



Axxia set for spring launch of SQL Server

Axxia Systems says its accounts software will be available on a Microsoft SQL Server platform by the spring of this year. The company will however also continue to develop systems that will run on Informix.

Commenting on the move, Axxia's development director Bob Hadingham said "Artition and Eiion PMS are being rewritten to operate on SQL Server. This is a key milestone on our product road map and will be followed by the conversion of our desktop products, providing yet further choice for users and new business prospects."

Microsoft launch CRM

One year later than planned, Microsoft has finally launched its new CRM 1.2 customer relationship system. Although first reports suggest its strengths lie in managing sales forces rather than complex professional client relationships, which software such as InterAction addresses in the legal market, a number of legal IT vendors are planning to build CRM applications around Microsoft's new system, with Pericom (01908 265533) expected to be the first to launch a product.

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Will IM messaging be the next email ?

With so much attention focussed on email management at the moment, a newer development in technology has crept onto the radar - and law firms are only just waking up to the implications.

This new technology is instant messaging (IM) and although initially ignored as something only home users and spotty kids would bother with, there is now a realisation that it is being widely used by a growing number of investment bankers and lawyers as an online forum for 'chatting' in realtime about the various cases and deals they are involved with.

The problem is both professional and financial services regulations now require records to be kept (either in a paper or digital format - it is now also usual to record phone calls in City offices) of all communications - but is anyone remembering to comply with these requirements when it comes to IM?

According to Dan Carmel, the vice president for marketing at Interwoven "instant messaging is the 'next email' and we fully believe that addressing IM session capture, logging compliance, retention and destruction is an important part of our future strategy. The IM genie is out of the box and today, in any major enterprise, users will use one or more of the big three IM systems - AOL, Yahoo and MSN. Any viable solution must leverage and ideally support all three of the established IM systems."

Although Interwoven are working on an IM management solution, it is their big rivals Hummingbird who are the front runners in this field and will be launching Hummingbird IM, as part of their Hummingbird Enterprise system within the next month to six weeks.

Iain Jones, Hummingbird Europe's director of technology for professional practices, says firms need to "balance their mandates of compliance, confidentiality and privacy" with the realisation that IM is not only increasingly popular among users but "is also a beneficial productivity tool as it can eliminate long trails of voice mails and emails." ...*Continued on page 7.*

LSSA enter the show business

We've lost track of the number of times we've heard legal IT vendors complain that exhibitions are too expensive and that they could put on a cheaper and better show themselves. Well now the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) has decided to try to do just this and will be holding its first annual conference and exhibition later this summer, at the recently opened Old Billingsgate Market venue in the City of London.

Given the falling exhibitor and visitor numbers many legal IT events have suffered in recent years, it seems odd for LSSA to plan their inaugural show for dates (15 & 16 September) that will clash with another event: the highly rated By Legal, For Legal. However one LSSA member told the Insider they felt this was not a problem, as By Legal only appealed to the larger top 200 firms end of the market, which they were not interested in.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ADDLESHAW TURN TO HORNBILL

In the aftermath of last year's merger with Theodore Goddard, Addleshaw Goddard has rolled Hornbill Systems (020 8582 8282) Supportworks help desk system across the entire practice. The Addleshaw Booth side of the firm was already using Hornbill, which runs on an NPA (non polling architecture) platform that allows multiple helpdesks to communicate with each other while still operating independently.

www.hornbill.com

■ ECLIPSE PROCLAIM NEW WINS

Eclipse Legal Systems (01274 704100) has announced nine new installations for its ProClaim personal injury and conveyancing software. The new conveyancing sites are: Anderson Macrae, Miller Evans and Steve John-Syru in London, Howells Williams in Shrewsbury, M K Sri & Co in Harrow and Symons & Gay in Romford). The new PI sites, all of which have also opted to install Eclipse's legal accounts software are: Kayes Solicitors in Leeds, Dettlaff & Co in Bromley and McLoughlins in Liverpool. Eclipse sales director Russell Thomson said the latest signings brought the total number of individuals using ProClaim to nearly 3500.

■ CERBERUS GUARDS MUNDAYS

Mundays has chosen the Cerberus fully managed IT data recovery service from Datashare Solutions (020 8337 2700) as part of the firm's overall disaster recovery plan. Cerberus uses an 'image gateway server' that hosts images of critical systems taken at predetermined intervals so that in the event of a disaster, the firm can reinstate the exact system configuration and data as the original. Mundays' IT manager Elaine Barraud said one of the attractions of the Datashare service is it also monitors and tests the data recovery process on a regular basis without any interruption to the day-to-day operations of the IT department.

www.datasharesolutions.com

■ ATHERTON GO WITH VIDESS

Doncaster law firm Atherton Godfrey has chosen a 55 user Legal Office case and practice management system from Videss (01274 851577) to replace its current accounts and legal IT systems.

E-conveyancing portals ready for take off ?

In a joint venture with case management specialist Visualfiles, Scottish law firm PSM (Peddie Smith Malaco) has launched a new conveyancing portal called Transact Direct. Delivered as an ASP service to solicitors and other conveyancing providers, with pay-as-you-convey pricing based on a fixed fee per transaction for each conveyancing matter, apart from the cost of an internet connection, access to the system is free of charge to property buyers and sellers. PSM will initially focus on the Scottish market but there are plans to widen it to the broader English market.

According to PSM's IT director Peter Falconer "What is different about Transact Direct is that it isn't just a tracking system that allows the buyer or seller to see how their deal is progressing via the internet, our software actually automates and conducts the transaction from start to finish. It is like everyone sitting in the same virtual room and using a sophisticated case management system to do their bit at the earliest moment possible. Firms should easily half the average time taken to complete a conveyance." www.transactdirect.com

■ In a related development, the Rutland-based conveyancing case management portal ConveyanceLink (0845 1662629) has reported its busiest period to-date with over £236 million worth of property transactions going through its servers in September and October. ConveyanceLink offers online case tracking on a pay-as-you-convey basis. www.conveyancelink.com

Tikit say legal market improving

Is the UK legal IT market dragging itself out of the trough it has been stuck in since Y2K? According to the AIM-listed Tikit, the signs of recovery are present with firms once more "considering and committing to larger scale projects". In a Stock Exchange statement, Tikit said trading was "encouraging, with continuing demand for higher margin consultancy and support services".

Quill secure funding for major expansion of Pinpoint bureau

Quill Computer Systems has been awarded a £78,000 grant by the Department of Trade & Industry under the 'SMART' scheme, which aids companies developing technologically innovative products and services. Quill will use the grant to fund the development of its new Pinpoint Modular Service, which will extend the company's current outsourcing bureau operations beyond legal accounts and cashiering services.

Quill chairman Tony Landes said he wanted to be able to offer a "pick and mix approach that will allow law firms to choose to have their accounts inhouse or not, with or without cashiering services, time recording, database and case management, without being locked into a long term contract".

Interwoven set to become legal DMS market leader

A raft of new orders won by Interwoven (aka iManage) since the start of December look set to oust Hummingbird from the top spot as the UK's market leading supplier of law firm document management systems.

Insider sources report that Berwin Leighton Paisner, DLA, Manches and Nabarro Nathanson are all planning to switch from Hummingbird to DMS products from arch-rivals Interwoven. DLA will be integrating Interwoven with their existing bespoke myDLA portal.

Interwoven refused to comment on the reports, citing contractual obligations, however they did say that over the past few weeks they had secured nine new orders from law firms, including four conversions from Hummingbird that amount, in total, to over 5500 users.

Miles 33 is latest Solicitec best of breed alliance

Miles 33 has become the latest practice management systems supplier to work with case management specialist Solicitec to create a best-of-breed integrated accounts and case solution. The two companies held their first meeting in early December, in response to demands from joint users at a recent Miles 33 user group meeting. Also present were representatives from the four firms already using both systems: Bond Pearce, Shakespeares, Enoch Evans and Holmes & Hills. Solicitec is currently in the process of rebranding itself as Visualfiles - perhaps TINA (There Is No Alternative) might be a more appropriate name!

LITIG publishes email guidance

LITIG (the Legal IT Innovators Group) has published two new guides on email policy and best practice. The guides - *Email: Acceptable Usage Policy* and *Email: User Good Practice* - can be downloaded free of charge from the LITIG web site and used in their entirety or adapted by any firm looking for guidance in these areas. We particularly like LITIG's golden rule: "If you wouldn't say it in public or send it by post, DON'T email it".

The LITIG team working on the project included Shoosmiths' IT director Rosemary Kind and Bond Pearce IT director David Coates. Commenting on the guides Coates said "This project is absolutely vital to firms and their clients. Email is now one of the most mission critical systems within our industry. The way people use email is as crucial as the management of the system itself. Many firms run huge risks by not having appropriate guidance and policies in place."

The LITIG team is now investigating further email-related issues including spam and archiving. Copies of the guides can be downloaded in Word DOC file format from www.litig.org

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **STONE ROWE SWITCHES TO SOS**
Stone Rowe Brewer, which has four offices in the Twickenham area, is spending £100K with Solicitors Own Software (01225 787700) to replace its old Avenue system with a new accounts and case management system. The firm is installing the SOS Practice Manager system along with Solicitec's SolFile product.

■ **e1 BUSINESS REBRANDS ITS CRM**
Following three years development work to extend support for the way lawyers interact with clients, e1 Business (01962 831471) has rebranded its SalesLogix CRM software as Metis (the Greek goddess of wisdom). e1 say Metis is a more flexible product than some of its competitors, has a more attractive pricing structure and can support conventional marketing campaigns as well as CRM work. e1 Business has also formed a number of strategic partnerships with legal IT suppliers, including Axxia and Civica, who want to offer CRM functionality in conjunction with their own practice management systems.

■ **RINGROSE RING THE CHANGES**
The Ringrose Law Group, one of the largest firms in Lincolnshire, has selected Axxia Systems (0118 9602602) to replace its current IT infrastructure from Mountain software. The firm will install Artiion accounts, case management, a 130 user roll-out of Axxia's fee earner desktop system and will also be one of the first firms to take Axxia's new KPI management information utility.

■ **EVOLUTION FOR CONVEYANCERS**
The Connells estate agency group, which now has over 500 branches in the UK, is running the Evolution accounts system from AIM Professional (01482 326971) to support the operations of its Conveyancing Direct legal services team.

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PEOPLE & PLACES

■ NIGEL WILLIAMS JOINS SOLICITEC

After 3 years as IT director at Lee Crowder in Birmingham, Nigel Williams has joined the Solicitec business division of Visualfiles as project manager. The appointment means Williams has had to resign as the chairman of the Solicitec User Group, where he has been replaced by Alun Jones of Hugh James.

■ THOMSON ELITE MOVES

Thomson Elite has moved its London-based European HQ to Aldgate House, 33 Aldgate High Street, London EC3N 1DL. The phone number is 020 7369 7379. The company began its European operations with just one employee - David Thorpe - based in the UK. It currently employs 50 staff and Thorpe is Thomson Elite's vice president and general manager.

■ SEARCHFLOW FINDS NEW HOME

The market leading NLIS channel operator and conveyancing search specialist NLIS Searchflow has moved to Nepicar House, Wrotham Heath, Sevenoaks, Kent N15 7RS. The switchboard number is 0870 990 9945.

■ DMS SUPPLIER RIDES INTO ASCOT

Following the recent merger between iManage and Interwoven, the UK offices of the document management business (including Geoff Hornsby's team) have moved from Guildford to new premises at Kingswood, Kings Ride, Ascot, Berks SL5 8AJ. The phone number is 01344 631900.

■ PHOENIX ARISES IN THE CITY

The DMS consultancy Phoenix Business Solutions has relocated to new premises at 75 Cannon Street, London EC4N 5BN. The phone number remains 0870 735 1426. Since breaking away from KLA, the Phoenix team has completed Interwoven (aka iManage) implementations at Boyes Turner and BP Collins, and commenced projects at Teacher Stern & Selby, Harcus Sinclair and an undisclosed DOCS to Worksite conversion.

■ MORE GO WITH TFB SCOTLAND

During the course of 2003, a total of 31 Scottish law firms, including Ross Harper and Masson & Glennie, have migrated to TFB's Partner for Windows integrated case and practice management system.

Mystery firm first to buy new Osprey software

Powell Callen, a new start-up practice with ambitious expansion plans, has become the first firm to order the all new .NET version of the Osprey accounts and case management system from the legal IT supplier Pracctice (01432 372100).

Powell Callen, whose origins lie in the small Welsh firm of Parsons & Powell, are not prepared to discuss the details of their new business venture until it is launched later this year however it is understood to involve a niche area of legal practice. The scope of Powell Callen's plans can be gleaned from the fact it has initially purchased 500 user licences for Osprey. Managing director (the firm has been incorporated) Andrew Callen has also said that the "firm is committed to getting into the top 100 law firms over the next two years." Powell Callen will be operating the Osprey software through a nationwide network of offices, with Pracctice providing a complete managed service, including hosting the data, via their new secure data centre.

Case management - buy the book

Emis Professional Publishing (01707 334823) has published *Case Management - making work flow* (ISBN 1-85811-321-0, price £29.95) by Blake Laphorn Linnell solicitor & consultant Nicholas Poole. The book covers all the practice and IT issues associated with case management, including managing the process changes within a firm, and can be purchased online at www.emispp.com

Digital dictation news in brief

■ VOICEPATH NOW SUPPORTING WINSCRIBE

Voicepath (01926 821900), the digital dictation ASP/outsourcing business, can now support the WinScribe DDS for those firms who want an internal digital dictation workflow management system but also need to outsource some of their transcription work and are less than enthusiastic about sending it overseas.

■ DOLMANS ADVANCE BIGHAND ROLL OUT

Dolmans in Cardiff have rolled out the BigHand (020 7793 8200) TotalSpeech DDS across the firm and ahead of schedule. The firm brought forward the rollout after a pilot digital dictation project proved highly popular, with both lawyers and support staff reporting immediate increases in productivity.

■ SRC BECOME WINSCRIBE PLATINUM PARTNER

SRC (020 7471 0127) has been appointed to 'platinum partner' status by WinScribe Europe. Along with closer co-operation between their support and development teams, including active involvement in beta testing new WinScribe software releases, the five year agreement will also see the two companies working together on joint marketing activities in the legal sector.

Workflow on the agenda as Tikit climbs aboard

During a recent interview, Metastorm's marketing director Andy Bailey told the Insider he believed workflow and business process management (BPM) systems (such as the Metastorm e-Work product) were finally set to become a mainstream legal technology because more and more areas of law office practice involved areas of financial and regulatory risk management where there were clear and measurable benefits to be enjoyed from deploying workflow systems.

Bailey cites client and matter inception as a good example, as there are not only potentially dire consequences for lawyers if they overlook the regulatory elements - conflict of interest searches, Rule 15 client care, money laundering and, for some firms, compliance with Sarbanes Oxley - but the sheer time all this involves can be financially detrimental. For example 'lock up' (the time that elapses from the start of the billing period to the date when payment is received) currently averages 130 days in larger firms but where BPM has been employed, this delay has been cut by as much as 20% - or 26 days - to the obvious benefit of cash flow positions.

In a further sign that workflow has come of age, Metastorm has announced it has entered into a business partnership with Tikit (020 7400 3737) in a move that will see Tikit developing BPM solutions for its customers. Other suppliers now competing in the workflow market include Infographics (01592 750677) with its FloSuite system and Solicitec/Visualfiles (0113 226 2000).

■ MAKING BPM WORK SEMINARS

Long-time Metastorm partner ResSoft is holding two business process management workshops at its London offices next month on the subject of making BPM work. The sessions will also provide an opportunity to see Metastorm e-Work in action. The workshops are taking place on Fridays 13th and 27th February (9:00 am - 11:00am). For more details call 020 7421 4140 or visit www.ressoft.co.uk

LOTIES 2004 awards underway

The LOTIES and e-LOTIES legal office technology innovation awards for 2004 are underway, with the *In Brief* web site now open to accept nominations for the projects, products and people you think should be shortlisted for an award.

The awards follow their familiar two stage structure of nominations (these are open until 30 April) followed by voting on the shortlisted entries, which will commence in May, with the e-LOTIES awards ceremony taking place on 23 September and the LOTIES on 18 November. The 2004 awards have been expanded to include more categories, including giving greater recognition to the part law firm staff play in legal IT and online legal service projects. Further details, including the nomination forms, can be found on the web at www.inbrief.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ THREE WINS FOR HUMMINGBIRD

Niche IP firm D Young & Co and niche City practice Orchard are the latest firms to order the Hummingbird (0118 979 2800) DM document management system. Orchard had planned to implement iManage through Kramer Lee Associates but after the acquisition of KLA by Hummingbird, the firm opted to maintain the relationship with KLA and are now deploying Hummingbird.

The third order was placed by insurance specialist Kennedys, who will be using Hummingbird's portal and collaboration modules to deliver client services in conjunction with their ClaimBase (01708 736660) claims management system.

■ LAWFUSION GETS SDLT

Bilton Hammond in Mansfield has become the first firm to install a LawFusion conveyancing case management system from Select Legal Systems (01482 644334) that supports the automatic production of the new SDLT (Stamp Duty Land Tax) forms. Select say reports from users suggest that, compared with manual methods, automation can cut the time it takes to complete just 10 SDLT forms by as much as two hours.

■ EVERYFORM FREE SDLT FORMS

Everyform (part of the LexisNexis group) can now provide Inland Revenue approved substitute SDLT forms featuring a two dimensional barcode. The Inland Revenue have warned they will only accept substitute forms with a 2D barcode once they move over to automated processing later this spring. The SDLT forms can be downloaded free of charge from www.everyform.net

Online strategies white paper revised

The downloads facility on the Insider web site has been updated to include a revised version of our *Online Strategies for Law Firms* white paper. The revision is available free of charge as a Word DOC file.

We have also expanded The Insider 200 chart to include document assembly and automation software. The chart is available in Excel and HTML file formats.

www.legaltechnology.com

Legal IT show features product shoot-outs

The organisers' decision to radically rejig the seminar programme for next month's Legal IT 2004 exhibition, at the Business Design Centre in Islington, looks like it may have paid off with pre-registration entry ticket bookings running at a record high.

Out go CPD accredited educational sessions and in come a series of LegalTech style 'product shoot outs' hosted by IT consultant Neil Cameron. These will involve three rival suppliers being asked a series of questions so the audience can make a comparative assessment on the merits of each product. The case management shoot out on Thursday (from 12 noon) between AIM, Pilgrim and Solicitec looks like being particularly hotly contested.

Admission to the exhibition and seminar sessions is free of charge and you can book tickets online. Legal IT takes place on 11 & 12 February, from 9:30am - 5:00pm, with the seminar sessions starting at 10:00am.

www.legalitshow.com

LEGAL IT EVENTS DIARY

- FEBRUARY 2-to-4, NEW YORK. Legal Tech New York - the major US conference and exhibition. Visit www.legaltechshow.com
- FEBRUARY 11 & 12, LONDON. Legal IT 2004 at the Business Design Centre - *see above*
- FEBRUARY 12, LONDON. LegalKEY and Kramer Lee are holding seminars of records and risk management, including conflicts of interest. Book online at www.kramerlee.com
- FEBRUARY 18, LONDON. Interface Software and Kramer Lee are holding an afternoon seminar on 'Vital advice for successful CRM'. For details or to book online go www.kramerlee.com
- FEBRUARY 26, LONDON. The Legal IT Forum Club extends the networking opportunities of the Gleneagles event with its inaugural meeting at The Magic Circle near Euston Station. For details email simon.dieppe@informa.com or visit www.legalitforum.com
- MARCH 1 & 2, AMSTERDAM. Lex Connect at the Amsterdam Hilton. www.lexconnect.com

Xoomworks hoping to zoom in on legal KM

One of the suppliers to catch our eye at the recent Lex Connect event was Xoomworks (020 7665 8460) which is promoting a new knowledge management system that could appeal to many law firms. Called Inxight, this is a KM tool for organising and accessing unstructured data - such as WP files, email and web pages - which according to Xoomworks now accounts for about 85% of all the information most organisations handle.

Xoomworks' CEO Malcolm Clark said a key feature of Inxight is its use of linguistic, rather than mathematical, search routines so instead of just generating a series of 'hits' identifying when a particular word or phrase is used, it also takes into account the context in which they are used. Another feature, popular with publishers such as Factiva, Reuters and Thomson, is the Inxight Categorizer. In effect this is a taxonomy tool for automatically filtering and classifying documents.

Inxight is widely used in the US, including by IT suppliers, such as IBM and HP, who embed it in their systems. It is now available in the UK via Xoomworks. www.xoomworks.com

Contributing to web success

Web site development consultancy Intendance (020 8871 1330) is now advocating the use of Macromedia Contribute 2.0 software (a cut down version of Dreamweaver - although the original site still has to be developed in Dreamweaver) as a way to provide law firms with a simple way to update their web pages on a regular basis but without having to learn HTML programming skills or rely upon external web designers.

Intendance's James Tuke says this gives firms the flexibility they need but without the cost overheads. In recent months one of the heaviest users of this approach has been Saunders & Co (www.saunders.co.uk) who act for the Norfolk farmer Tony Martin and are using their site as a virtual newsroom for dealing with media enquiries. www.intendance.com

Scotland abandons PKI project

At its November council meeting the Law Society of Scotland agreed to abandon its Lawseal secure email project, which was based on PKI (public key infrastructure) technology. The Society said that although the technology had been proven during pilot testing, "the council were not persuaded that the profession and, consequently, the client's interests would be served by adding this financial commitment at this stage".

Insider sources suggest fears about the potential high administration costs associated with PKI systems was one of the reasons why Scottish firms were lukewarm about Lawseal. According to one firm's estimates, it would cost them as much as £60,000 a year to run a 100-user PKI system.

Latest product launches

■ AXXIA ADDS FOURTH TIER TO ITS REPORTING

Axxia Systems has announced details of Vision - its new executive information system (EIS) that is intended to provide the finance directors of firms running an Axxia PMS with a fourth tier of management reporting capabilities.

The first tier is the 98 standard reports Axxia offer with their accounts and practice management software. The second tier is a report writer (there is an option to use Crystal) that allows firms to create their own bespoke reports. The third tier in the reporting hierarchy is the KPI (key performance indicators) facility, which provides browser-based statistics at a practice, departmental and fee earner level. The fourth tier is the new Vision system (which is based on the Orenburg 'management intelligence' toolkit) which includes all the features you would expect from a good EIS, including the ability to 'slice and dice' and carry out 'drill downs' on data from different sources.

Interestingly, it was Russell Robinson - Axxia's finance director - who had overall responsibility for the project. Axxia also liaised with a number of law firm finance directors to produce 150 standard reporting templates to help Vision users get up and running immediately. Vision is priced at about a third of the cost of a Cognos-type EIS. www.axxia.com

■ ALL THE BENEFITS OF THE OFFICE - AT HOME

Voice and data convergence specialist Wanbase (0870 340 2000) has launched WANdesk, a new system designed to bring the standard of network access and telephony enjoyed in the office into the home working environment. Using local DSL connections via the internet, WANdesk provides a fast, secure data IP VPN between home and office to give rapid access to core applications such as email and practice management.

With the addition of a voice gateway to the office phone system, a home based handset can also replicate a user's extension, allowing them to keep their DDI or internal extension number. Users also get all the functions they would expect at work including voice mail, caller ID, missed calls. Also, because voice traffic runs over the existing VPN, calls between the office and home are free, regardless of location.

According to Wanbase technical director Mike Jones "One of the major barriers to home working is the fact that your desk at home is not the one you enjoy in the office. People have to put up with slow dial-up connections, limited access to network applications and using a home phone or mobile, none of which are ideal in terms of functionality or cost. We felt that if we could give people the same technology at home as they enjoyed at work, we would make home working an easier, more productive cost-efficient experience with no price premium."

The leasing figures for an initial 5-user WANdesk system is £325 a month (WANdesk is available as a 5, 10, 20 and 50-user system and also on an enterprise basis for installations of 50+ users). The only other costs, aside from the initial investment, are those associated with DSL line rental, which currently stand at around £30 per user per month. www.wanbase.com

Instant messaging

Continued from front page... According to Jones, although compliance, confidentiality and privacy are naturally issues of vital concern to lawyers, any IM management must recognise that instant messaging discussions also have a corporate value, just as conventional email does.

As to just how you "leverage IM discussions as corporate assets," Jones suggests you need to "collaborate in context" and provide a "secure common repository".

"The most valuable discussions," says Jones, "are not conducted in a vacuum but associated with a specific client matter, set of documents, meeting or event. The solution must provide simple ways of initiating discussions from within applications that lawyers use every day. And, when the discussion is saved, the link (or thread) between the discussion and the matter, meeting or document retained for reference."

Jones adds that the solution must also be flexible in how and where captured discussions are stored. "While discussions logged for auditing purposes may be secured only to the highest level administrators, discussions proactively saved by a lawyer in relation to a specific document must be stored in the same common document repository or DMS - and with the same access permissions."

As a final point, Jones stresses that any IM solution must also be easy to install and use so a firm does not have to provide any additional training for either its fee earners or support staff.

■ We have also learned of one stand alone IM management system called ePulse Messenger (ePM) which is in use in some City dealing rooms to provide audit trails for SEC and FSA compliance purposes. ePM sits on a Linux or Solaris server and works with all the main IM systems. For details phone 020 7422 6300 or visit www.epulse.ltd.uk

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Capsoft boss takes over Emplaw portal

Russell Shepherd, best known as the managing director of Capsoft UK, has acquired a controlling 49% interest in Emplaw - Henry Scrope's highly rated employment law portal, which is now firmly established as the UK's most widely used internet resource for employment law information. Shepherd plans to relaunch the site "to maintain and enhance its position" by creating new digital services to complement existing products.

Shepherd, a self-confessed 'serial entrepreneur' (the sale of his online legal forms service Everyform to Reed Elsevier made him a millionaire) said the venture appealed to him "because I believe the legal information business is very unstable. Existing UK legal publishers have not successfully migrated to digital provision. I think there exists a great opportunity to displace the incumbent players and Emplaw could be the cornerstone of an assault on the market." www.emplaw.co.uk

Lex Connect connects in UK

The Ark Group's recent Lex Connect UK seems to have pressed all the right buttons - including actually getting managing partners to attend a legal IT event! The delegates we spoke to said the attraction of the format was that the business side of the event was confined to one-to-one 'consultations' with suppliers, leaving the seminar sessions totally neutral and free from any hidden commercial agenda - or more blatant product plugs.

Lex Connect Europe takes place at the Amsterdam Hilton (1st & 2nd March). Sponsors already confirmed include Elite and Solution 6. For details call Caroline Searle on 020 8785 5930.

Windows 98 back from the dead

Friday 16th January was due to have been the funeral date for the Windows 98 and 98 SE operating systems, with 'end of life' - defined as one year after an OS enters a 'non-supported phase' - one year later in January 2005. However with just hours to go before the final curtain, Microsoft had a change of heart and extended support for Windows 98 and 98 SE (and coincidentally Windows ME) until June 2006. This means users will still be able to get paid-for telephone support and Microsoft will continue to provide patches for security issues.

This is clearly good news for the many firms who subscribe to the view that 'if it ain't broke, it don't need fixing' and are looking at 7 year plus lifecycles rather than implementing major upgrades every 4-to-5 years. But Microsoft's move will be a blow to those suppliers currently advocating that now is an appropriate time to migrate to Windows XP. Conspiracy theory fans might like to note there is already a rumour that extending the life of Win 98 is merely a cunning ploy by Microsoft to stop the rival Linux OS emerging as the cheaper alternative to XP.

First Stop survives near death experience

Despite a near-death experience in the early New Year, when the company slipped into administrative receivership, the business and goodwill of the First Stop Computer Group (whose legal clients include Freshfields, Mills & Reeve, Morgan Cole and Olswang) has been acquired by Teksys Ltd, a specialist in Microsoft infrastructure services. First Stop's old Surbiton offices have closed however First Stop's Paul Hoffbrand is now the legal business manager for Teksys and can be reached at phoffbrand@teksys.co.uk

www.teksys.co.uk

Alternative Team quits legal market

After suffering a series of blows last year, including a prolonged legal dispute with founding director Bruce Argue, the departure of their only sales person Jackie Rough - who has joined DPS Software, and, finally, the loss of their DPS dealership, legal case management software specialist Alternative Team has gone into receivership.

Former development director David Rich said the loss of the dealership effectively destroyed the company's business at a stroke, leaving them with no option but to close down. Although Rich has now formed a new business - ATL Software - he told the Insider he had no intention of returning to the legal IT sector. The company has also withdrawn its ATL Assist case management system from the market, which had been in use in one law firm.

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