



Now BigHand sets its sights on Ireland

Six weeks after securing its first order in Scotland with Morisons, the digital dictation workflow market leader BigHand has turned its sights on Ireland. BigHand has just won a 100 user order for its TotalSpeech DDS system from Dublin top 10 firm Mason Hayes & Curran. IT director Trisha Carroll said the feature that impressed her was the stability of the TotalSpeech product. *See page 4 for more DDS news.*

Chafes opt for Linux

Cheshire based Chafes has become the first TFB user to migrate to a Linux platform. Although the 43 user firm was already running TFB's Partner for Windows accounts and case management system on a Windows NT4 platform, when the time came to upgrade its ageing servers, Chafes opted for SCO Office Mail Server and Linux instead of Microsoft Exchange and Microsoft 2000 Server. Partner Jonathan Roberts said the net result would be no loss of functionality but significant cost savings.

The Insider web site

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www.legaltechnology.com

Elite, Solcitec and Axxia head IT top 200

According to Legal Technology Insider's latest survey of what the top 200 largest law firms in the UK and the Republic of Ireland are now using by way of IT systems, three suppliers - Axxia, Elite and Solcitec - now dominate the core practice and case management systems market.

In terms of the number of firms running their accounts & PMS systems, Thomson Elite is the market leader with 46 sites, closely followed by Axxia with 44. Trailing some way behind in third place with 25 sites is Solution 6 however it is worth noting that there are four other vendors - AIM, Miles 33, Pilgrim and SOS - with 10 or more sites. Although between them these seven account for 160 of the top 200 firms, there are 14 other suppliers scrambling for a slice of the remaining 20% share of the market.

On the case management front, Solcitec is the undisputed leader, with its SolCase and Visualfiles products in use in a total of 48 firms. Next comes Axxia - in use in 24 firms - and falling into the 'one to watch' category is InfoGraphics, which now has 8 firms running its FloSuite software.

Looking at other product types, Hummingbird (with 49 sites) currently has the edge on its arch rival iManage (with 41) in the DMS sector but with so many firms currently reviewing their document management facilities, we expect these figures to change over the next few months. It is also a two-sided fight between Copitrak and Equitrac in the cost recovery market although the surprising feature here is that despite being such a proven technology, less than 40% of firms in our survey (and almost none outside the top 100) run these systems.

Turning to digital dictation, BigHand has the largest number of sites, with its TotalSpeech system in use in 35 firms, followed by WinScribe in 16 firms. Interface Software's InterAction is the CRM market leader in use at 45 firms, with the only competition coming not from other dedicated CRMs but the CRM/marketing modules of practice management systems. Elite Apex, in use in 21 firms, is the most widely used alternative to InterAction.

Copies of The Insider 200 can be downloaded free of charge from the Insider web site in PDF, Excel spreadsheet and HTML file formats. www.legaltechnology.com

Phoenix arises from KLA

With iManage billing the upcoming Version 8.0 of its WorkSite system as the most important advance in document management in recent years - new features are expected to include enhanced email management and greater support for matter centric computing - the company has also found a new partner in the UK. The partner is Phoenix Business Solutions (08707 351426) which was formed by Roger Pickett and five other iManage consultants who were previously with Kramer Lee Associates. Phoenix has already won four iManage implementation and 14 support deals, including a project for Boyes Turner in Reading.

News in brief

■ SCOTTISH SITES MIGRATE TO TFB

Five more Scottish firms, who previously ran the old CB Business Systems Signet software, have migrated to TFB's Partner for Windows integrated case & practice management system. The five are John Robertson & Co in Hamilton, Matthews in Newton Stewart, James Turnbull in Larbert, Blacklock Thorley in Edinburgh and Macpherson Maguire Cook in Glasgow.

■ EQUITRAC SCANNING FOR COSTS

Equitrac (020 7831 7818) has added a new scanning data facility - called Equitrac ScanPost - to its Professional and Enterprise cost recovery systems. By adding Equitrac's PageCounter control terminals to provide access control and validated client allocation, ScanPost also enables detailed reporting and client billing. Additionally, ScanPost is designed to integrate with embedded document delivery technology from leading device manufacturers, including Canon, Ricoh and Xerox.

■ EVERSHEDES WIN FOR VRISKO

Vrisko has signed up Eversheds as the first client for its new LawSuite information integration system. LawSuite is designed to integrate any information source with any internal business application. Technically, it comprises an open standard XML delivery platform, plus a suite of software which interface to the information sources and a firm's internal applications. Eversheds will use LawSuite to integrate Westlaw UK legal content with their own KM system, which is based on Tikit's Knowledge Portal and Hummingbird technology. Vrisko (020 7448 9714) has also become a Factiva partner, which means its customers can now access Factiva content, which includes Dow Jones and Reuters newswires and the FT.

■ MORE WINS FOR ECLIPSE

Eclipse Legal Systems (01274 704100) has signed up nine more firms for its ProCLAIM conveyancing and personal injury case management software. They include accident managers Claims UK in Leeds, licensed conveyancer County Conveyancing in Redditch and solicitors Mirza & Co in London, as well as a bespoke costs drafting system for Compass Costs in Warrington.

More firms exploring cost effective alternatives

Linux - *see front page* - is not the only way law firms can reduce their capital and ongoing IT maintenance & support budgets. For example Paul Houghton, an ICT partner at Lupton Fawcett in Leeds, reckons his firm has extended the life of its AIM Evolution Classic practice management system by "another four to five years" thanks to the services of the IT consultancy ITM Group and the implementation of Novell's exteNd web services application.

As part of the Lupton Fawcett project, ITM has been able to enhance the longevity and functionality of the firm's PMS, while simultaneously automating some of the existing internal management reporting routines. Along with extending the life of the PMS, the firm is saving up to five-man days of manual data collation per month and has the benefits of added functionality without the estimated £500k costs associated with the purchase of a new PMS. Future projects ITM will be carrying out for the firm include providing clients with extranet access to their case files. www.itm-group.co.uk

■ This summer also saw the launch of two new services for smaller firms, both designed to provide lower cost solutions to common IT problems. Active Technology (01296 398561) has introduced an IT service package that offers firms day-to-day maintenance support, including such things as virus updates, PC upgrades and network balancing for less than £40 per week.

And Solution 1 (part of the Siemens group and no relation to Solution 6) has introduced a pay-as-you-go corporate email system that includes a broadband link, virus protection and secure data backup. www.solution1.co.uk

Trio of orders plus strong results see AIM in upbeat mood

AIM Professional's summer has seen a trio of new orders - from 120 user Lanyon Bowdler in Shropshire, long-time AIM user Brethertons in the Midlands and Rooks Rider in London, the last one won in the face of stiff competition by five competitors - plus the release of upbeat financial results for the year to 30th April.

Group turnover grew by over 9% to £8.6 million (2002 - £7.9 million) with the legal services side of the business accounting for £5.6 million. After taking in to account £102k of non-recurring expenditure relating to corporate restructuring, the operating profit of £948k was marginally down on last year (2002 - £1.08m).

LSC holding developers forum

The Legal Services Commission is holding a software suppliers forum at the end of this month (29 September) at 85 Gray's Inn Road. The session starts at 10:00am. For details call Tim Collieu on 020 7759 0458 or email tim.collieu@legalservices.gov.uk

New accounts package for legal aid practitioners

Brighton-based legal software developer Anya Designs (01225 420194/01273 504178) has launched a new accounts system for legal aid practices. Anya, in conjunction with Jordan Publishing, has already sold its CaseKeeper case management, time recording and billing software into over 200 legal aid practices however the new accounts module has been introduced after research revealed that many users felt standard legal accounts systems did not fully meet their needs. The biggest complaints centred on the handling of the Standard Monthly Payment from the LSC and Anya has now automated all stages in this process, from the creation of the monthly claim form through to the allocation of each claim. There is also a disbursement allocation procedure to ensure the process is handled accurately for VAT.

The new accounts module is fully integrated with CaseKeeper, so all billing records created in CaseKeeper are immediately pulled through to the accounts side as a file is invoiced, with all relevant ledger postings made automatically. Software is sold on an office licence basis, so start ups and small firms can take on more fee earners without also having the burden of additional user licences. www.anyadesigns.co.uk

British Land buys Pisces ready document assembly system

The property group British Land has bought a DealBuilder document automation & assembly system from Business Integrity to help streamline the production of leases. British Land will use the system to generate documents complying with the new PISCES v1.6 standard. www.business-integrity.com

Tikit results on target

The AIM-listed Tikit Group's interim results to 30 June were back on target with turnover and profits both up on last year. Undoubtedly the most interesting feature is the huge 26% growth in the company's consultancy operations, through its Aurra and Granite & Comfrey arms, which accounted for over 70% of Tikit's £3.9 million turnover in the first half of this year.

Legal Tech Europe discount

The LegalTech Europe 2003 conference takes place at the Royal College of Surgeons in London on 4th & 5th November. The standard delegate rate is £650 + VAT but subscribers to Legal Technology Insider can take advantage of a special discount rate of £500 + VAT. To secure your £150 discount, contact Rene Bros of American Lawyer Media by phoning 01926 889144 or emailing rbross@btconnect.com by no later than 30 September.

News in brief

■ **PILGRIM DIVISION'S FLYING START**
Pilgrim's new case & workflow management division has secured contracts worth in excess of £500k from firms including Bircham Dyson Bell, Longmores and, most recently, Glasgow-based Macdonalds who expect to go live later this month with a new conveyancing system. The division's head, Martin Siddle, says Pilgrim's IntelliCentre web based business process management software has been crucial in helping to develop workflows. Siddle adds that thanks to IntelliCentre, Pilgrim can move outside 'traditional' case management and offer best practice systems that can help manage compliance, risk, HR and new client & matter inception. www.pilgrimsystems.com

■ **CARDIFF FIRM LIBERATES IT**
Cardiff firm Thomas Graham has replaced its old Avenue accounts software with the Linetime (0113 250 0020) Liberate practice management system.

■ **CIVICA IN WITH LOCAL COUNCILS**
Civica has won new orders for its Galaxy Premier case management system from the legal services departments of four local authorities: West Sussex County Council, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough, Horsham District Council and Thurrock Council - better known as the home of the Lakeside Shopping Centre. www.civica.co.uk

Jobs market heating up again

After a quiet summer the legal IT jobs market is heating up again, with vacancies being posted at all levels by law firms - from IT director to systems trainers but with Solcase case management developers in particularly high demand. On the vendor side, Pilgrim, Solicitec, Laserform, Linetime and Tikit all have openings. Full details of these and other vacancies can be found on the Insider jobs board at 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

People & Places

■ VIDESS JOINS LSSA

Videss has become the latest legal IT supplier to join the UK industry body LSSA (the Legal Software Suppliers Association).

■ NEW IT HEAD FOR HERBERT SMITH

George Kalorkoti is the new head of IT services at Herbert Smith. He takes over from John Rogers who has now left the firm.

■ MBO AT JMC

Manchester-based JMC.IT (the trading name for JM Computing) has had a management buy out. Led by Andrew Burgess, who becomes managing director, the MBO team comprises sales directors Tim Maxwell and Mike Bentley, engineering director Nick Isherwood, financial director Dave Gill and technical director, Malcolm Sykes. JMC's former directors George Buchan and Paul Tobin retain small shareholdings.

■ FINANCING DEAL FOR SOLCARA

KM systems developer Solcara has secured "significant venture capital investment" from the Capital Fund. The funding will be used for software development and to ramp up sales and marketing. www.solcara.com

■ JOHN WILDE RETIRES

Former AIM managing director and more recently management consultant John Wilde has retired. Wilde told the Insider he was retiring to spend more time with his brassicas and to concentrate on farming.

■ MURRAY AT IRON MOUNTAIN

Following the acquisition of Hays IMS by Iron Mountain, the largest archive records storage group in the world, Rupert Murray is heading up legal sector business development for Iron Mountain UK (07770 698553). www.ironmountain.co.uk

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New contenders in DDS price wars

Lexacom Digital Dictation (0870 777 3336) has thrown its hat into the low cost digital dictation market with the announcement of a price of £199 per seat for its network based dictation system and £79 for Lexacom Mobile, which turns a PDA into DDS device. Lexacom, which is also compatible with DSS and WAV files, works with Philips SpeechMike Pro and Olympus foot pedals.

Meanwhile on the transcription outsourcing front, New Zealand based Frantic Limited is offering UK law firms an overnight transcription service (taking advantage of the time zones) for £15 per hour. Frantic are pitching the service as an overflow solution that firms can use as and when they need it, with no set-up or minimum charges and no monthly retainers. All transcription work is handled by New Zealand based legal secretaries and work uploaded to the Frantic web site by 8:00pm London time will be ready to download as Word documents by 8:00am the following morning.

Frantic will formally launch the service later this autumn and is currently looking for trial sites - firms taking place in the trial are being offered a special £7.50 per hour transcription rate. For more details email brooke.martin@frantic.co.nz

Voice technology news in brief

■ ROLLITS TRIAL DIGISCRIBE DDS

Rollits, which has offices in York and Hull, has begun a trial of the DigiScribe digital dictation system, with a view to rolling out DDS across both sites via a WAN (wide area network). The DDS system has been supplied by DigiVoice (0870 380 1112).

■ ALL CHANGE AT BERRYS

Following the sudden departure of Mike Coxall, Jayne Dixon (previously with Sanyo) is now heading Berrys' digital dictation operations. Dixon, who is based at Berrys' Staples Corner offices (020 8452 8080) told the Insider she was currently recruiting sales engineers who could better help customers address the system integration issues associated with DDS projects.

■ NFLOW GOES IN AT BEVAN ASHFORD

Following a pilot in the construction department that realised substantial productivity benefits, nFlow Software (01245 463377) has won an order from Bevan Ashford to roll out its DictaFlow DDS software to the firm's Bristol, Birmingham and London offices. DictaFlow will be integrated with the firm's Axxia PMS and Meticulist document management system.

■ LASERFORM BECOMES WINSCRIBE PARTNER

The Laserform/LFM Group (01925 750020) has become the latest distribution partner for WinScribe's DDS workflow management software. Laserform has already implemented WinScribe at Thring Townsend in Swindon.

Jario debuts with DLA beta test

Jario Limited (01236 702005) is another fresh face in the UK legal IT market and is hoping to make a splash with what it describes as its new 'intelligent file tracking' software that 'makes documents manage themselves'.

As products go, this is not an easy one to fit into any of the conventional categories. At one level it would appear to be just another DMS add-on utility that sits between a user's desktop applications, such as Word, and a document management system, to automate aspects of the DM workflow process including compliance with a firm's document retention policies. Or, as Jario put it "to remove the key pressures on individuals to remember and then carry out many of the repetitive and time consuming tasks associated with document management."

However it also contains what is described as 'zero effort version control' plus linked file and document tracking features that pitch it into direct competition with a product such as the Synergy/Workshare 3 system. And, by way of further complication, the Jario system also has the capability to serve as a stand alone document management system for smaller firms who do not need the full functionality of an iManage or Hummingbird DMS.

This interesting system is also claimed to be "the world's first application to offer a 100% view of all document activity by capturing document events at the operating system level on a PC." The system is currently in the final stages of testing before its formal launch, which is scheduled for the beginning of October, and last month Jario signed up the law firm DLA to act as a beta test site to trial the software. www.jario.com

Litigation support news in brief

■ LDM LINK WITH SANCTION

Lit support & repro specialists LDM (020 7613 1160) are now selling and supporting Verdict Systems' Sanction II courtroom presentation software in the UK and Europe. The Sanction system is currently being used by the UN War Crimes Court at the Hague in connection with several trials relating to the former Yugoslavia and Slobodan Milosevic. www.ldm.uk.com

■ LEGASTAT CLOCKS UP HALF CENTURY

Congratulations to John Eddowes' Legastat litigation support and repro bureau (020 7405 9178) which today celebrates 50 years of involvement in the legal market, as well as half a century at its home by the Carey Street gate into Lincoln's Inn.

■ EGNOSIS MOVES

Ted Clark and Kerry Day's EDM and litigation support company E-gnosis has moved to new offices at Wildwood, Coldharbour, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6HF. The new phone number is 01306 713131. www.egnosis.com

Email to go with the RIM Blackberry

We have lost track of the number of times we have heard firms complain that they have to equip all their lawyers with laptops just so they can access their email while out of the office. And we have also lost track of the number of lawyers returning from the US bemoaning the fact they cannot have a handy instant email device like the Blackberry.

Well, now you can. Blackberry's developers RIM have now opened for business in the UK and are supporting both an enterprise version of the device - this is already being trialed by a number of City firms as a way of delivering client/matter information to fee earners - and a 'pro-consumer' version that can deliver messages via the T-Mobile instant email service.

Having previously used the brick-like Nokia Communicator to access email, we were bowled over by the Blackberry. It is small and light enough to fit in a shirt pocket, totally intuitive in its set up and operation and, because it uses GPRS, you get emails instantly, rather than have to log on to check for messages, as you had with a Nokia, which uses the slower GSM channel. The Blackberry can also be used as a normal phone for voice messages and is a tri-band device, so it will also work in the USA.

Even in the wilds of East Anglia we had no difficulty accessing the T-Mobile GPRS service but if the choice of network supplier is an issue, it is worth noting that both O2 and Vodaphone will be offering similar Blackberry services from later this year.

Price-wise, a Blackberry 7230 (with a colour screen) retails for £199 and until the end of the year T-Mobile is running a special promotion with prices as low as £13.50 per month if you keep your existing phone for voice calls. Given our experiences with the slow downloads achieved with a Nokia on GSM, regular mobile users will probably save at least £13.50 a week in call charges alone - as well as a huge amount of time and frustration - by switching to the Blackberry.

■ In a related development, the widely used Carpe Diem time tracking system is now available in a version that will run on a Blackberry. Carpe Diem is sold in the UK through the Tikit Group (020 7400 3737).

www.t-mobile.co.uk/instantmail

Legal technology events diary

■ **SEPTEMBER 24-to-26 BATH**, By Legal, For Legal conference - a new event that a number of IT directors from London firms have put together to provide them with an opportunity to network and discuss topics of mutual interest. The consultant Neil Cameron is chairing the event.

■ **SEPTEMBER 25 LONDON**, Records & risk management - Kramer Lee & Associates is holding a day of seminars looking at LegalKEY's records management and conflicts of interest systems. Book online at www.kramerlee.com

■ **SEPTEMBER 29 LONDON**, Tikit email security conference - one day event (10.00am - 3:30pm) at the Adam Street Club looking at all aspects of email security including monitoring policies, spam, encryption and storage management with speakers from Waterford Technologies, DespatchBox, KVS, First Stop, MDY & Tikit. For details email Sally Bellwood at sally.bellwood@tikit.com

■ **SEPTEMBER 30 & 1 OCTOBER WEST MIDLANDS**, Axxia user group national AGM & conference - at the Forest of Arden Hotel & Country Club, near the NEC. Topics for discussion include e-conveyancing, risk management, management information and leveraging IT. Contact Heidi Cranfield on 0118 960 2627 or email cranfieldh@axxia.com

■ **OCTOBER 8 MANCHESTER**, Laserform is running a series of half day (morning) product presentations around England this autumn. Admission is free, the events qualify for 4 CPD hours. The Manchester event takes place at the Crowne Plaza and is followed by events in Birmingham - 17 October, London - 28 October, Leeds - 5 November, Newcastle - 12 November and Bristol - 20 November. For details email jennet.ingram@laserform.co.uk

■ **OCTOBER 8 EDINBURGH**, Nothing but the Net - one day conference organised by the Law Society of Scotland looking at the issues associated with the internet, comms and online legal services. For details email update@lawscot.org.uk

Bevan Ashford uses Rock portal to support NHS bids

In one of the more specialist uses of portal technology we have seen to-date (as well as evidence that portals are maturing into serious business applications rather than just marketing gimmicks) Bevan Ashford has chosen the PFINet portal from Rock Consulting (020 8948 7111) to support the firm's work for its client Pfh (Partnerships for Health) which is responsible for developing and implementing the model to deliver 42 NHS local improvement finance trust (LIFT) schemes for primary health care facilities in England.

Bevan Ashford turned to Rock, one of the UK's leading consultancies in PPP/PFI (private finance initiative) projects, after concluding that a secure portal/virtual dealroom would reduce administration costs, speed communications, improve the distribution of LIFT project documentation to prospective bidders and generally assist in a complex procurement process that is expected to deliver over £1 billion in investment funding by the end of next year. www.rockconsulting.co.uk

Portal news in brief

■ **ACTIVE LAWYER POWERS NEW HAMMONDS SITE**
Hammonds has used the ActiveWeb CMS content management system from ActiveLawyer (0207 841 5180) to support the publication of client facing material on the firm's recently redeveloped web site. According to ActiveLawyer CEO Steven Vincent "ActiveWeb CMS is designed to be so easy to operate that 'even a lawyer can use it' with content contributors across the firm only needing half an hour's training."

www.hammonds.com + www.activelawyer.com

■ **PURPLE PAGES INTRANET CASE STUDY ON WEB**
A case study looking at the way Cripps Harries Hall and AIM Professional worked together to create the firm's award winning Purple Pages intranet is now available as a PDF on the Insider web site. Click on the 'Downloads' option on the drop down menu to access the document. www.legaltechnology.com

■ **THE SORCE FOR YOUR INTRANET PORTALS**
Still on the subject of intranet/corporate portal development, The Sorce (01635 551777) is another useful source for an out-of-the-box solution for firms with limited IT resources who need to upgrade their first generation intranets into something more sophisticated. Features the Insider likes about the Sorce intranet include its support for discussion forums and bulletin boards plus the fact so much can be done by cutting and pasting, without the need to access the underlying HTML code, thus greatly simplifying the task for firms wanting transfer content from an old intranet to a new system. Law firm users include Mishcon de Reya and Gateley Wareing and a new ASP hosted extranet version of the system is on the way. www.sorce.biz

Secure email - PGP hopes to inject life back into PKI

Although the PKI (public key infrastructure) approach to email encryption is generally reckoned to be the most secure, it has been plagued by concerns about the administrative overheads.

One company that believes it has a solution is the PGP Corporation which this week launched its new PGP Universal system. This is a network rather than a desktop based system that aims to cut both user and management cost by automating many aspects of running the system. For example there is a "self managing security architecture" that permits the automatic generation of keys and their lifecycle management, plus the automatic encryption and decryption of messages.

It is also a multifaceted system that takes into account the reality of the modern email environment. So, along with external cover, it can also be configured to maintain the security of emails internally. It is 'transparent' with all the security measures taking place behind the scenes and requiring no extra user training. And, through the Satellite and Web Messenger modules, the system can offer email security to users accessing email via laptops, PDA and web browsers. PGP reckons the entry level for is any firm that runs its own email server. PGP Universal is available now, for details visit www.pgpeurope.com

Email management news in brief

■ **RED LETTER GETS POLICY MANAGEMENT FACILITY**
Meticulus Solutions is to integrate BT offshoot Open Orchard's Ensure Legal email policy compliance system with the Meticulus Red Letter secure email server software. Ensure Legal lets firms monitor email activity to identify and intervene when users violate corporate email policies. www.redletteremail.com

■ **NEW NAME IN EMAIL MANAGEMENT**
Best known for its records management system, Accutrac Software is now shipping an email management application to help firms track and classify emails more efficiently. Although the most recent signing is Hopkins & Carley in California, the company does support users in the UK. www.accutrac.com

■ **TSB ROLLING OUT KVS VAULT**
Travers Smith Braithwaite is currently rolling out the KVS Enterprise Vault to support and control its growing Microsoft Exchange environment. Vault will archive public folder items as well as 350 users' mailboxes and remove the need for users to archive to PST files. The system was supplied by the First Stop Computer Group (020 8974 3545). www.firstop.co.uk

■ **MACLAY MURRAY SPENS GET SECURE WITH DDX**
DespatchBox (0207 520 9310) has secured its first Scottish law firm client with an order for the DDX email encryption system from Maclay Murray & Spens. www.despatchbox.com

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Four big issues now predominate in legal IT

We know, we should have been on the beach enjoying the sun but instead we were rootling around trying to discover just what are the really big IT issues currently concerning law firms.

Not surprisingly, given the problems with spam and viruses this summer - as well as reports that in some firms fee earners are now spending as much as four hours each day dealing with their email - the number one concern is email management. Or, as one lawyer put it "Email now represents our biggest exposure to risk and expense." However with email the issue is management in its broadest sense, including security, archive storage, encryption, corporate policy enforcement and integration with other office automation systems.

In our post 9/11 world, it was also no surprise to discover that disaster recovery and business continuity is a major concern with several firms based in the centre of cities like London and New York now building out-of-town back-up data centres.

Next on the agenda is doing business in the current financial climate, which basically means 'doing more with less'. In other words: how can firms use IT to deliver better services to clients, through such things as portals, when many IT departments are facing the tightest budgetary constraints for nearly a decade.

Finally, there is a growing demand for systems that can deliver real benefits to lawyers, with particular emphasis on the concept of 'matter centric computing.' Or, to put it another way, the killer app firms are seeking is the digital equivalent of the old paper file, where everything is located in one place rather than spread across practice, case, document, CRM and email management systems.

Norwel continues success in councils market with Lancs deal

Norwel Computer Services (0161 945 3511) is continuing its current run of success in the local authorities market with a new win from Lancashire County Council. The council, who issued an ITT for a case and time management earlier this year, said they chose Norwel over Solicitec and AIM because "Norwel showed they understood our business needs extremely well and we felt their product was easier to use and better suited to our culture."

Legal IT previews & reviews

The Insider is previewing the upcoming Legal IT Leeds event in its 9th October issue - any suppliers planning to launch new products or services should contact us by no later than 1st October. Insider editor Charles Christian will also be in Leeds to cover the exhibition and there will be a full review in the 30th October issue. For details email leeds@legaltechnology.com

Solicitec diversifies into panel management

Case management software specialist Solicitec has diversified into panel management through the launch of Synapse.

Synapse, which is described as "panel management without a panel manager," is jointly owned by Solicitec and a number of leading conveyancing firms. Commenting on the launch, Synapse business development director Richard Hinton (previously with Shoosmiths' Property Direct division) said "The interface between introducers of business and their panels is currently too cumbersome and too expensive. All players can expect to win with a model that for the first time uses proper case management integration and only charges for the value it delivers. This is a solution that delivers more, whilst effectively cutting out the traditional middle man." www.synapse-pm.co.uk

■ Solicitec, which this year celebrates 18 years in the legal IT business, has reported group turnover up by more than 20% at just over £8 million and profits over £500k. Group chairman Neil Ewin said it represented "a very successful year of trading in a quiet market" adding that "next year looks even better" thanks to new products, a new ASP delivery mechanism and new business ventures in Australia and South East Asia.

■ Solicitec Scotland has moved to Suite 2L, Willow House, Kestrel View, Strathclyde Business Park, Bellshill ML4 3PB. The new phone number is 01698 464610.

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■ **Coming soon:** The next newswire is scheduled for the 25th September. The next Insider newsletter (No.153) will be published on Thursday 9th October 2003.