



Law Society 2005 guide selection starts soon

The English Law Society will be starting the selection process for the spring 2005 edition of its influential *Software Solutions Guide* early next month. The applications period opens on 5th July and closes on Friday 13th August for new applicants and one week later, on 20th August, for suppliers featured in the current guide. The 2005 edition of the guide will follow broadly the same format as the current edition. Suppliers wanting to apply should contact project co-ordinator Sue Cummings on 020 7841 5570 or email sue.cummings@lawsociety.org.uk

Solicitec to drop name

In a surprisingly brave move, the UK case management software market leader is dropping the Solicitec brand name it has used since 1985 and from 1st July will be known as Visualfiles Legal Solutions. The company is also changing the name of its SolCase 8 application to Visualfiles. Neil Ewin, Visualfiles' founder and chairman, said the old Solicitec name was no longer appropriate for the company's growing workflow business in non-legal markets.

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www.legaltechnology.com

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Axxia unveils new .NET product strategy

Axxia Systems has unveiled details of a new product development strategy that puts the Microsoft .NET framework and Webservices at the heart of its software architecture.

Over the last couple of years Axxia has been engaged in a root and branch redevelopment of its software - and the company is keen to stress this is a full redevelopment and not merely 'skinning' or recompiling existing applications to give them a .NET look and feel. Its fee earner desktop product - currently called the PKC personal knowledge centre but the name is being changed - is already deliverable now as a .NET product while development work on the billing and case management systems is now entering its final phase.

Axxia managing director Stuart Holden told the Insider that along with re-establishing Axxia's reputation for being "the best in the market," the underlying principle behind the new strategy was to preserve the value of law firms' existing investments in IT by allowing them to take advantage of the inherent flexibility of the .NET framework. These include: allowing firms to have the database of their choice, and to benefit from reduced management costs, in terms of deploying and upgrading applications, and the simplicity of a browser interface.

"It is all about giving our customers a choice. You can now have your practice management system how you want it rather than how your supplier wants you to have it. It also marks a subtle change in Axxia as we move away from focussing on software systems to focusing upon solutions," says Holden.

Although Axxia has already spent over two years on development work and will not have the full suite available until spring 2005, the company estimates it will still have the best part of a two year head start on almost all the other suppliers in the market, allowing it to achieve the same sort of market leading competitive edge it enjoyed in the mid-1990s when it launched its Arista plus Informix on Unix combination.

DictaNet starts to put its UK distributor network in place

The German digital dictation systems market leader DictaNet - the company has over 14,000 end users in Europe - has begun its march into the English legal market with the appointment of three UK distributors: Phoenix Business Solutions, Technology for Business and The Speech Centre. DictaNet has also become an Interwoven integration partner and is now working on a project to integrate its DDS with the WorkSite document management system.

As part of the launch, The Speech Centre (01892 661116) is running a special promotion offering free user licences on systems ordered before the end of July. www.speechcentre.co.uk

Win a Blackberry PDA - see page 7

NEWS IN BRIEF**■ LOVELLS SELECT LAWPORT**

Lovells has selected the SV Technology LawPort portal and Tikit KnowHow system, as part of a project that will see an intranet, content management and KM infrastructure eventually rolled out to 3200 users in the firm's 26 offices around the world.

■ IoW SAYS GOODBYE TO AVENUE

Eldridges, who have three offices on the Isle of Wight, have rolled out AIM's Evolution practice management system and are now planning to deploy AIM's file management software. The 40 user firm previously ran an old Avenue accounts system.

■ CLYDE & CO OUTSOURCE E-BIBLES

Following a successful pilot in the firm's Guildford branch, Clyde & Co's corporate department in London is to outsource the production of all its electronic transaction bibles to EDM specialists Thinking Virtual. The company's chairman Nigel Shore said more and more firms were now looking at outsourcing non-core business activities, such as email archiving and electronic document management. Thinking Virtual (01428 661255) can produce e-bibles in CD and DVD format, as well as adapt them for use on intranets, extranets and web sites.

www.thinkingvirtual.com

■ DPS BUSINESS LINK-UP

Legal systems and DDS supplier DPS Software (020 8804 1022) is now able to offer existing and prospective customers potential funding through the government-backed Business Link network. Depending upon locality and eligibility, firms can receive grants of up to 60% towards the costs of IT training and implementing legal systems from Business Link offices.

■ THE 99.97 PERCENT SOLUTION

Following a decision in 2002 to outsource its network support and systems integration to Datashare (020 8337 2700), Masons has recorded a 99.97% systems availability figure, with no complete, unscheduled downtime across Masons' international networks during the past 12 months, despite them running 24/7. Datashare's John Eady says the use of SLA-based monitoring "led directly to these performance levels".

Pericom win £3m Avenue sales as OMS launches

Over the last couple of years we have reported a steady stream of stories from IT suppliers who have been winning swap-out business from old Avenue Legal Systems law firm sites but it looks like the record for the highest number of Avenue conversions has to go to Pericom (01908 265533) who have just completed their 51st Avenue swap-out.

With recent Avenue conversions including Birchall Blackburn (90 users), Whiskers (54 users) and Taylor Bracewell (44 users), Pericom estimate the Avenue business has been worth over £3million to-date. However Pericom have also successfully competed for other swap-out business and now claim to have carried out successful conversions of systems from almost all the major legal IT suppliers operating in the UK today.

In addition to its conversion business, Pericom is also the legal market distributor for the FWBS OMS law office automation suite, including the all new .NET based OMS Matter Centre system which is formally launched this week. Several organisations have already ordered or implemented this system, including Watford Borough Council. www.pericom.co.uk

New telecoms option at StatPlus

The legal stationery and office supplies company Stat Plus (020 8646 5500) has become a distributor for the Legal TX alternative telephone service. This can save law firms and barristers chambers up to 77% off standard BT prices. www.legaltx.com

JV aims to create end-to-end document production solution

Interwoven and Workshare last week launched their Legal Document Acceleration Suite (LDAS). This is a collaborative venture that pulls together elements from both companies' software to create an end-to-end integrated wordprocessing meets email meets document management solution for "efficiently generating, controlling and protecting" legal documents, particularly when being sent via email to multiple parties for editing, review and approval.

LDAS, which has already been piloted by Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw, integrates directly with Microsoft Word to ensure that document versions, edits, comments and email communications, remain linked and filed within dedicated matter folders. Interwoven vice president Dan Carmel says one of the new system's ROIs is that it can "dramatically reduce" - by as much as 70% - the time spent on the non-billable, and usually tediously manual, steps involved in producing, managing and circulating complex legal documents. Interwoven is holding breakfast briefings on LDAS in London (7th July) and Amsterdam (8th July). For details email mhaslam@interwoven.com

RJW document assembly move with Chameleon

Russell Jones & Walker has become the first UK law firm to invest in a bespoke will writing system from Documents Plus Limited (DPL). The RJW system is based on DPL's Chameleon generic document creation and assembly software is already used by banks and financial institutions, such as Barclays, both in the UK and in Australia and South Africa, to handle such applications as trust documentation and employment contracts.

Although the RJW wills project is the first bespoke implementation for a law firm, DPL is actually a spin off from a Kent solicitors practice and already has an extensive track record in wills and document assembly software. For example, DPL created Oyez's original DOS-based will creation system. More recently, both the Sweet & Maxwell Express Wills and LexisNexis Wills Creator systems - now in use in over 800 firms in England & Wales - are based on the Chameleon system, as are a number of online will creation services, such as those offered by Friends Provident, Cahoot and www.professionalwills.com

According DPL's business development executive Beverley Freestone, with its strong legal background the Chameleon system is already a viable competitor for any of the other document assembly systems available in the UK legal market however the company believes it will be putting some clear blue water between it and its competitors with the launch of its next generation KBX system later this year. KBX will be based around Microsoft .NET architecture.

As well as building and customising applications, DPL also license the Chameleon software engine so law firms and other organisations can create their own document assembly applications. www.chamnet.com

Law Society update Lexcel

The English Law Society last week launched a new version of its Lexcel quality standard, which is already in use by over 300 law firms and 122 local authorities and in house legal departments. The new standard, which practices will be assessed against from October 2004, now includes assessment on emerging issues such as the new money laundering rules and email management. For a free Lexcel information pack call 020 7320 5756.

Solution 6 sale concluded

The US venture capital group Francisco Partners has now concluded its acquisition of the professional and enterprise business - which includes the CMS, Keystone, CABS and Javelan software product ranges - from its Australian parent company Solution 6 Holdings. Francisco has appointed Michael Simmons as the CEO of the new business, which will be known as Solution 6 Professional & Enterprise.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ MISHCONS SELECT ELITE

London commercial lawyers Mishcon de Reya have chosen Thomson Elite (020 7639 7379) to replace their old AIM accounts and practice management system.

■ HALIFAX COMMITS TO PISCES

The mortgage lender Halifax, which is now part of the HBOS Group, has become the latest organisation to commit to the PISCES XML open data standard for property transactions. A spokesman for Halifax, which joins PISCES (020 7643 9300) as an executive member, said they were looking forward to working with PISCES on the development of a common standard amongst mortgage lenders.

■ HARBOTTLE & LEWIS IN KM MOVE

Media lawyers Harbottle & Lewis have implemented the Solcara (0870 3332966) Client-Partner system to increase the sharing and exchange of knowledge and information between different departments. As IT partner Mark Owen put it "The Solcara system is the one place where we can put everything from technical know-how, to what's going on in the firm and even down to what's on today's lunch menu. It offers a standard procedure and an easy to use mechanism for updates and access through the firm's intranet." The Solcara system will also be integrated with the firm's Interwoven DMS.

■ THORNEYCROFT SPEND £100k ON IT

Macclesfield-based Thorneycroft Solicitors is spending over £100k on an overhaul of its IT infrastructure, which will see the 70 user firm rolling out Eclipse (01274 704100) ProCLAIM case management software in its RTA, personal injury, conveyancing and probate departments. The firm is also buying its new accounts system from Eclipse.

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All change at Wessing as IT head goes it alone

Tim Hyman, currently the head of IT at Harbottle & Lewis, has been appointed the new IT director of the Anglo-German law firm Taylor Wessing. Hyman - known as 'the wizard' and one of the driving forces behind the By Legal, For Legal event - takes over from Adam Westbrooke, who left last month to form his own consultancy and IT services company Firstcourt (07748 657650).

Firstcourt describes its brief as "offering advice on using IT as an integral part of the business" with an emphasis on strategy and best practice rather than technology. The company offers a range of services including its 'Quick Win' programme. This involves a total of three days' consultancy with Firstcourt, for an all-in price of £1950, during which Westbrooke or one of his colleagues will focus on smaller quick win projects that can either be delivered and show results as quickly as possible or else be used to kick start a larger project, such as a workflow or case management implementation project.

www.firstcourt.co.uk

PEOPLE & PLACES

■ NEW SALES EXEC AT NFLOW

Jane Ashley, previously an account manager with TFB, has joined digital dictation supplier Nflow as the company's new southern area sales executive. Other recent Nflow appointments are Simon Thomas and Chris Sadler who have joined the project engineering and programming teams.

■ HOAD QUILTS CC FOR TIKIT

Chris Hoad, previously with Clifford Chance and prior to that general manager of Solution 6/CMS Europe, has joined Tikit as the group's new head of development.

■ NEW HOME FOR KUTANA

WP training and macros specialists Kutana has moved to The Old Mill, Mill Street, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 9AB. The phone number is 0870 220 2275. www.kutana.co.uk

■ HARRIS REJOINS WORDWAVE

Vicky Harris, until 2002 with the company's Asian operations, has rejoined WordWave as business development director.

DIGITAL DICTATION NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SCHILLINGS ENJOY 50% CUT IN TURNAROUND TIME

Niche media law firm Schillings is reporting a 50% improvement in the time it takes to turnaround reports, from dictation to transcription, since replacing analogue tape with a LegalSpeech digital dictation system from G2 Speech UK (020 8989 7330). Schilling's office manager Shelley Vincent said other immediate benefits of the G2 system were no more backlogs of work, support for out of office working, improved prioritisation for urgent work and better management information.

■ THREE NORTH EAST FIRMS ORDER BIGHAND

Three of the larger firms in the North East - Sintons, Blackett Hart & Pratt and Freeman Johnson - have begun implementing BigHand's (020 7793 8200) TotalSpeech digital dictation software at their respective offices in Newcastle, Durham, Darlington, Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor.

■ WARD HADAWAY GO WITH SRC WINSCRIBE

Ward Hadaway, one of the largest law firms in Newcastle, has placed an order with SRC (020 7471 0100) for a WinScribe digital dictation workflow management system. WinScribe is currently being rolled out to 250 staff and will be integrated with the firm's case management system later this year.

■ MORE SUPPLIERS OFFERING THIN CLIENT DDS

The spread of thin client technology within the DDS sector continues. Nflow Software has been appointed a charter member of the Citrix access partner programme and will now be able to offer their Dictaflow DDS software over a Citrix MetaFrame network. And, G2 Speech is now offering thin client available on Citrix MetaFrame and Microsoft Windows Terminal Server platforms for both the company's digital dictation and speech recognition systems.

■ WINSCRIBE OFFICE: MAKE THAT 10 USERS NOT 30

WinScribe Europe's PR agency have asked us to point out that when they said their new WinScribe Office system (see previous Insider for first report) was suitable for smaller firms with '30 transcriptionists' they actually meant just 10 transcriptionists in a firm with, typically, a total complement of 30 or less staff including fee earners. We apologise for their mistake.

■ NFLOW RELEASE NEW VERSION 4

Nflow Software (01245 463377) has released Version 4 of its Dictaflow digital dictation software. Features introduced since Version 3.2 include: an Outlook-style interface that reduces user training times, plus improved workflow functionality, such as a 'client centric prioritisation' system and what Nflow describe as 'presence awareness' functionality. This is designed to replicate more closely the fee earner/secretary relationship found within law firms including the reliance on the hard copy file in conventional analogue tape transcription. Nflow's Rob Lancashire says the new release has already been beta tested with nearly 1000 users in law firms.

LATEST PRODUCT LAUNCHES

■ AFTERMAIL LOOKS AFTER YOUR EMAIL

Chapman Tripp Sheffield Young in New Zealand has become the first law firm to implement a new email management system that provides a way of both archiving messages for longer term storage and simultaneously automatically reducing the Microsoft Exchange message store size.

The system is called AfterMail and Chapman Tripp say that since installing it, they not only have a better records management system, for compliance and KM purposes, but also have been able to reduce their email lifecycle, going from 180 to 60 days before messages are automatically deleted from the Exchange server and archived. This has also had a knock on benefit in terms of reducing the resource needed to backup Microsoft Exchange. AfterMail has also been purchased by organisations in the US and Europe and the company hopes to publish a case study on the use of the system by a UK financial services company later this summer. www.aftermail.com

■ STAYING CONNECTED TO YOUR EMAIL ARCHIVE

Staying with email archiving, the US-based Connected Corporation last week launched ArchiveStore/EM 3.0, a new system designed to automatically archive and recover email records. With its US background, the system focuses very heavily on compliance issues, such as Sarbanes-Oxley, and offers not only extensive audit trails, relating to message retentions and deletions, but also compresses, encrypts and digitally signs all emails and attachments entering the archive to create a 'tamper evident' data store.

Because all emails are automatically reviewed against customisable rules based retention policies, Connected estimate ArchiveStore can reduce the volumes of data held on Microsoft Exchange servers by between 60% to 90%. ArchiveStore is a new and substantially enhanced version of the MailStore 2.1 system developed by Archive-it, a company Connected acquired last year. Connected has European offices located in France, Germany and the UK (01628 509055). www.connected.com

■ OUTSOURCING TO THE SUB-CONTINENT

Manthan Services, based in Bangalore - now described as India's Silicon Valley - already provide outsourcing services for three European law firms, including one UK practice that now outsources its conveyancing and remortgage processing, as well as its dictation transcription and document digitisation work.

Manthan's fee earners can also handle employment law and personal injury work, plus a full range of law office accounts, administration and support services at rates running from 30% to 70% lower than in the UK. This can be explained by the fact there are 6.6 million lawyers and law graduates in India with salaries averaging between £4000 and £8000 pa. Although more and more Indian companies are pitching for legal outsourcing work, we have been particularly impressed by Manthan's (the name means churning nectar) professional approach. For details contact Ms Ruchira Raghav (07930 439672) in the UK or Phil Prashant in Banagalore at phil.prashant@manthanservices.com

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

■ MORE MID-SIZERS GO WITH ELITE

Thomson Elite Asia Pacific is reporting increasing demand among mid-sized law firms (defined as those with less than 100 fee earners) for the Elite practice management system. The most recent signing is 75-lawyer Hunt & Hunt in Brisbane, which will also implement the Elite Apex CRM software.

Staying in Brisbane, 150-lawyer McCullough Robertson, the largest law firm in the State of Queensland, has also ordered Elite and there are reports that another top 20 Australian firm will shortly announce its decision to purchase Elite. This, incidentally, will bring to five the total number of orders won by Thomson Elite in Australia since the start of this year. The first of these, top 20 firm Ebsworth & Ebsworth, is due to go live later this year. Implementation is being handled by Elite staff in conjunction with the IT consultancy Harriss Wagner.

www.harrisswagner.com.au

■ USING HUMMINGBIRD FOR KM

Thommessen, which with 145 lawyers is one of the largest firms in Norway, has used its Hummingbird DM document management system to provide the foundation for its new knowledge management system. The firm says that after evaluating several KM products, it decided the simplest solution, taking in consideration its existing IT platform, was one based on Hummingbird. This also proved a "much lower cost" option than originally anticipated as the firm already had user licences for Hummingbird, including the WebTop web client software which simplified integration with the firm's intranet. On the advice of the Swedish law firm Vinge, Thommessen used the Swedish IT supplier Intelligo (08 514 939 80) to handle the taxonomy and specialist KM sides of the project, with the whole system developed in just five months. www.intelligo.se

■ SINGAPORE FIRM SELECTS ELITE

Drew & Napier in Singapore has become the latest firm in South East Asia to implement a practice management system from Thomson Elite. Other Elite users in the region include Deacons in Hong Kong, AccraLaw in the Philippines, Zaid Ibrahim in Malaysia and both Allen & Gledhill and the Kelvin Chia Partnership in Singapore.

NEWS IN BRIEF**■ TUMBLEWEED CONNECTION**

Manches has selected Tumbleweed Communications (0118 934 7100) email firewall to help manage spam, deal with viruses and provide messaging security, including encryption. The Tumbleweed solution being used by Manches also includes a dynamic anti-spam subscription service that automatically updates the email firewall in the same way that anti-virus services work. www.tumbleweed.com

■ WORKSHARE 3 IN AT BLP

Berwin Leighton Paisner is the latest firm to deploy the Workshare 3 document productivity suite on a practice-wide basis. BLP will be using Workshare in conjunction with their Interwoven DMS to tackle a number of issues including the problem of document 'corruption' when several people are working on large Microsoft Word files.

■ ULTIMATE MOBILITY SEMINAR

Ultima Business Solutions is holding a seminar (starts 9:00am, ends with buffet lunch) on 21st July at the Audi Forum in London (Green Park Tube) on using technology to provide remote/mobile access to office systems and information. Speakers will include representatives from Citrix, Nokia, HP and T-Mobile. For details call Helen Freestone on 0118 902 7208 or email emma.baber@ultimabusiness.com

■ ANOTHER TIKIT ALLIANCE

Tikit's latest strategic partnership is with Mobotel, the exclusive distributors on Onset Technology's METAmesssage product. This provides integration between the Blackberry wireless handheld and widely used law firm applications, including Carpe Diem, InterAction and document management systems. www.tikit.com

■ TEKSYS SAN FOR FRESHFIELDS

Teksys (01256 825757) has been awarded a contract to provide Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer with a centralised storage area network (SAN) solution to help improve the management of the increasing volumes of data held within the firm and going through its 270 servers. The Teksys solution consists of three HP StorageWorks EVA5000s and 10 terabytes of hard disk space.

Wireless hot spot initiatives come online

The last week has seen the launch of two new legal community initiatives in the field of wireless and WiFi communications.

■ HOT SPOTS FOR VISITING CLIENTS

Within the next few weeks wireless technology specialists visitorXS hope to announce details of the first UK law firm to go live with their new WLAN management system. The system, based on a product developed by PatronSoft in the US, provides WiFi hot spot access and associated WLAN security and network management facilities so that, for example, clients or third parties visiting a law firm's offices can have the convenience of access to the internet via a WiFi link without any risk to the integrity of the firm's own network or internet connections.

The company suggest firms could provide WiFi access either free of charge or on a billable basis. In addition, the system can also be used inhouse by a firm's own staff, as an alternative to some of the less-than-secure wireless links some practices run. visitorXS Limited (01279 634600) was set up by Stephen Jardine (07711 330830), who until late 2002 was the head of IT at Winckworth Sherwood. www.visitorxs.com

■ HOT SPOTS IN COURT

The Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand plus six other courts centres around the country (Southwark, Birmingham and Swansea Crown courts plus the combined courts in Winchester, Liverpool and Leeds) are to take part in a three year pilot project to test the viability of providing WiFi hot spots to users of those courts. The pilot, which will use BT's Openzone WiFi service, is intended to provide all court users - including lawyers using wireless enabled laptops in court - with access to the internet at broadband speeds but without first having to find a phone point and connection.

Commenting on the launch of the pilot, Lord Justice Thomas, the senior presiding judge for England & Wales, said the new service would not only allow lawyers to access files and work online while waiting for their cases to be called but also to deal with issues arising and carry out research during the course of a hearing. Users will be charged for accessing the WiFi links.

LATEST INSIDER WEB SITE POSTINGS www.legaltechnology.com

The latest postings to the Insider web site include:

■ A buyers guide to the 12 digital dictation systems available in the UK, including a market overview, full distributor contact details and a features comparison chart.

■ More legal IT jobs than ever before, including vacancies for a head of IT at a Manchester law firm and for an IT manager at White & Case's Moscow office.

Competition - win a BlackBerry

The Insider has teamed up with Isis Telecommunications, the UK's largest independent mobile service provider to businesses, to give away a BlackBerry 7230 remote email device, along with a one year email contract. The prize is worth over £300. As the ability to work on the move has become increasingly important in the legal sector, the Insider would like to find out your views on this issue. To enter the prize draw to win a BlackBerry, all you need do is answer the following questions.

Either fill out the survey below and post your responses to:

Isis Telecommunications/Legal Technology BlackBerry Competition, PO Box 31968, London W2 4SA or log on and compete online at www.isistelem.com/company/legal_technology_survey.asp

The competition is only open to competitors in the UK and closes on 8th July 2004. The first entry to be pulled out of the hat will win the prize.

Your name:

Your organisation:

Your email address:

Your phone number:

Please tick this box if you do not wish to receive news and special offers from Isis Telecommunications

1. How many hours do you spend out of the office in an average day?

- None Less than 1 hour 1-2 hours
 2-4 hours More than 4 hours

2. Does your practice provide you or your colleagues with a PDA or BlackBerry device?

- Yes, I am provided with a PDA/BlackBerry
 Yes, colleagues are provided with a PDA/BlackBerry
 No

3. If no, would you or your colleagues benefit from such a solution?

- Yes No

4. Do you make most of your client contact via:

- Mobile phone? Landline phone?
 Email? Face-to-face meetings?

5. Which of the following would improve your client communications? (tick all that apply)

- Providing a speedier response to their emails
 Being able to review documents etc while out of the office
 Being able to make diary appointments while out of the office

6. Which of the following devices/tools do you take to meetings? (tick all that apply)

- Mobile phone Laptop BlackBerry
 PDA Diary

7. In an average day, how much time do you spend managing your inbox when you return to the office in the morning/after meetings?

- Less than 10 minutes 10-to-20 minutes
 20-to-30 minutes More than half an hour

8. If you could save one hour in your working day, what would you do with it?

- An extra hour's work An hour's less work!
 Other (please specify)

Even if you are not the winner, solicitors and inhouse legal counsel can now start using the enterprise version of the BlackBerry email solution within 72 hours and totally free of charge for the first month. To find out more or to register for a 72 hour installation and free one month trial, contact Isis Telecommunications on 0845 277 1000 or email mobiledata@isistelem.com

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The Tesco lawyer finally arrives with the shopping

Since the heady days of the Dotcom boom - and more recently in an Insider April's Fools Day story - there has been speculation that one day the supermarkets would add legal services to the range of products their customers could take home in their shopping trolleys. This week it has finally happened, with Tesco launching a Legal Store to complement the offerings already available via its www.tesco.com online shopping portal.

The Legal Store's portfolio currently includes a range of legal guide books, check lists, collections of electronic legal forms on CD-Rom and DIY products, such as wills packs (including the option of secure deeds storage) and tenancy agreements that should appeal to Tesco shoppers for either private or small business usage. The majority of the products have been developed by LawPack, who are the UK market leaders in DIY legal publishing, and the prices are substantially lower than those charged for comparable services by High Street law firms.

Despite the competition it represents to solicitors, the English Law Society has welcomed the Tesco initiative. In the words of chief executive Janet Paraskeva "Tesco's legal store will help to demystify the law for many people and encourage them to seek legal advice and help. It is better they go to a reputable source of legal information than cowboy providers who style themselves as legal advisers but are unqualified and unregulated."

The Tesco site also has a Find a Lawyer service that provides links through to the directories of solicitors published online by the law societies for England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. And 'yes' all purchases from the Legal Store do qualify for triple points on the Tesco store card.

Dumb and dumber

We all know some sales reps cannot resist the temptation to slag off their competitors but usually they manage to do this in a subtle fashion. So, congratulations to the salesman from a well known UK practice management systems vendor (a member of the Legal Software Suppliers Association) who recently broke with tradition by making a series of defamatory allegations about a competitor (also an LSSA member) and then mailed them out on company letterheads to the competitor's user sites.

The contents - or grammar - of the letter, which began "Please forgive this intrusion if my letter if it is inaccurate but I have heard a rumor in the industry that [supplier name deleted] have, or may be about to, withdraw from the Legal Market..." so clearly underwhelmed was one of the recipient law firms that they not only alerted the supplier but also offered to act for them in any subsequent libel action.

In the event some abject grovelling saved the day, so we will not name and shame the offending vendor, except to note that as a member of LSSA surely they are bound by a code of conduct that is meant to prevent precisely this kind of behaviour?

LSSA confirms cancellation of Lexpo

The Legal Software Suppliers Association has confirmed the cancellation of its Lexpo 2004 exhibition and conference, which was to have taken place in London on 15th and 16th September. In a note, sent out to companies who had booked stands, LSSA admitted that "we basically underestimated the time needed to pull it together properly". Despite some suppliers now talking about quitting the organisation in the wake of the debacle, LSSA hopes to relaunch Lexpo next year.

In related legal IT events news...

- The organisers of this year's By Legal, For Legal event, which takes place near Bath, on 15th-to-17th September, report they are now fully booked up, with no more spaces left for exhibitors, nor any further sponsorship opportunities available.

- American Lawyer Media report that their recent LegalTech West event in Los Angeles was a success with 127 exhibitors (up by 22 on last year) and attended by 2700 delegates, a 27% increase on their 2003 figures.

- Cordial Events, organisers of the market leading Legal IT Exhibition in London, have decided to move their peripatetic regional show onto a biennial basis. This means their Manchester exhibition, originally planned for this October, has now been cancelled and provisionally rescheduled for autumn 2005.

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