitors.co.uk](http://www.intranet-portal-solicitors.co.uk)

### ■ WEB ENABLEMENT AT GOLDCREST

DataCare Solutions (0870 7578100) has designed an extranet for Kent-based licensed conveyancers Goldcrest. Goldcrest uses Laserform’s case management software to drive its conveyancing work and DataCare has provided the web enablement side of the service, including online quotations and a facility for customers to log in to monitor the progress of their property transactions. [www.goldcrestconveyancing.com](http://www.goldcrestconveyancing.com)

## Pilgrim’s “annus horribilis”

*Continued from page 3...* “This year,” says Cummings, “is a better year. We’re focussed on our core business and it is paying off, with our strongest pipeline for new orders since the late 1990s.” One factor Cummings attributes to this return to form is a change in the company’s approach to sales, with far greater emphasis now placed on consultancy oriented sales where the focus is upon the business benefits and ROI rather than technology innovation. Pilgrim has also set up a dedicated case and workflow management division, headed by Martin Siddle, and anticipates some major announcements about this side of the business in the coming few months.

Cummings says that with hindsight, Pilgrim’s poor figures was a direct result of the company’s ambition. Cummings believes too many legal IT suppliers are happy to run a ‘lifestyle business’, spending just enough of their earnings on R&D to keep the company ticking over while the rest provides directors with a comfortable standard of living. “At Pilgrim our strategy was different. We wanted to create a bigger boys business that could tackle Elite and Solution 6 on their own terms. We had a setback but we are now back on track for expansion in 2004.”

The Insider also spoke to Pilgrim’s institutional investor Aberdeen Development Capital, which has a 20% holding in the company. Aberdeen’s Stuart Overend told the Insider that not only were they fully behind Pilgrim but were prepared to increase their investment should the opportunity arise.

Overend added that Pilgrim was to be congratulated for not taking the easy option of trying to make their figures look better by cutting their R&D expenditure. “By continuing to invest in the LawSoft product, they are creating value.” Overend suggests that far from realising savings, legal IT suppliers who slash their R&D budgets (and some spent as little as £25,000-to-£50,000 on R&D last year) are unwittingly engaged in value destruction.

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## Secretaries and dictation - just take down the facts

With so many firms currently investigating ways of cutting their secretarial overheads by implementing digital dictation and, in some instances, outsourcing the whole transcription process to UK-based or even offshore locations, we thought it would be useful to dig out some facts and figures relating to the costs and work practices of conventional (ie non-digital) secretarial staff.

How much does it cost to employ a full-time secretary inhouse? Taking into account salaries, benefits, tax and national insurance, plus the IT systems they use and the office space they occupy, the true cost of a secretary ranges from about £45,000 a year in central London to £25,000 pa in the provinces.

Research conducted in both the US and UK suggests that in the average law firm, the average secretary produces just 1.5 documents per hour. And, perhaps even more surprisingly, it appears that the average document is just 41 lines long, amounting to 2 minutes 30 seconds of dictation by a fee earner.

Or, to put it another way, using traditional ways of working, the average secretary transcribes documents at a rate of about one line, or 12 words, per minute, so each document costs a London firm £18.50 a pop in typing time alone. (On out of London rates the figure falls to closer to £10.30 per document.)

Clearly secretaries are employed to do far more than type but these figures suggest that in most firms secretarial resources are not being used as productively as they could and even small increases in efficiency - whether from inhouse DDS or Voicepath style outsourcing services - could yield benefits ranging from cuts in the budget for temps, 'floats' and overtime to improved fee earner-to-support staff ratios.

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## CLT drops annual IT conference

Central Law Training (CLT) has become the latest organisation to be hit by the apparent decline in the legal world's enthusiasm for conventional IT conferences and exhibitions. Citing the low number of delegates that attended the event earlier this month, CLT has announced that it has "no plans to repeat its annual IT solutions conference next year" however it will be running other conferences on practice management related topics.

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## So much for the summer

This is the last issue of the Insider newsletter before the Long Vacation, which we will be spending, anorak style, on a redesign of the top 100 chart and Solution Finder features on the Insider web site. We are back in September and in between there will be two editions of the Newswire plus, as ever, any breaking news will immediately be posted on the [www.legaltechnology.com](http://www.legaltechnology.com) web site. Have a good break - and if you must take your laptop to the beach, remember to keep the sand out of the disk drive.

## GlenLegal organisers hope to buck the trend

With many conference and event organisers currently struggling to attract the audience figures they enjoyed a couple of years ago, Informa/IBC Global Conferences believe they will buck the trend with this October's Legal IT Forum at the Gleneagles Hotel.

Programme director Simon Dieppe told the Insider that with still 12 weeks to go, delegate numbers were already ahead of target, including an influx of bookings from European firms, "and we are having to be increasingly creative to come up with new sponsorship packages to meet demand." Dieppe added that although there will be more than 50 speakers taking part, over a third are new to the GlenLegal event, so audiences will not be faced by the same old people talking about the same old topics.

GlenLegal's continued success probably owes as much to its format as to the content of its sessions. It offers a different type of venue to the usual, sad conference hall. There are a choice of streams - organised by subject matter and practice size. There are plenty of genuinely informal networking opportunities. And, as almost every session involves bite-sized presentations by multiple speakers and panel discussions, you avoid the 'death by PowerPoint' scenario of one speaker droning on interminably as they plod through their slides. For the latest programme visit [www.legalitforum.com](http://www.legalitforum.com)

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■ **Coming soon:** The next newswires are scheduled for the 7th August and 4th September. The next Insider newsletter (No.152) will be published on Thursday 18th September 2003.