



WinScribe to bring DDS to smaller firms

As part of a planned strategy to double its UK customer base over the next 18 months, WinScribe Europe (0118 984 2133) this month launches WinScribe Office, a new version of its flagship digital dictation and workflow management system specifically designed for smaller workgroups, including small-to-mid sized solicitors practices.

WinScribe Europe's managing director Philip Vian said the company's research had identified a demand among smaller firms for a simple dictation workflow product that filled the gap between full function DDS systems and the software supplied with dictation devices. "And we intend to fill this gap with WinScribe Office," says Vian.

The main differences between the full version of the system and WinScribe Office are the latter has limited connectivity, so will only work across a single network (but this can encompass WANs and VPNs as well as LANs) and can only support up to 30 transcriptionists (in practical terms this figure is actually quite generous as it would even meet the needs of some smaller Legal 500 sized firms). Office can also support handheld digital recorders for dictation on the move. www.winscribееurope.com

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Lit support: Kroll buys - and is bought

The last couple of weeks have been an interesting - if not hectic and possibly confusing - time for Kroll, the giant US private investigation to litigation support services company and its UK subsidiary Kroll Ontrack Legal Technologies.

In middle of May, Kroll announced that its Kroll Ontrack e-discovery division had acquired Quorum Litigation Services, the US market leader for paper document scanning and coding services, for US\$39 million in cash. Then, just a few days later on 18th May, Kroll itself was acquired by Marsh & McLennan Companies (MCC), the global insurance and risk management group, for US\$1.9 billion in cash.

So where does that leave the litigation support side of the business? Currently Kroll Ontrack is part of Kroll's Technology Services business which, along with conventional lit support facilities, can also offer e-discovery, computer forensics and electronic evidence related services, all of which are increasingly becoming part of the corporate risk management scenario.

As Kroll Ontrack Legal Technologies director Kelvin McGregor-Alcorn recently told the Insider: "In an era when over 93% of all documents are produced electronically and 75% of those never make it to the printer, the 'smoking gun' evidence for litigation or compliance purposes is more likely to be found on a computer than buried in a filing cabinet." But, the sheer volume of all this material - just one backup tape can hold 40Gb of data, the equivalent of 3.5 million pages of paper - means the only way now to search for key information is electronically.

And Kroll Ontrack Legal Technologies in the UK? Having gone from being an independent player to first part of Oyez and then Kroll, the company now has its third change of ownership in almost as many years, while Kelvin McGregor-Alcorn must be experiencing feelings of *déjà vu* as, during the early years of the 1990s, he used to head Quorum's litigation support operations in the UK. **For more litigation support news see page 7.**

John Miller leaves Law Society

John Miller, who for the past seven-and-a-half years has been the director of the English Law Society's membership services division, has left Chancery Lane to resume his career in the commercial world. Miller can take much of the credit for restoring friendly relations between the Law Society and the legal IT suppliers' community in the aftermath of the Society's High Street Starters Kit (HSSK) debacle. And it was also under his watch that the Law Society developed and launched the now highly influential annual *Software Solutions Guide*.

Although the Law Society is currently reorganising some of its operations - plans include new initiatives on IT and business development - as far as the next edition of the *Software Solutions Guide* is concerned, there will be continuity with John Miller's work as Sue Cummings will continue to manage the project.

NEWS IN BRIEF**■ TWO DPS ACCOUNTS WINS**

Brighton-based conveyancing specialist ACT Law has selected the DPS Cashier legal accounts system to replace its incumbent Quill software package. Another new order for the DPS (020 8804 1022) accounts system has been placed by Suremove Property Lawyers, who have offices in Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. The firm, which is also buying a DPS case management system, currently uses Perfect Books accounts and Sellers Link case management software.

■ WILDINGS MANAGED SERVICES

Wildings Professional Systems (01473 219819) in Ipswich is now offering a managed services facility to help law firms with small IT departments tackle large projects, such as rolling out Windows 2003 or digital dictation across multiple desktops in multiple locations.

■ NICHE FIRM ORDERS LASERFORM

Three more law firms have ordered the Laserform (01925 750020) Partnership Suite accounts and practice management system. The firms are Turner & Wall, property specialists RTL and niche maritime practice Swinnerton Moore, which has also ordered Laserform's case management software for its conveyancing department.

■ RISDON HOSEGOOD'S NEW PMS

Risdon Hosegood in Somerset has begun rolling out a new practice management system based on Pilgrim's (0131 555 9700) LawSoft software. The firm, which has five offices across that part of the West Country, said a determining factor in the selection of LawSoft was the availability of Pilgrim's Web Portal facility. The firm expects to complete the implementation of the new PMS before the end of July.

■ AIMING OFFSHORE

Maples & Calder Europe, part of the Cayman Islands-based offshore law firm, has awarded AIM Technical Services (01482 326971) a contract worth over £150k to provide new hardware, systems software and support services via VPN access for the firm's London office. AIM Technical is the infrastructure and IT services arm of the legal systems supplier AIM Professional.

Wragges turn to RedDot XML to enhance content

Wragge & Co has implemented RedDot Solutions' XML-based Content Management Server to deliver its *Legal Update* legal and regulatory news service directly to its clients' desktops and intranets. RedDot, which has been integrated with the firm's Hummingbird DMS, now acts as the repository for every piece of *Legal Update* content, regardless of its original format, and allows Wragge's editors to create, store and automatically disseminate sector-specific XML-enabled news stories.

Wragge & Co's client technology solutions manager Matthew Cleverdon said the RedDot/Hummingbird technology behind *Legal Update* would "help clients keep up with the law by providing them with relevant content in a usable, as opposed to purely readable, format. XML's inherent flexibility allows us to provide client communities in different sectors with content that is relevant to their needs." www.reddot.co.uk

Document assembly specialist over in the UK next week

Mark Todes of Korbitec, the South African developers of the GhostFill document assembly and automation system, will be in the UK next week (commencing 7th June) for a series of presentations to law firms. Although GhostFill's architecture has incorporated XML data elements from the outset, Todes told the Insider that "we at GhostFill are absolutely convinced of the importance and major significance of the whole Microsoft .NET platform and are fully committed to building new versions of GhostFill from the bottom-up that will harness .NET," including the creation of a "viable scenario for complex document assembly in a server based environment". www.korbitec.com

Question mark over LSSA show?

The Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) is meeting this week to discuss the future of its LEXPO event, which is due to take place in London this September. The Insider has learned that although the event has passed the break-even point in terms of stand sales, there are concerns that there is no longer sufficient interest in legal IT trade shows to make the event viable. As soon as we have more news, it will be posted on the Insider web site.

New date for bears and beers

Informa has switched the date of its summer LITF Club meeting to Wednesday 23rd June. The event will take place by the bear enclosure at London Zoo, with an agenda that includes jazz, Microsoft, drinks and networking opportunities. For details email Simon Dieppe of Informa at simon.dieppe@informa.com

Tikit targets sub 150 user firms with CRM 'lite' suite

Tikit (020 7400 3737) has begun targeting smaller law firms (defined as practices with less than 150 users) with its new InterAction Lite Suite. This is an implementation of Interface Software's standard InterAction CRM (client relationship management) system but with special licence and finance arrangements, to make it more affordable to smaller firms, and making greater use of predefined template solutions, to minimise the cost of deployment and ongoing support. Tikit envisage the initial demand coming from smaller commercial and niche practices, who still need CRM facilities but do not have the flexibility requirements of larger City firms.

■ Following a pilot last year, Nelsons has placed an order with Tikit to rollout the nFlow DictaFlow digital dictation system to 290 users in the firm's Leicester, Derby and Nottingham offices.

Autostore goes into NG&J

Transam Microsystems (020 7837 4050) has installed an NSi Autostore system at Nicholson Graham & Jones. Autostore is a document workflow system (similar to the eCopy and Omtool Accuroute products) that works in conjunction with the HP 9000 range of MFD multi-function printers. Transam has also installed a utility called DOCSLink, which integrates HP digital senders with the Hummingbird DMS, at a number of firms. For details about Autostore visit the NSi web site. www.nsius.com

AlphaLaw guide - simply the best

As user manuals are usually the weakest link in any software supplier's portfolio, MSS (01252 371121) must be the exception that proves the rule as the latest edition of the user guide for their AlphaLAW Vantage practice management system is by far the most comprehensive and well designed manual we have seen to-date.

Loties awards: not for the prudish

With voting underway for this year's LOTIES and e-LOTIES awards, details have been announced of the plans for the awards ceremonies. The guest compere for the e-LOTIES, which take place at The Savoy on 23rd September, will be Ruby Wax, while the host for the main LOTIES awards, being held at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand on 18th November, is chat show host and comedian Graham Norton whose outrageous humour - and dress sense - is probably unsuitable for anyone of a nervous or prudish disposition. Voting for the shortlisted nominations continues until the 30th July for the e-LOTIES and 22nd October for the LOTIES. You can vote online at www.inbrief.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ CITY AND CRIMINAL WINS

Niche London commercial lawyers the City Law Partnership and Morgans, one of the largest criminal firms in Wales, as well as being the principality's leading social welfare practice, are the latest law firms to select the Videss (01274 851577) Legal Office system for their new practice management software.

Videss say the pleasing aspect of the orders is although the two firms are very different (City Law specified a system to support 24/7 operations, whereas Morgans, which has five offices carrying out mainly legal aid work, is still technically a solo practice - although there are plans to promote more partners) the Legal Office system was able to meet both sets of needs.

■ NEW MESSAGING AT ADDLESHAW

Addleshaw Goddard has selected AVST CallXpress unified messaging software and the Capartis RightFax network fax system to form part of its new communications infrastructure. IT technical services manager Dan Simms said that along with addressing technical matters, the systems - which are being supplied by Avanquest Communicate (01962 835000) - would also help deal with broader business issues such as compliance.

■ LASERFORM PISCES INITIATIVE

Laserform is planning to rollout a new series electronic forms later this year that will include full compliance and integration with the PISCES data standard for property transactions. Laserform chairman Barry Hawley-Green said the PISCES project was another example of the company gearing up to prepare for the e-conveyancing revolution. Laserform is developing and trialing the new forms in conjunction with other legal systems suppliers and a number of law firms, including three 'top 20' practices.

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PEOPLE & PLACES

■ NEW CRM TRAINER AT PASPEER

Perfect Access Speer (020 7488 6973), which is fast becoming the leading training company for specialist legal IT applications in the UK (the company also handles a growing number of projects in Continental Europe) has appointed Karen Hall as its new InterAction CRM training consultant.

www.paspeer.com

■ AUTHOR, AUTHOR!

In the previous issue of the Insider we mentioned Legalease's excellent new training course: the *Practical Lawyer Online Guide to Money Laundering*. This is aimed at qualified staff however the regulations also require support staff to be properly trained and for them probably the best source of instruction is an online training course that can be found at www.mlts.uklaw.net

This course, incidentally, was developed by solicitor and long-term legal IT pioneer Michael Kaye and Jonathan Fisher QC, the same people who wrote the content for the Legalease guide.

■ NEW IT HEAD AT BEVAN ASHFORD

Val Fox, previously the IT manager at Clarke Willmott, has taken over as the new head of IT at Bevan Ashford, replacing Dick Sayers, who has moved on from the legal industry.

■ SIMPLY LAW JOBS NUMBER

Our item in the previous Insider about the new Simply Law Jobs recruitment web site should have said the phone number was 01428 604013. www.simplylawjobs.com

■ PILGRIMAGE TO SOLICITEC

Steve Falconer has joined Solicitec Scotland as head of sales & marketing. He was previously with Pilgrim Systems, most recently as director of sales.

■ CHANNEL PARTNER EVENT

Avanquest Kommunicate is holding a channel partner event at the Marriott County Hall in London on 15th June to introduce its new strategic partnership with Netviewer, a developer of desktop sharing, remote support and web conferencing software. The event starts at 6:00pm and closes with a spin on the London Eye. For details email Alison Hall at ahall@avanquest.co.uk

InfoPath cuts conflict checking time by 75%

US law firm Gunderson Dettmer is reporting a 75% reduction in the time taken to perform conflict of interest checking since the introduction a new system based around the XML capabilities of Microsoft Office Professional 2003, Microsoft Office InfoPath 2003 and Web Services.

Whereas previously two staff were employed full-time to re-key data and manually distribute paper forms around the firm, the entire process is now handled electronically, using InfoPath forms to route the data. The system, developed by Allin Consulting, has cut the average time for performing a conflict search from two hours to 30 minutes. A full length case study is available on the Insider web site at www.legaltechnology.com

DIGITAL DICTATION NEWS IN BRIEF

■ BIGHAND LANDS JERSEY DDS DEAL

Jersey law firm Viberts, and its Vivat Trust & Corporate Services trust subsidiary, are to install BigHand's (020 7793 8200) TotalSpeech digital dictation workflow system. Viberts' managing partner Rose Colley said the firm's success had "led to office space limitations and burgeoning secretary to fee earner ratios, and we saw instantly how digital dictation could help confront these issues," as part of a wider initiative to reshape the firm's internal work culture and improve work sharing. The implementation is being handled by BigHand in conjunction with local IT company Itex Jersey.

In a related development, BigHand has recently revamped its web site. Along with all the usual corporate information you would expect to find, there are also a series of 'virtual tours' using animation to demonstrate the use of digital dictation in different law firm work scenarios and, for anyone with a few minutes of spare time, a lawyer-versus-secretary dictation game.

■ TWO MORE DIGISCRIBE SIGNINGS

Following a successful pilot in the Worcester office, Thursfields has now begun rolling out Crescendo Systems (0870 770 1717) DigiScribe DDS to a further 65 users in the firm's three regional offices. Thursfields' IT manager Ian Morris described DigiScribe as "the best investment in IT the firm has made in a long time". Chelmsford law firm Wollastons is also set to roll out DigiScribe on a practice-wide basis after a pilot in the firm's company commercial department.

■ DONNS GO WITH SRC WINSCRIBE

After a 20-user pilot in the firm's personal injury litigation department demonstrated how digital dictation could reduce document turnaround times and streamline the handling of physical files, Donns in Manchester has placed an order with SRC (020 7471 0100) for a WinScribe digital dictation workflow management system. The system will initially be rolled out to the firm's EL/PL and catastrophic departments.

Elite widens its knowledge management arm

The recent announcement that Thomson Elite (part of the Thomson Corporation) had purchased Expert Ease, a leading US provider of knowledge management and related productivity software for law firms, has served to confirm suspicions that Thomson is serious about dominating all aspects of the lawyer's desktop, from the supply of information through to the practice and KM applications used to process it.

Expert Ease's flagship product is DealProof, which helps lawyers draft and review legal documents by automatically proof-reading and summarising them and then linking them to external search engines, such as Westlaw. Expert Ease has also developed search, categorisation and summarisation technologies for transactional legal documents such as contracts, leases and prospectuses. Thomson Elite's president & CEO Chris Poole said the acquisition would "complement the company's line of practice and knowledge management technologies and accelerate the development of West km to deliver a complete knowledge management suite for all of our customers".

Expert Ease's operations, including product development, sales, service and support, will be integrated into Thomson Elite, with current employees - including Expert Ease president Ely Razin - joining the organisation. The terms of the acquisition have not been disclosed.

KM NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SOLCARA AND LEXIS LAUNCH NEWS MONITOR

KM software specialists Solcara (07810 631377) and LexisNexis have teamed up to develop InTheNews, an online news monitoring service designed to make it easier for lawyers to keep track of what is being said in the media about their firms, clients and competitors. The Solcara system uses statistical and linguistic analysis routines to identify relevant content within more than 32,000 different publications and news services.

■ OPEN SOURCES SANITISES DOCUMENTS

US KM specialist OpenSource has launched a 'Sanitize' module for its document analysis and assembly software. The module simplifies the creation of precedents, templates and model agreements from transactional documents by automatically stripping out all sensitive data, such as client details and deal identifiers and substituting dummy terms in their place.

www.opensourceinc.com

■ ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND PRODUCTIVITY

Solcara and online legal publishers Context are holding a breakfast briefing at the Law Society in London on 29th June on the subject of improving productivity through giving fee earners better access to information. The guest speaker is Macfarlanes' head of legal information David Coleman on responding to client demands. For details email tim.keigan@solcara.com

Microsoft .NET - now Java fights back

Our feature in the previous issue of the Insider about Microsoft .NET and whether it was going to create a generation of legacy suppliers and transient technologies certainly set the .NET cats among the Java pigeons but it is quite clear that fans of Java are not going to give up without a fight.

On the one hand, many readers echoed the views of Alex Ogilvie, a director of the Glasgow case management software developer Lonelypixel, that "a great many previously prohibitively expensive projects can now be done quickly and cost effectively thanks to the capability of the .NET platform to actually deliver what it says on the tin".

On the other hand David Copper, the technical director of insurance claims specialists ClaimBase - and, coincidentally, a big fan of open source software - says "In our experience, Java is no more difficult to develop than any other OO language, nor is it any more time consuming or unstable. Java will continue to offer fantastic advantages for companies such as ourselves, that develop solely in browser-based technologies and can make good use of Java applets. It's just too early to write Java off and we are taking advantage of its universality today."

■ CIVICA MICROSOFT WORKSHOPS

Civica is holding a series of one-to-one workshops on the use of Microsoft SharePoint Portal and strategies for migrating from NT to Windows 2003. The next workshops will take place at Civica's Putney offices on the 9th and 16th June. To book a place call Ruth Hammond on 020 7760 2800 or email rhammond@civica.co.uk

■ MATTER CENTRIC LAUNCH

FWBS and Microsoft are holding presentations of the OMS Matter Centre system from FWBS at the Law Society on 22nd June and the Harewood Estate, near Leeds, on 24th June. The new OMS system provides law firms with a matter centric approach to computing from within the comfort zone of existing Microsoft Office applications, such as Outlook, Word and Excel. For more information or to book a place at either presentation visit

www.omsmattercentre.com

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

■ FREEHILLS SELECT INTERACTION

Freehills, one of the 'big three' law firms in Australia, have selected Interface Software's InterAction system to support the firm's client relationship management strategy. The InterAction CRM system is now used by more than a dozen firms in Australia and New Zealand. www.interfacesoftware.com

■ WORKFLOW SANS FRONTIERES

Metastorm has appointed Swedish-based Kerfi AB as its new distribution partner and reseller for the e-Work workflow and BPM software in Sweden and Iceland. Kerfi is one of the largest IT suppliers operating in the Nordic markets. In a related development, Software Futures will now be distributing Metastorm BPM software in South Africa. www.kerfi.se + www.softwarefutures.com

■ DISCONNECTED IN AMSTERDAM?

Microsoft and European Solution 6 distributor Timesoft are holding a seminar for Dutch law firms in Amsterdam on the 24th June on the subject of the 'disconnected working environment'. Microsoft will be highlighting its Small Business Server and Timesoft will illustrate using practice management software in remote offices via a VPN link. For details call Timesoft on +31 348 484700 or email Martijn Voorhuis at m.voorhuis@timesoft.nl

LEGAL IT EVENTS DIARY

■ JUNE 8 & 9, LOS ANGELES. LegalTech West American Lawyer Media's West Coast legal technology event at the Westin Bonaventure. For details visit www.legaltechshow.com

■ JUNE 15, BIRMINGHAM. PCS and DPS TeamTalk are holding seminars on case management and digital dictation. The venue is the Aston Villa FC ground, with sessions starting at 10:00am and 2:00pm. Call Jayne Marshall of PCS on 01675 470774.

■ JUNE 17, LONDON. Laserform is running a series of workshops for its electronic forms users. The cost is £100 + VAT (3 CPD hours). The event takes place at the Naval & Military Club with similar events in Leeds (24 June), Bristol (23 September) and London (7 October). Call Laserform on 01925 750020.

Legal web site content service goes live

Conscious Solutions (0117 904 0801), a new company formed by David Gilroy and Andy Osborne, who were both previously with the Sift/LawZone group, has launched a new web site content provision service for law firms.

Called ConsciousLaw, the new service offers the combination of web site design and hosting services plus a content management system to make the task of keeping sites up-to-date as simple as possible for law firms. Additionally a steady supply of news updates and articles, researched and written by experienced legal authors, provides the content that makes a site stand out from the brochureware crowd. What is interesting about the content side is rather than just delivering anonymous slabs of text, it is very easy to customise the material to reflect the views and identities of an individual firm's own lawyers.

The ConsciousLaw service also offers a number of useful extras to enhance web sites, such as a conveyancing costs calculator (more products are under development) and facilities to generate and manage client email newsletters. And, unlike some of the competitor services which use third-party products, such as Macromedia Contribute, to provide inhouse update capabilities, the Conscious Solutions approach is to use their own integrated system that handles all aspects of running the site with simple Microsoft Word-like editing tools.

Pricing starts at around £1100 for the initial set-up and design of the site, with ongoing support and content costing from around £300 a month. (A sole practitioner version of the service is currently under development.) As the latter figure is the equivalent of a couple of hours fee earning time, Gilroy's return on investment argument for using them, rather than trying to handle web content management inhouse, is: could your own firm's lawyers write the amount of legal materials Conscious can offer, liaise with a web design company and get them proofed and loaded up on to a web site in under two hours each month?

Conscious Solutions have also produced a white paper on web site accessibility in the light of the requirements of the 1995 Disabilities Discrimination Act. Copies can be downloaded free of charge from www.conscious.co.uk

Zero tolerance on Day Zero

Anti-virus updates and operating system security patches may be getting better but viruses still enjoy a window of opportunity on 'day zero' between the time they first emerge and the development and availability of suitable fixes. Security consultancy GPM, in association with MessageLabs and Reflex Magnetics, are holding a half-day seminar (9:15am-12:30pm) at Tikit's Holborn offices in London on 30th June looking at 'zero tolerance' strategies for minimising the impact of new virus and security threats. For details contact Jim Davies of GPM on 020 7281 0123 or email jimdavies@gpm.co.uk

LITIGATION SUPPORT NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **CASE CENTRAL AIMS TO BRIDGE E-DISCOVERY GAP**

US litigation support technology specialists CaseCentral have launched two new on-demand online review services - the Online Review & Repository Enterprise Edition and Law Firm Edition 4.0 - designed to help corporate legal departments and law firms manage and review litigation related documents.

CaseCentral also take as their starting point (see front page) the rapid growth of electronic documents, such as emails and instant messaging; the impact this has on compliance with document archival regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley; and the fact the only practical way to review this information is to use electronic search and discovery techniques. The company's CEO Chris Kruse cites the fact that whereas 10 years ago a 'big case' might involve half-a-million documents, today the average is more likely to be five million documents.

Where CaseCentral differentiates itself from the competition is by offering its facilities as an on-demand outsourced service, with the data held centrally (the company currently hosts 35 terabytes of data and this is growing at 4% a month) and accessed via a standard web browser. The system does however use a Windows folder metaphor for organising hierarchies of information, as well as offering extensive security options controlling who has access to what, backed up by audit trails. Not surprisingly, one of the company's other products is a virtual dealroom service called DealCentral.

In addition, the latest version has been designed to address the increasingly common problem of 'pattern litigation' (where lawyers and corporate counsel face repetitive or related cases, typically arising out of product liability claims) so it then becomes possible to take advantage of research and document reviews conducted on prior related cases and avoid reinventing the wheel with each fresh claim.

Incidentally, the service is priced per gigabyte on the volume of data processed rather than the number of pages it equals. CaseCentral, who will be exhibiting at next week's LegalTech West in Los Angeles, say this is a more predictable cost for users whereas page rates can vary depending on the file format used.

www.casecentral.com

■ **E-DISCOVERY WORKSHOP**

ResSoft is holding an e-discovery workshop at its Hatton Garden offices on 18th June (9:00-11:00am) looking at discovery and the impact of electronic media. The workshop will consider the greater use of IT as part of the discovery process to increase accuracy whilst reducing costs and timescales. For details call 020 7421 4140 or email marketing@ressoft.co.uk

■ **DRAFT LIT SUPPORT PRACTICE DIRECTION REVISED**

LiST - the Litigation Support Technology group - has published a revised version of its draft practice direction on the use of technology in civil proceedings. The latest version includes two new appendices. LiST have also extended the consultation period on the document until 1st July. A copy of the revised draft, in Word .doc format, can be found on the Insider web site.

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Law Soc president worried by failure of IT initiatives

In one of the most high profile criticisms of the 1996 Woolf reforms to-date, the English Law Society president Peter Williamson has blamed the government's "failure to invest in a comprehensive IT system" for a "deterioration in the overall efficiency of the civil courts - and as a result the Woolf reforms are being seriously undermined.

"Eight years later," said Williamson, in his regular column in the *Law Society Gazette*, "we remain as far away from Lord Woolf's vision of the future as we were then," adding that "the lack of investment in IT for the civil courts is eroding London's position as a major international centre for dispute resolution."

But, as Williamson also pointed out, as it took nearly 20 years of requests from the judiciary during the inter-war years before the then Lord Chancellor's Department installed electricity in the Royal Courts of Justice, perhaps we can expect the case management systems needed to support Woolf's civil procedure reforms finally appearing somewhere around the year 2016?

However Williamson's comments are not restricted solely to central government as he also criticises the failure of lawyers to embrace technology. Citing recent Law Society research which found that less than 50% of firms have a PC on every fee earner's desktop - apparently the most common excuse was that lawyers 'prefer not to use them' - he expressed concern that too many law firms "simply do not see the relevance of IT".

According to Williamson "this approach needs to change rapidly" not least because "it is only by adopting a positive approach to IT that practitioners will be able to make a legitimate argument for improvements in the modernisation of the court service".

"Information technology," says Williamson, "is transforming many aspects of the way we live and work. We are becoming accustomed to high speed, high-tech customer service and the legal profession is not immune to these demands. The changes taking place represent major opportunities for the profession that will reap rewards for consumers and practitioners. The fact is if we do not move with the times and take advantage of the opportunities that exist, then we are severely limiting our ability to modernise and risk the future well-being of the profession."

Insider web site gets new look

Legal Technology Insider has just completed a major revamp of its web site. Although the main objective was to improve the user interface and navigation, we have also reorganised our downloads and white papers section to create a know-how section on legal IT and related management issues. Documents currently available to download free of charge include: supplier case studies, templates for ITTs and email user policies and lists of questions law firms should be asking suppliers of digital dictation systems. www.legaltechnology.com

Interwoven set to dominate DMS market

In the same way that Thomson Elite currently appears unstoppable at the top end of the practice management systems market, so Interwoven is now starting to put some serious blue water between itself and its arch rival Hummingbird in the UK document management systems sector.

Taking into account the company's latest wins - Shakespeares and Carey Olsen (Cobbetts is also installing WorkSite in Lee Crowder) - Interwoven now has its WorkSite DMS running or due to be installed in 54 of the UK's top 200 law firms, compared with just 42 using Hummingbird. This is in sharp contrast to the autumn of last year when Hummingbird was still in 49 firms and Interwoven only had 41 top 200 sites.

■ This November, the Insider will be publishing its first Top 200 winners and losers survey, comparing the IT systems currently in use in the UK's largest law firms, with those in use 12 months previously.

.NET BPM masterclass

Infographics and Microsoft are holding a free business process management (BPM) masterclass in London on 23rd June looking at the way the Infographics FloSuite system and .NET can create an effective BPM solution via an independent process layer. To register for a place call 0870 166 6671 quoting event code 118746541.

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■ Publisher & Editor: Charles Christian
Tel: 01379 687518 - Fax: 01379 687704
Email: news@legaltechnology.com

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