



Law Society launches seventh issue of guide

The English Law Society has just published the 7th edition of its *Software Solutions Guide*, a publication which has become increasingly influential in system selection procedures for High Street firms. As in previous years, the guide only focuses on accounts and practice management systems.

Although participation in the guide remains entirely voluntary, every listed supplier had to go through a selection panel, financial vetting and an extensive market research survey of their existing users.

Those making the grade included 13 from last year's guide (AIM, Axxia, Eclipse, Edgebyte, JCS, Laserform, Mountain, MSS, Opsi, Pericom, Quill, SOS and TFB), plus the return of Gavel & Gown, who opted out last year) and two new entries: Civica and Linetime. The one surprise was DPS Software, who have been in the guide for several years but this year withdrew from the process, saying they felt the format and target market of the guide no longer matched their business profile.

Copies of the guide are sent free of charge to every solicitors practice in England & Wales. It can also be downloaded free of charge from www.it.lawsociety.org.uk

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Tikit buys ResSoft for £2 million

The AIM-listed Tikit Group has made its second acquisition of the winter (in December it bought the NIS systems integration business from MYOB for £1 million) with the purchase of legal systems house ResSoft for £2 million in cash and shares.

In the year ended 31 July 2004, ResSoft had revenues of £2.88 million and pre-tax profits of £220,525. The deal sees ResSoft founder Ken Symons retire however the company's managing director Neil Renfrew now joins Tikit's board as professional services director. ResSoft will also move out of its Hatton Garden offices but Tikit is retaining the Aldershot support and development facility.

ResSoft began life in 1984 as Exol Computer Services before being acquired in 1993 by the Resolution Group and its name changed to Resolution Software Systems, later shortened to ResSoft. In the 1990's it concentrated on the development of time and billing systems for the legal profession, winning a number of magic circle sites with its FirmControl and Firmware systems.

In 2000, ResSoft began establishing strategic alliances with a number of third-party software suppliers including Interwoven, Autonomy, Metastorm and Interface Software. During this period ResSoft also earned a strong reputation in the area of BPM and workflow management, winning significant clients not only in the legal sector but also in property management and consulting engineering. Current users of ResSoft systems include Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Slaughter & May, Lawrence Graham, Mills & Reeve, Browne Jacobson, Kennedys and, in continental Europe, Nauta Dutilh and Hengeler Mueller.

Rave reviews for Legal IT show

This year's Legal IT 2005 exhibition, which took place a fortnight ago at the Islington Business Design Centre in London, has generated some of the most positive feedback we have heard about any legal technology event in recent times.

Alby Smith of Laserform HR Systems said it was the busiest exhibition he attended "for many years". John Bendall of DDS vendor Crescendo said they had a steady flow of visitors that generated "very positive leads" including a number who placed verbal orders on the day. Jasmine Gonano of Aderant said the exhibition "turned out to be a great show for us with quite a buzz around the stand." And Stuart Holden of Axxia said he "felt that, more so than in previous years, people definitely came with an agenda rather than just for the day out."

Next year's London exhibition is scheduled for 8th & 9th February 2006 and will see closer liaison between the organisers Cordial and long time sponsors LSSA (Legal Software Suppliers Association) including the introduction of a new 'LSSA village' and an expanded conference and keynote seminar programme. The regional version of the exhibition – Legal IT 2005 Manchester – will take place at the New Century Hall on 18th & 19th May.

NEWS IN BRIEF

► **LIVERPOOL'S MSB SELECT VIDESS**
MSB Solicitors in Liverpool has spent £34k with Videss (01274 851577) installing a new practice management system. The firm has also installed Windows XP throughout the practice and opted for the Videss computer facilities management (CFM) service which effectively outsources all user and technical support, including the firm's IT helpdesk.

► **FIRST LBC WIN FOR IKEN**
Iken Business (0845 4509201) has won its first order from a London borough council to implement an Iken system – the London Borough of Hackney's legal department has just purchased Iken case management, workflow and time recording software for 50 users. Other recent Iken wins include Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Both authorities will be using Iken for legal casework however Staffs will also be using it for Freedom of Information requests processing. www.iken.biz

► **HUMBER ASHFORD TOLLERS WIN**
The IT solutions and training consultancy Humber Ashford Associates (08700 645060) has been appointed by Tollers to assist with delivering IT training to staff at the firm's four offices in Northampton, Kettering, Corby and Milton Keynes. Humber Ashford will be assisting with training on the latest version of Tollers own document management application Dot Legal, which has recently been upgraded to handle digital dictation and email integration, and will subsequently help with an upgrade to the firm's Norwel practice management system.

► **MORE SUPPLIERS TAKES GOLD**
Mountain Software and Aderant are two of the latest legal IT suppliers to attain the status of Microsoft gold certified partners.

► **NO COBWEBS HERE**
Well it might not be as controversial as Cruz Beckham but Cobbetts still deserve special mention for naming their new extranet facility CobbWeb. The extranet, which provides online matter progress reporting services to clients, is based on Norwel's (0161 945 3511) case management and web enablement software.

Pracctice planning pay as you go software ?

One of the more interesting stories to emerge from the recent Legal IT exhibition in London was that Pracctice – which already supplies its Osprey TM practice management system on a hosted basis – was planning to introduce a pay-as-you-go service later this spring.

During one of the keynote conference sessions, the company's sales director Martin Siddle said instead of paying an upfront capital cost, firms would be able to subscribe to the service and only pay for the time they were actually online using the software. As Siddle pointed out, lawyers were already familiar with this approach when paying for services such as electricity, LexisNexis and mobile phones "so why should legal software be any different."

Pracctice will be launching pay-as-you go for their Osprey TM software later this spring and, interestingly, are currently investigating ways of delivering a similar service for standard office applications, such as Microsoft Word.

DataCert announces European market initiative

DataCert Inc, one of the leading providers of electronic invoicing and legal spend management systems, is to target the European market directly and will be opening an office in London this April. DataCert's Jeff Hodge has been appointed as director EMEA business development and is relocating to the UK.

Hodge said "there is a growing realisation that corporate legal departments in London need more transparency and control around their legal expenditures. Surveys indicate there is a strong recognition of the pain but there is no strong sense about how to address it. DataCert is uniquely positioned to address these issues." DataCert's new London office number will be 020 7849 3033. www.datacert.com

New standard agreed for EDI

Still on the subject of electronic invoicing (*see previous story*), earlier this month the UK's Legal IT Innovators Group (LITIG) and the LEDES Oversight Committee (LOC) announced the introduction of an international LEDES format. With electronic invoicing technology expanding in Europe, LOC has adopted a revision of a standard based on LEDES 98B, which was previously released and tested by LITIG.

LOC chairman Aaron Van Nice said that "in order to accommodate the growing number of non-US firms being asked to submit electronic invoices, changes had to be made to the current standard. We feel these changes will allow corporations and law firms around the world to enjoy the benefits of a paperless invoicing process." www.ledes.org + www.litig.org

Workshare launch upgrades plus freeware

Workshare has announced details of three new products, namely major upgrades to its Workshare Professional and Protect systems and the launch of a new free metadata utility.

Workshare Professional 4 features nearly 100 enhancements, including policy based, centralised security administration, a new 'dynamic document states' facility that makes it easier for users to know if they are working on a Word master, review copy or modified review copy of a document, and email synchronisation to ensure users are always working on the correct versions of attached documents. The latest release of Protect builds upon Protect 3's ability to lock down MS Office documents at various stages of their production and exchange lifecycles but with many operations now up to 60% faster.

Workshare has also launched Trace! 1.0. This is a new free metaware utility that alerts users of Microsoft Office applications to the risk of any potentially dangerous 'hidden' information – such as macros, previous author details, white text, track changes and similar metadata – that may be contained within a document.

WP4 for Outlook, with optional Interwoven or Hummingbird integration, is available immediately. Versions for Notes and Groupwise will be launched in March. Protect 4 for Outlook is available now, with Notes and Groupwise versions following in March. Workshare 3 and Protect 3 customers on current support contracts will receive their upgrades free of charge. Trace! 1.0 will be available as a free download from a number of sites, including www.workshare.com from next Monday (28 February).

Fraud Squad dawn raid at Sweet & Maxwell

Following reports that the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) conducted 'dawn raids' on the London offices of legal publishers Sweet & Maxwell and on the homes of some of the company's senior management in connection with a suspected accounting fraud, Sweet & Maxwell issued the following statement:

"The Serious Fraud Office and the City of London Police are investigating an allegation in relation to Sweet & Maxwell. Sweet & Maxwell is co-operating fully to help facilitate this investigation. Details of the allegation have not been made known to Sweet & Maxwell but the company believes it concerns certain subscription-related customer refunds. This is an issue the company had been addressing and at this stage it would be inappropriate to comment further."

The SFO confirmed "there were a number of searches carried out in London and the South-East on Thursday 20th January. The searches were carried out on business premises and some domestic residences." However the SFO has not released any details on the identity of the individuals involved nor the nature of the investigation.

NEWS IN BRIEF

► BARNET LBC SELECTS NORWEL

The legal department of the London Borough of Barnet has awarded Norwel Computer Services a contract to supply it with new fee earner desktop, case management and practice management software. Norwel, which won the contract in a competitive tender against two other suppliers, will also be transferring data from the department's old Datix software. The system, which will also be used by the department to assist with Lexcel compliance, provides full integration with Microsoft Office, Outlook and electronic legal forms packages.

► MONEY LAUNDERING FOR THE BAR

Essex Court Chambers has become the first set of barristers chambers to roll out the new money laundering reminder cycle facility developed by Formation Software (0116 225 2000) for users of its InQuisita Law system. The anti-money laundering facility, now available as a standard part of InQuisita Law, automatically generates all letters and record keeping including, if necessary, blocking any activity on a brief until the regulations have been complied with.

► LEWIS SILKIN GO RECOMMIND

Lewis Silkin has confirmed that it has become the first UK firm to select the Recommend MindServer Legal system to support its knowledge management operations. www.recommind.com

INSIDER JOB OF THE WEEK www.legaltechnology.com

Electronic Disclosure Consultant

Lee & Allen Forensic Computing, London

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PEOPLE & PLACES

► BLASDALE MOVES TO Q2

Richard Blasdale, the well-known systems consultant – over the past 15 years he has held posts with Robson Rhodes, Grant Thornton and Baker Robbins – has joined Solihull-based Q2, a vendor independent provider of project and change management services to the local authority and legal sectors. Blasdale can be contacted on 0121 506 9255. www.q2.ltd.uk

► NEW TRADE MARK WEB SITE

Trademark attorneys HallMark IP has launched a new web site to meet the changing requirements of its clients and market. This follows a major rebranding exercise when the organisation, which was founded in 1886, changed its name from the Trade Mark Owners Association to HallMark IP. HallMark clients include Bass, Blue Circle, Heinz and Nestle. The new site was developed and will be maintained by the branding and design agency Nucleus. www.hallmark-ip.com + www.nucleus.co.uk

► TEKSYS MICROSOFT CREDITATION

Teksys has been awarded 'gold' level accreditation by Microsoft in three areas of technology of relevance to law firms: security, advanced infrastructure (Windows 2003 & Exchange) and information worker (SharePoint & Office). Teksys will be holding an executive briefing for firms in conjunction with Microsoft in the near future, for more details call Paul Hoffbrand on 01923 247707 or email phoffbrand@teksys.co.uk

► BAILEY AND TESWAINE MERGE

Communications specialists Bailey Telecom and Teswaine Business Communications have merged to become Bailey Teswaine (0800 028 2229), with Teswaine's managing director Peter Patsalides heading the new company. www.baileyteswaine.co.uk

► COBBETTS SITE FOR GRADUATES

Cobbetts has launched a new section (or microsite) on its web site to attract graduates to join the firm. The microsite, which was developed by Freestyle New Media Group (01962 652832) has a distinct 'student brand' and uses Flash technology to drive the online application process. www.fsnm.co.uk + www.cobbetts.co.uk/graduate

Open standards the next big issue in DDS ?

As the UK's digital dictation systems market becomes increasingly competitive and more law firms start contemplating outsourcing transcription work, standards are now emerging as one of the potential differentiators between different suppliers.

Nflow is currently making the most waves here, suggesting that law firms must ensure any DDS system they buy is based on non-proprietary, Microsoft Windows file formats (such as .WAV) for dictation recording, otherwise they risk being restricted in their choice of potential outsourcing partners. Nflow's approach has clearly struck the right chord as a number of outsourcing bureaux, including Voicepath, Exigent, Global Secretarial and Scottish-based LawScript, have all endorsed Nflow's position.

However DDS market leaders BigHand say the debate is misleading for while .WAV may be open, it is also insecure, uses large files that create bandwidth issues for law firm networks and is inherently inflexible when it comes to making edits and insertions in dictations. For this reason BigHand have developed their own BHF format but it remains open as users can export the contents at any time as .WAV files, to be played on third party transcription systems or even Windows Media Player.

► While the prospect of outsourcing transcription work to the Third World remains a politically incorrect hot potato for most firms (the exception being firms outsourcing work to their own staff in their own branch offices in the Third World) there is interest in moving work from London to either offices elsewhere in the UK or UK-based transcription services, such as Voicepath. For example, a new study by the Angela Mortimer recruitment agency, found that whereas a typical associate level secretary could earn £28k pa in London, in Birmingham a secretary in a similar role would earn only £16k per year.

DIGITAL DICTATION NEWS IN BRIEF

► BEDELL CRISTIN REPLACES TAPE WITH WINSCRIBE

Bedell Cristin, one of the largest firms in the Channel Islands, has rolled out a WinScribe digital dictation system to replace its old analogue tape system. The system was originally sold direct by WinScribe Europe but is now maintained by XKO (01481 737000) in Jersey.

► XOVOX & LEGAL DOCS LAUNCH SPEECH + DMS

XoVox Communications and LegalDocs UK have released a combined speech recognition and document management system. This provides a complete workflow covering the entire process of placing text on a page from the authors' original spoken word, including correction by secretaries after speech files have gone through the recognition system, through to the production and filing of the final documents, with minimum human intervention. XoVox sales director Chris Ford says initial trials indicate increased efficiency and dramatic improvements in document turnaround times. www.legaldocs.uk.com

LEGAL IT EXHIBITION LAUNCHES

► NEW CRM-ORIENTED MATTER MANAGEMENT

Tricostar Solutions (01992 442800) used this month's Legal IT exhibition in London as the venue to launch its new Tricostar Legal matter management system. This is a browser-based application, built around the Sage CRM Mid Market Edition (MME) system, that combines time and activity recording with document, contact and workflow management functionality. It offers full integration with Microsoft Word and can also be integrated with or operated from within Outlook to provide what in effect will be a matter centric overview of a fee earner or department's caseload.

Tricostar – the company was previously known as Total Computer Systems – was formed in the late 1980s and is headed by Jeff Lawler, a former managing director of AIM. Its original Timebase time recording product is widely used by local authority legal departments and the new system has already been ordered by Epping Forest District Council. Lawler said the new system had been designed to build on the company's experience in this market to keep both office and field-based staff in touch and in control of their caseloads. www.tricostar.com

► SOLUTION CANVAS PREVIEW NEW WORKFLOW

Solution Canvas Software (0845 890 3192) used Legal IT as an opportunity to preview their new Justia 'True Workflow' management system. This is scheduled for an autumn 2005 launch and the company is currently getting feedback from law firms on the functionality and the design of the system.

Justia has been designed on a Microsoft .NET/SQL platform and uses an XML-based workflow engine that will support both a series of workflow templates as well as user-designed case and risk management applications. Shelley Brackenridge, of Solution Canvas, says the element of Justia that differentiates it from other workflow systems is its use of software components called 'actors,' that can integrate data from third-party and legacy systems, and its integral Workflow Designer utility, which allows users to create workflows diagrammatically without the need for products such as Microsoft Visio. www.justia.co.uk

► OFFERING A TOTAL CONVEYANCING SOLUTION

Total Conveyancing Solutions (0845 230 1695) is a new company set up by practising solicitor Paul Berg to provide other law firms with a range of services and facilities offering a more modern approach to conveyancing, including the provision of online quotations, extranet access to documents, more polished client reports, e-conveyancing, risk management controls and home information packs.

Berg says that along with all the usual benefits associated with e-conveyancing – including saving between one and two hours on each matter – the Total approach effectively outsources many of the tasks that are outside the normal skill sets of solicitors. Although the Total solution can be integrated with existing case and file management systems, it will also operate on a stand alone basis, providing a firm has a scanner and broadband internet access. www.totalconvey.co.uk

► VIDESS UNVEILS VERSION 10

Videss unveiled the successor to its Legal Office case and practice management system. Called Videss v10 LPM (Legal Process Management), this is a new Microsoft .NET suite that along with all the usual accounts, workflow, document production and diary management facilities of the old Legal Office system, can now also handle all incoming and outgoing communications, including email management, telephone integration and the ability to scan incoming post and add it to the matter file. Videss v10 also offers full integration with digital dictation including automatic filing and time posting.

On the technology front, v10 is based on Progress OpenEdge architecture and developed in Progress Dynamics and Microsoft .NET. The system will support a Progress or Microsoft SQL Server database and run on both Windows and Linux.

www.videss.co.uk

► AIM CONTINUES ITS EVOLUTION

AIM Professional used Legal IT to explain its plans to migrate the Evolution case and practice management to a .NET platform and what additional practical benefits Evolution .NET would deliver to users. Coinciding with this, AIM launched its new DocuMail facility. This lets users work with Evolution from within existing Microsoft Office applications, including Word and Outlook.

In addition, the company was demonstrating its recently revised TeamFlo 2 case and workflow management system, which AIM is pitching as serious competition to the likes of Visualfiles and Metastorm. We also think the company's SharpOWL project and resource planning, management and budgeting system is their best kept secret – it is already being used by the inhouse legal team at Siemens - and has potential in the larger law firms market. www.aimlegal.com

► MORE .NET FROM LINETIME

Legal IT also saw the launch of two new .NET products from Linetime. Called CallRouter.NET and ImageRouter.NET, they are part of the company's Liberate suite and allow incoming phone calls and incoming documents (the hard copy documents are scanned first) to be automatically routed to the appropriate fee earners and matter files.

www.linetime.co.uk

More Legal IT exhibition news on page 7...

Dan Carmel leaving Interwoven for CEO job

Dan Carmel, Interwoven's vice president of legal solutions, is leaving the DMS company to take up the post of CEO with a small software company in the San Francisco area. The company has promoted two existing senior managers – Chris Junker, who becomes general manager & VP of legal sales, and Neil Araujo, now VP of legal marketing & product management – to head up Interwoven's activities in the legal sector.

In a related development, Interwoven has announced the launch of OffSite, a new module for the WorkSite 8 DMS that will allow lawyers to access and modify emails and documents while working offline, such as when out of the office. OffSite will be available in the UK from Q2 this year.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

► **SV TECH TO MERGE WITH XMLAW**
SV Technology, the developer of the LawPort portal and KM suite, is to merge with xmLaw Inc, a developer of Microsoft SharePoint-based portal and integration products. The merged company currently has a total of 35 law firm sites in the US, UK, Canada and Australia. Martin Metz, the CEO of SV, will head up the new company.

► **MAURICE MAY FIRST TO UPGRADE**
Maurice May & Co, which has offices in Sydney and Wollongong, has become the first law firm – and organisation – in Australia to upgrade to the new WinScribe 3.5.3 digital dictation system. And, Minter Ellison SA/NT has implemented the WinScribe DDS in its Adelaide and Darwin offices. The move will allow staff in the two states to share resources for dictation transcription. www.winscribe.com.au

► **PTNSW BUY WILLS SYSTEM**
The Public Trustee New South Wales agency has purchased a customised version of the Chameleon will writing system from UK software house Documents Plus (01732 867792) to streamline the preparation of wills and powers of attorney. Documents Plus is best known for the Express Wills and Wills Creator products which are distributed in the UK by Sweet & Maxwell and LexisNexis.

Tikit & Conscious in content management deal

Tikit has announced a strategic partnership with Conscious Solutions that will see the two companies integrate elements of Tikit's ReAction Server and Taxonomy Toolkit products with the Conscious technology and content service, to offer firms the benefits of a content management driven web site with 'out of the box' integration with other internal systems.

Commenting on the deal, Tikit's business development director Liam Flanagan said "We already have an established suite of enhancements to InterAction, particularly with ReAction Server and Classification Manager, but realised there was greater value we could add to law firms' internet and e-marketing strategies. When Conscious first approached us we were impressed by their understanding of the issues faced by firms wanting to maximise the bottom-line impact of their internet strategy, and Conscious' background in developing web services for professional service firms."

Flanagan added that the link-up between Conscious and the Tikit Taxonomy Toolkit would allow firms to not only categorise all its internal content via a single taxonomy but to ensure its public facing web content is categorised the same way."

www.conscious.co.uk

Lit support industry gears up for electronic data discovery

The UK litigation support services industry is gearing up for what it believes will be an inevitable boom in demand for electronic data discovery (EDD) services, as more and more litigation starts to pivot on evidence, such as emails and file attachments, that only exist in a digital format.

The US-based LIT Group, which is now making a major push into the UK legal market, has just announced details of its new Virtual DNA e-discovery system. Mark Burrows, the managing consultant in LIT's London office, describes Virtual DNA as a 'next generation' EDD system in that it applies pattern recognition technologies and advanced search facilities, such as Attenex and Autonomy, so as not only to speed up the processing and review of electronic documents but also improve the accuracy and precision of the review. The formal launch of Virtual DNA is scheduled for mid-March this year.

Kroll Ontrack Legal Technologies (020 7549 9600) has also announced the availability of its Electronic DataViewer system in the UK. This e-discovery system, which has been used by Kroll Ontrack in the US for the past three years, integrates paper and electronic documents into a single online repository and review tool. www.litgroup.com + www.krollontrack.co.uk

► The LIT Group has produced a useful pocket guide to all the practical issues associated with electronic disclosure. Called *Do not press print !* copies are available free of charge from the London office. Call Mark Burrows on 0870 421 4091 for a copy.

LEGAL IT EXHIBITION LAUNCHES - 2

▶ OPPORTUNITY CALCULATOR KNOCKS

Aderant launched its new Opportunity Calculator system – the application enables law firms to more accurately predict the profitability of new business – at the Legal IT Exhibition. The product, which is available now, is a browser-based .NET application that allows the user to run various ‘what if’ scenarios by factoring in billing rates, resources assigned, discounts and other profitability indicators.

In a related development, Aderant has also announced plans to launch its own client relationship management system – to be called Front Office CRM – specifically for law firms and other professional service organisations. Further details are to follow however Aderant say embedding the new CRM, which will use a Microsoft Outlook interface, into the company’s practice management system will provide firms with a full 360 degree view into client and matter information that ‘eliminates a disconnected flow of information between front and back office systems and removes the risk of missing potential business opportunities.’ www.aderant.com

▶ NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT THOMSON ELITE

Thomson Elite have also been very busy, with three new product launches in the UK. They are: the latest version of the company’s practice management system – Elite Enterprise 3.5 – which sees more functionality added to support firms with international operations, plus added capabilities for records, billing, conflicts and reporting functions. The company has included advanced trust features allowing Australian law firms to meet national accounting regulations and modifications of bank account numbers to enable European International Bank Account Numbers (IBAN) compliance.

Elite has also released the Elite Practice Manager, which provides access, via a browser interface, to a matter-centric view of consolidated information relating to events, people, documents and finances. And, finally, the company has enhanced its Records Manager system, with new features including integration with Microsoft Outlook (and other email systems) to make it easier to store email messages against the appropriate matter files. www.thomsonelite.com

▶ COST RECOVERY SYSTEM LAUNCHES

Billback Systems (020 7246 9999) launched its iBillback print room workflow management module. This is an automated browser-based job ticketing system for secretaries and fee earners, designed to simplify job submission in the front office, while simultaneously achieving efficiencies in the printroom, as staff will no longer have to decipher and rekey handwritten job descriptions and matter details.

Meanwhile **Equitrac** (020 7831 7818) launched its Professional Enterprise Edition v4.63i featuring ‘active integration’. This is designed to make it easier for firms to integrate Equitrac cost recovery devices and software with Microsoft Windows Active Directory-based centralised network management and SQL Server-based time and billing systems.

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The Insider 200 just got bigger

Legal Technology Insider has revised and extended its top 200 chart of the IT systems in use in the UK's largest law firms. As well as taking into account the latest mergers and demergers, the chart has been extended to cover the 250 biggest firms in the UK and Ireland, by number of fee earners. We have also introduced three new categories for email, know-how and HR management.

We are still in the process of filling in some of the gaps and vetting entries and will be publishing a full breakdown in a subsequent edition however initial data suggests there are currently six giants in this market: Visualfiles, in use as a case management system at 60 firms, Thomson Elite in use as a practice management system at 60 firms and Axxia, in use as a PMS at 50 firms, the BigHand digital dictation system in 56 firms, Interwoven as the DMS of choice in 55 firms and the InterAction CRM system in 49 firms.

The chart is updated on an ongoing basis and can be downloaded free of charge as a Excel spreadsheet from www.legaltechnology.com – just click on any Top 250 link.

US legal IT market - its smaller than you think

Legal Marketing News, which is published by the US legal IT marketing agency Envision, has just collated some data which suggests that, proportionately, the United States law firms' market is actually smaller than the UK.

For example, whereas the latest edition of the *Legal 500* identifies 520 firms in the UK with 50 or more fee earners, including partners, in the US there are only 900 firms with 50 or more lawyers – despite the fact the US legal services industry is far larger, employing in total over 1,465,000 people.

Envision add that over 76% of all US firms have less than 4 employees and a further 22% have between 5 to 49 employees, including less than 20 lawyers. This leads Envision to conclude that the medium and large firm market actually accounts for less than 0.1% of the entire US legal market. www.envisionagency.com

Tony Welsby charity drive

Tony Welsby, the chairman of legal IT supplier Norwel, died of cancer at the end of last year, aged 58, after a short illness. Norwel's managing director Alan Richardson said in the light of Welsby's death he felt the most positive response would be to help raise money for medical research and to this end he is planning a fund-raising sponsored hike through the Andes mountain range in Peru in June this year. Richardson is hoping to raise several thousand pounds for the charity Action Medical Research. For more information email Alan Richardson on arc@norwel.co.uk or visit www.action.org.uk/~norwel

Pilgrim off to flying start in 2005

Pilgrim Systems has enjoyed a flying start to 2005 with a series of wins for its LawSoft practice management software that has added nearly 1000 new licences to its user base. The orders were placed by Davidson Chalmers in Edinburgh, Darlington's in Edgware, Pardoes in Bridgewater, Tilly Bailie & Irvine in Hartlepool and former Linetime users Watson Burton in Newcastle.

Pilgrim's chairman & CEO Jim Cummings said he was "delighted to see an upturn in a market that has been quite turgid over the past few years. I am especially pleased as some of these new deals were won in a dog fight with our US competitors."

Cummings added that he felt "Elite in particular have had a very strong run since they entered the market. They caught most of us on the back foot but I believe there are indications that ourselves and other UK suppliers are waking up to the idea that it is possible to compete and win against them."

Elite in offshore double

Thomson Elite has signed up two new PMS sites on Jersey in the Channel Islands. Carey Olsen, created two years ago by the merger of Carey Langlois and Olsens, is swapping out its legacy Axxia accounts in favour of Elite. And Viberts is replacing its old TMA SiMS with Elite's Out-of-the-Box PMS, which was specifically designed for smaller firms.

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