



Bond Pearce switch to CMS

Bond Pearce LLP has just placed an order with Aderant for the company's CMS.Net practice management and Business Intelligence management information systems. The order is the tenth new European win for Aderant in the ten months since the company was split from the old Solution 6 group and rebranded as Aderant. The Bond Pearce deal is also the second major site Aderant has won from Miles 33 – the other was Shepherd + Wedderburn.

Microsoft to run OMS

The License Compliance division of Microsoft UK's Law & Corporate Affairs department has implemented the OMS Matter Centre system from FWBS to help manage its civil and criminal caseloads. Microsoft had previously used a mixture of databases however the integration with OMS means staff can now track cases within familiar Microsoft Office 2003 applications, such as Outlook, Excel and Word. Mark Craddock of FWBS said the Microsoft deal demonstrated the business benefit of OMS not only in law firms but also corporate legal departments.

www.mattercentre.net

Aderant CRM deal

US top 100 firm Sheppard Mulin Richter & Hampton LLP has become the first legal practice to order Aderant's new client relationship management system. The system – Aderant Front Office CRM – was launched earlier this year. Aderant say a key benefit is the reduction in integration and maintenance costs associated with third-party CRM systems.

The Insider website

For the latest legal IT news, jobs, events, case studies and buyers guides visit the Insider website, described by *The Times* as "the UK's definitive online resource for legal technology information".

www.legaltechnology.com

Bond Pearce IT director David Coates said the firm faced several business challenges that prompted it to search for a new PMS. "The increasing demands of our clients and our own rapid growth (the firm has employed over 70 new lawyers since last year) was overwhelming our previous practice management system." Coates said the system could not provide the management information required, nor could it adequately handle today's variety of fee arrangements, which made it difficult to provide clients with the matter and billing detail they required. "Selecting Aderant was a win-win for us," said Coates. "Our lawyers liked the solution's deep matter management functionality and we now have a PMS that can help us profitably manage our firm for years to come."

Ashfords order Laserform HR

Ashfords, the Exeter and West Country based commercial practice, has become the latest firm (the second this spring) to order the HRnet personnel and training management system from Laserform. Commenting on the deal, Ashfords managing partner Simon Rous said "Our HR strategy is a key ingredient of our success and we want to make sure we retain, recruit and work with the best people. It is essential that our personnel team gets the best IT support available as we continue our growth."

Visualfiles in HIPs project

Visualfiles and First Title, one of the UK's leading providers of title insurance and related services, have teamed up on a £1.25 million project to develop a HIP (Home Information Pack) platform by Q3 of this year. The move is in advance of the introduction of HIPs on a voluntary basis in June 2006 and as a mandatory requirement from January 2007. The new HIP platform will be based around Visualfiles' Visualpanel engine for large volume, collaborative business processes.

News in brief

Keelys implementing AIM PMS

Keelys, who have 85+ staff at offices in Lichfield and London, have placed an order worth £90k for an AIM Professional Evolution practice management system.

Barnetts go with titlesolv.com

Southport-based conveyancers Barnetts have signed up to use the London & European insurance group's titlesolv.com service. This is a web-based service that provides instant quotes and cover within three minutes for search indemnities and title defects policies.

www.titlesolv.com

Greenwich meantime recording

The London Borough of Greenwich has become the latest local authority to order case management, workflow and time recording software from the systems house Iken Business (0845 4509201). The council will be installing a 62 user system in its Legal & Client Department later this year to provide "joined-up working" in line with e-government strategies. Other recent wins include Richmond upon Thames LBC, who are installing Iken case and time recording software to replace an old Lawfiler system, and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, who are replacing an old Timebase system.

www.iken.biz

BLP selects FloSuite for BPM

Berwin Leighton Paisner has selected FloSuite's BPM system to provide a platform for the firm's workflow and business process management projects. The firm's head of IT Janet Day said the decision was "a natural progression in BLP's continuous drive to improve the efficiency of our business processes".

www.flosuite.com

New BarStart phone number

Siemens Financial Services has changed the phone number for barristers wanting information about its BarStart service. The new number is 020 8233 4046.

Legal Aid IT supplier to keep prices low

Following the success of a cut-price sales promotion earlier this Spring, Anya Designs (0870 402 9939) has decided to continue the discounts available on its fully LSC-compliant CaseKeeper case management software. Prices for the out-of-the-box software, which includes time recording and billing, start at £499 for sole practitioners, rising to £2000 for 11+ users.

Anya's managing director Christina Grzasko said the initiative came in response to the continuing pressure on legal aid firms by the government and Legal Services Commission, particularly with the introduction for compulsory competitive tendering, which starts for criminal firms in London later this year. "CaseKeeper is committed to supporting Legal Aid firms, especially those unable to find the considerable financial outlay involved in hiring dedicated IT staff. The promotion has been a phenomenal success, so we realise we have struck a chord and have decided to respond by extending the offer until further notice." For a copy of a free demo CD email charlotte.bishop@anyadesigns.co.uk

New directors for SOS board

SOS has appointed Elaine Galvin and Graham Colbourne – both long standing employees – to the company's board of directors. SOS managing director Michael Platt said that with a steadily increasing customer base and plans for expanding the business this year, it was an appropriate time to strengthen and broaden the expertise of the company's top management team.

Four new signings for LSSA

LSSA (the UK's Legal Software Suppliers Organisation) has signed up four new members so far this year and another one is in the pipeline. The newcomers are Peapod Solutions and Select Legal Systems plus the digital dictation system suppliers BigHand and WinScribe.

www.lssa.co.uk

Supplier dirty tricks online

Some legal IT suppliers just cannot resist spreading rumours about their competitors. The latest ruse is a US supplier who is currently sending out emails saying their main UK competitor is in trouble, with the messages purporting to come from a former employee of the UK company via a bogus Hotmail address.

'Self serving' lawyers drive down costs

North Norfolk solicitors Butcher Andrews report that thanks to an integrated client/matter database and the use of case management on every file (the firm runs Select Legal's LawFusion software plus Microsoft Office on primarily a Citrix/Windows Terminal Server platform) over the past five years the firm has grown in size from eight to 20 fee earners but with no increase in support staff. Managing partner Mike O'Kane estimates that without IT, the firm would be spending an additional £100,000 a year on secretarial staff. "Fundamental savings are possible by strategic use of IT as part of a business plan," says O'Kane. "Getting lawyers to use keyboards and IT – in essence they are 'knowledge workers' – is where real savings are to be had although it is also a major management challenge."

O'Kane says part of the challenge was to change the culture of the firm from 'fee earner + secretary' to 'self serving' fee earners. This was combined with a CRM (client relationship management) strategy, to make fee earners more 'client' rather than 'transaction' focused, that has seen the firm win far more work from existing clients. But, O'Kane also warns that while it may be easy to get lawyers using quick-win technologies, such as digital dictation systems, this may be a retrograde step if they then start to use it to dictate their email messages.

Small firms want in on HIPs

New research conducted by ConveyanceLink, the 'pay as you convey' conveyancing case management software supplier, suggests that small firms are upbeat about the introduction of Home Information Packs, with 67% keen to participate in the government's voluntary dry-run of HIPs from the summer of 2006. ConveyanceLink director Malcolm York said these firms clearly recognise they need to embrace HIP-friendly technology if they are to secure their position in their local property markets.

www.conveyancelink.com

Copitrak on acquisition trail

Copitrak, the market leading supplier of cost recovery systems is on the acquisition trail. The company's founder Keith Child told the Insider that with the business in the UK, Continental Europe and China (where Copitrak has recently concluded deals with law offices in Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing) going well, the group is now looking to expand both through acquisition and an extension of its product portfolio.

News in brief

Hummingbird & Veritas link-up

Hummingbird has announced a strategic alliance that will see the integration of the Veritas (formerly KVS) Enterprise Vault 6.0 email archiving software with Hummingbird's latest document management systems. The combined solution, which is expected to be released later this summer, will have a Microsoft Outlook front-end so fee-earners can manage all their documents, including email messages, from within one familiar application. Transam (020 7837 4050) are one of the leading Veritas Enterprise Vault partners in the UK, with a number of legal sector sites including Charles Russell.

Scottish prisons pick WordWave

The Scottish Prison Service has selected WordWave International to provide it with a real-time transcription service. The 18 month contract will see WordWave help create an official written record of all the high profile or complex legal proceedings brought against the SPS, which manages 15 prisons north of the border.

Doncaster selects Tricostar

Doncaster Council's legal services directorate has selected the Tricostar Legal system to provide a platform for its new case management system. Doncaster has been running Tricostar's (01992 442800) Timebase system for the past 11 years.

www.tricostar.com

ClaimBase get security accreditation

Claims management and extranet systems developer ClaimBase (01708 736660) has just been awarded BS7799 information security standard accreditation.

www.claimbase.com

98 percent junk

Herbert Smith reports that on average 98% of the 18 million email messages it receives each month are spam or contain viruses. The firm uses MessageLabs to filter out the 2% of genuine messages.

People & Places

New manager at Transam

Bev Nicholls has been promoted to sales & marketing manager at systems integrator Transam. Nicholls, who was with Hummingbird and Tikit before joining Transam a couple of years ago, describes Transam as "one of the legal sector's best kept secrets" for despite its low profile, the company is winning a growing customer base of larger London firms. Roger O'Kelly has also been appointed marketing operations manager at Transam.

New faces and roles at Iken

Iken has promoted Katie Fowler to implementation manager and Reina Capus to senior implementation consultant. Former practice manager Liz Amiel has also joined the implementation team as a consultant and will be based in London.

LDM clinch DLA hire

LDM has appointed Alexander Keep, previously litigation support manager at DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary, as project manager based at the company's London office. LDM managing director Greg O'Reilly said the recruitment of Keep, who has been involved with both the LiST and TESCA initiatives on electronic disclosure management and the use of IT in legal disputes, "fits well with LDM's continued expansion and consultative approach."

Interface UK has new home

LexisNexis Interface Software, the company behind the InterAction CRM system, has moved its UK team, including Dan Von Weihe and Sarah Worsfold, to new offices at Procter House, 1 Procter Street, London WC1V 6EU. The new office phone number is 020 7911 1950.

www.interfacesoftware.co.uk

Professional Plus have moved

Colin Morris and the Professional Plus team have moved to 1 Bath Place, Rivington Street, London EC2A 3DA. The new phone number is 020 7729 3306.

www.professional-plus.co.uk

Two more DDS wins for Crescendo

Crescendo (0870 770 1717) now seen as the only digital dictation systems supplier offering any serious competition to the three established market leaders BigHand, Nflow and WinScribe, has secured two more orders for its DigiScribe software. The biggest win was at top 100 firm Hewitsons, which is now rolling out DigiScribe at its Cambridge, Northampton and Saffron Walden offices, where fee earners are using a mixture of desktop and mobile dictation devices. The firm's IT manager Tolan Collins said one of the reasons for selecting Crescendo was they were "the only vendor offering IP-based workflow management, using voice streaming to transfer voice files to the secretary in realtime, while ensuring files were not duplicated or stored on local computers."

Crescendo's second win was at Powell Spencer & Partners, one of the largest criminal law practices in London where, because of the nature of legal aid work, a key priority was to maintain the firm's 3:1 fee earner to secretary staff ratio. Practice manager Diana Du Bruyn said since introducing DigiScribe the firm has even been able to "direct existing secretarial staff to more paralegal, billable activities".

Digital dictation news in brief

Scottish giant picks BigHand for DDS

Scotland's largest law firm Maclay Murray & Spens has selected BigHand (020 793 8200) to supply its new digital dictation system. The DDS project is being led internally by the firm's director of technology Angus Mackenzie, with consultancy and support services provided by BigHand and Visualfiles.

Secretary-free firm uses Voicepath outsourcing

Niche City firm Reynolds Colman Bradley, which opened for business in 2003 with a strategy of maximum efficiency and minimum overheads, is now running a secretary-free office with all its typing work outsourced to Voicepath's (01926 821904) UK-based transcription service.

Kerman & Co pick Nflow for replacement DDS

Kerman & Co LLP has implemented the Nflow (01376 532266) digital dictation system at its Strand offices in London. Practice manager Caroline Green said because the firm had previously run a, now obsolete, DDS product, they carefully evaluated all the system and supplier options before selecting Nflow which "seemed to have a more proactive approach to openness and value".

Manchester Legal IT exhibition review

By a mixture of plane, train, bus and tram the Insider last week made its way to Manchester for the regional version of Islington's annual Legal IT show. There we found a respectable number of exhibitors and a more than respectable turnout of visitors to both the exhibition and keynote seminar sides of the event. In fact the organisers Cordial can take credit for running the busiest out-of-London legal technology exhibition we've seen for several years. The trip was also well worth it as there were a number of new products and services being announced.

Cognito launch next generation trust & probate system

Cognito Software (01279 821400) gave the first public demonstration of its new Custodiens trust & probate system. This is a complete end-to-end redevelopment (rather than just an update of its original Custodiens product) that combines case and risk management functionality with the ability to generate and revise IHT 200 and D schedules forms at a keystroke. Custodiens is available both as an integrated application, to be run in conjunction with Cognito's practice management system, and as a stand alone/best-of-breed product. Martineau Johnson is currently the biggest best-of-breed user.

Two more .NET applications from Linetime

Linetime (0113 250 0020) launched two new .NET applications. The first was an NLIS channel provider web services system, that provides integration between Linetime conveyancing case management software and Searchflow's NLIS search services. The system was also built around the Pisces XML standard, in anticipation of further developments in e-conveyancing. The second new release, developed in conjunction with Drydens, is Image Router.NET which automates the management, delivery, file attachment and subsequent archiving of scanned images of documents and their associated matter files.

Managing 'myclient' with Weblegal

Manchester also saw the public debut of a new legal systems supplier. Called Weblegal (0845 230 1133), the company's current product range includes myclient: a case management and optional extranet progress monitoring system for personal injury, conveyancing, matrimonial and criminal work; mydictation: a networked or stand alone digital dictation system that stores files in an MP3 file format; and myenterprise. This is a comprehensive range of law firm-friendly internet solutions, including email, website hosting and design and network management.
www.weblegal.co.uk

Manchester in brief

Norwel's desktop in your pocket

Norwel (0161 945 3511), who have been working on PDA integration initiatives for a number of years, launched their new Pocket Desktop product. Developed in conjunction with Cobbetts, this will run on any Pocket PC device and allows users to look up diary, contact and case notes as well as time record and action some tasks. Synchronisation can be via a docking station or a GPRS wireless link.

Axxia checks in with cheque system

Axxia (0118 960 2627) unveiled the first of a series 'process enabled management' systems (PEM) that will be the foundation of its next generation fee earner desktop software. The first PEM is a cheque requisition module that Axxia director Doug McLachlan says illustrates the way workflows can now be added to any administrative task in the same way they are already used for legal/case work.

Have you got the right address ?

Capscan (0161 435 6411) made its first appearance at a legal IT event showing its Matchcode and Matchcode Names systems, which are designed to help organisations to clean up their client and prospect records. Capscan has already linked up with Videss, so the system can be used by firms running Videss practice management software – Ison Harrison has already implemented it – and is interested in talking to other legal software suppliers about similar integrations.

www.capscan.com

Videss rebrands support services

Videss (01274 851577) used the event to announce the rebranding of its CFM computer facilities maintenance and support services operation as Videss Systems Support Services (or VS³). Over the last couple of years Videss has emerged as one of the few legal software suppliers whose technical services are also used by firms running third party legal software applications.

News in brief

Turners select MCL for infrastructure

Bournemouth-based Turners Solicitors LLP has selected Medhurst Communications (01489 563000) to provide a new IT infrastructure, including internet access, a new internal network and servers.

www.mcl-group.com

Shoosmiths complete Billback rollout

Shoosmiths has completed the rollout of a Billback (020 7246 9999) cost recovery system. The firm, which will initially focus on copying and printing costs, considered most of the major cost recovery products but settled on Billback because of its easy to use touch screen terminals.

Interwoven takes gold

As part of its strategy to become closer to Microsoft, Interwoven has become a 'gold' partner and will be launching a new Web Parts for Microsoft SharePoint Portal Server add-on for its WorkSite document management system in the autumn.

French connection for PracTice

North London start-up Agnes Crompton Roberts, who specialise in French and Spanish property law, is one of five firms to have placed recent orders for the Osprey.TM hosted case and practice management system from PracTice (0870 443 6300). The others are 50-user Georgiou Nicholas and Traymans, both in London, Robert Meaton in Manchester and Sumal Creasy in Leicester.

Ramesys adds email archiving to range

Systems integrator Ramesys (0115 971 2000) has added the Zantaz EAS email archiving system to its product portfolio. Ramesys legal account director Jonathan Bignell said that along with reducing the time it takes to search for and retrieve messages, the Zantaz system's ability to handle the management and long term retention of email files should prove popular for firms looking for compliance and risk management solutions.

www.ramesys.com/emailarchiving

MATS - a new face in case management

Bedford-based Evolving Media (01234 402500) is hoping to break into the case management market with its new MATS software, which is already being used by the Nationwide Building Society as a mortgage application tracking system.

Evolving Media director Martin Scovell said whereas most systems target workflows on the process, the emphasis with MATS is to allow staff to focus on the process by minimising the interruption from customers or clients, who are instead automatically kept in touch on the progress of their matters and applications by MATS. Communications can be via an extranet, SMS texting or email, thereby keeping the client in the loop but without fee earners and secretaries having to deal with so many routine phone calls and enquiries. For example, Nationwide's pilot project with MATS saw both incoming and outbound calls reduced by nearly two-thirds.

www.evolvingmedia.co.uk/mats

Hummingbird to go 64-bit

In the first of what is planned to be a series of collaborative ventures with Microsoft, Hummingbird has announced that this summer's release of its Connectivity 2006 system will support the 64-bit versions of Microsoft Windows XP and Windows Server 2003. Other projects include Content Drive, a new component of Hummingbird Enterprise that will streamline the integration of the DMS with Microsoft's file structure and applications, such as MS Office, and a Microsoft Outlook client for Enterprise.

Stephenson Harwood has completed the rollout of Hummingbird Enterprise DMS on a global basis to its offices in the UK, Europe and Far East. The firm has also deployed Hummingbird's Webtop application to provide a portal to the firm's intranet and client extranet.

Latest Recommind KM pilot

Dickinson Dees has become the latest firm to pilot the Recommind KM and enterprise search tool. Recommind's UK partner Phoenix Business Solutions (0870 735 1426) will work with Dickinson Dees on the implementation of the pilot, which will see the system being used to provide concept based searching and 'intelligent' result summarisation from a number of information repositories including an Interwoven DMS, LexisNexis Butterworths and the firm's own precedent libraries.

We don't like the web but 10 point type is OK

The last month has seen some interesting research results being published by a variety of sources...

Has the internet boom run out of steam ?

Research published by the Oxford Internet Institute suggests the internet boom has run out of steam in the UK. Although the percentage of people regularly using the internet in the UK has now hit 60%, this is almost unchanged since 2003 when a similar survey reported a figure of 59%. This prompted the Institute to conclude that internet usage has 'plateaued'. By contrast, internet use in the US is in the region of 75% but the UK still has a higher usage rate than the rest of the EU. Broadband access has increased substantially (up from 11% in 2003 to 36% today) but the Institute suggests these are merely existing users upgrading to a faster service. Turning to the 'refuseniks', who have either never used the internet (32%) or have dropped out (8%), reasons for non-use include: too difficult, worries about privacy, bad experiences (with viruses, spam and porn) nothing of use and not interested. www.oii.ox.ac.uk

Lawyers and IT staff – it's a cultural thing

According to a recent survey Sweet & Maxwell conducted among the heads of IT at top 100 law firms, the biggest problems IT faces in legal practices are cultural rather than technical. For example, 39% of IT directors reported that fee earners still lacked confidence in IT and 28% felt there was a low recognition of the business benefits of IT. The survey also found that while 64% of IT directors believed lawyers now accept IT can help retain clients, 55% said lawyers still do not believe IT plays a role in winning new clients. Not surprisingly, 73% of IT directors said more needed to be done to raise the status of IT in law firms.

Standard font point sizes for legal documents

The IT director of a major law firm has passed on the results of some data collated on the point sizes law firms are using for their documents. Although these range from a tiny 9 point to a glaring 12 point (the body copy of the Insider is 10 point) out of a sample of 21 firms, six were currently using 11 point, nine were using 10 point and of the five still using 12 point, three were considering changing to a smaller size. But as the IT director of one firm warned "We eventually ended with the compromise of 10 point for letters and 10.5 for longer documents. This decision though was only reached following direct intervention by the Pope himself. It makes a change of practice management system seem easy by comparison."

International news

Singapore court outsources transcription

The Supreme Court of Singapore has awarded WordWave International a three year contract, running from this July when the new court complex opens, to provide an outsourced digital audio recording and transcription service. The court previously employed its own court reporting team to capture proceedings from analogue tape.

nSynergy pick up two awards in Sydney

nSynergy, the company behind the LegalNet matter management system, picked up two awards – the Consensus Software Award and the Microsoft Global Export Potential Award – at the recent 2005 Consensus Awards in Sydney.

www.nsynergy.com

Colin Biggers implement WinScribe

Sydney-based Colin Biggers & Paisley is rolling out a WinScribe digital dictation system on a practice wide basis. Fee earners opted for a mixture of portable and Philips SpeechMike recorders.

www.winscribe.com.au

Insider Job of the week

Legal Software Sales, London

Long established, London-based practice and case management supplier requires legal sales professional/manager. New business sales will be the primary role. The position requires an experienced, self motivator who can assist in generating leads and negotiate at senior level. We offer a competitive basic salary in addition to a good bonus scheme. In the first instance email sales@legaltechnology.com

The Insider Jobs Board

Looking for legal IT staff, including posts in management, sales, development, KM, support, marketing, accounts or training? The Insider Jobs Board has the best choice of legal IT jobs available in the UK and you can post your vacancies free of charge by emailing jobs@legaltechnology.com

Boxed intranet launch

Case management specialist Eclipse Legal Systems (01274 704100) has launched a 'Boxed Intranet' product for smaller firms who want the benefits of an intranet but lack the resources and budgets to spend lengthy periods of time implementing traditional bespoke systems. Eclipse has provided intranet design services for its larger users for a couple of years however sales director Russell Thomson said recent research among Eclipse customers had uncovered a demand for such facilities from firms of all sizes, including one office practices as well as multi-site firms with disparate geography.

www.eclipselegal.co.uk

Search engine choice

Speaking at last month's APIL annual conference, in the session on online resources, personal injury lawyer Lee McIlwaine recommended delegates try the Dogpile site "because it searches other search engines and returns a greater number of options on first blush than Google will provide."

www.dogpile.co.uk

Chocolate teapots ?

"An Explorer only website is about as useful as a chocolate teapot." That was the comment of one, more than usually technology-savvy, solicitor at last month's Association of Personal Injury Lawyers conference in Wales, when he learned that an online service he wanted to access had been optimised exclusively for users running Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser. His view, echoed by recent moves in web browser market shares, is that online publishers need to realise there are now viable alternatives to Explorer on the Windows platform. These include Mozilla and Firefox, both from the Mozilla Foundation (who are also responsible for ongoing development of AOL's Netscape browser) and Opera.

www.mozilla.org

www.opera.com

New e-book - 'Whither the legal web ?'

Two of the UK's best known commentators on legal website and internet developments – Nick Holmes of Information for Lawyers and Delia Venables – have just published a new PDF format e-book. Called *Whither the Legal Web ?* part 1, which is available immediately, it looks in depth at the public sources of legal information now available on the web – everything from BAILII and Europa to blogs and wikis. Part 2, to be published in September, will look at the impact of the internet on legal practice, including email, web-based marketing and supplying legal services online.

Each part, which cost £40 + VAT for a single user and £100 + VAT for a multiuser licence, qualifies for 5 CPD points and both parts can be purchased together for a discount price. The PDF file contains live hyperlinks to all cited references and can also be downloaded for off-line viewing or printed out for armchair reading. The e-book can be purchased via a secure credit card payment from the Information for Lawyers website.

www.infolaw.co.uk

Context rebrands as Justis

Electronic publishing specialists Context, who have been active in the UK legal market since 1986, this month rebranded as Justis Publishing. The change followed market research which found that customers were now more familiar with the company's flagship Justis.com online service than with the company name. With the exception of email addresses – which now all end in @justis.com – there are no changes to any of the contact details. The phone number remains 020 7267 8989.

In a related development, Sweet & Maxwell's Westlaw UK online business has signed a licence agreement with the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting (ICLR) and Justis to add the online editions of the Weekly Law Reports and Industrial Case Reports series to the Westlaw service.

www.justis.com

ConveyPro updates website

The website for the ConveyProControl (0845 2255190) conveyancing case management system has been revamped to include user endorsements, a demo module and a calculator to illustrate the potential financial savings and increase profitability generated by the software.

www.conveypro.co.uk

Websites: it's how well you spend your money

Website consultancy Intendance has published its latest annual survey of law firm websites, this year focussing on the UK's fastest growing firms. Firms were rated out of 100 on usability, content and design, with Shoosmiths coming out top with an average score of 89%, closely followed by SJ Berwin, Irwin Mitchell, Cobbetts and Cripps Harries Hall. Of the three criteria, usability was the weakest category – Intendance suggest firms may be struggling to organise increasingly large volumes of information online.

The survey also found the cost of developing a website was between £10-to-£25,000, with firms quoting annual maintenance budgets of between £5-to-£20,000. But according to James Tuke of Intendance "there is no link between the size of the firm and the quality of its website. It is not how much money you spend that determines success on the internet, it is how well you spend it." Copies of the report *The Intendance Fast 50 Solicitors Websites 2005: who is winning and why?* cost £375 but are available free of charge to members of the legal profession. To order a copy email reports@intendance.com, call 020 8871 1330 or complete the online request form. www.intendance.com

Intranet dashboard for lawyers

Conscious Solutions (0117 903 1129) is now reselling the Australian Adweb out-of-the-box intranet system Intranet Dashboard in the UK. Although there are plenty of other pre-packaged intranet products available, the Dashboard system – which will run on either an MSDE or SQL Server platform – does seem to have the edge as it comes complete with about 30 optional modules. These cover just about everything you would ever want in an intranet, including calendars, meeting room booking, document management, a staff who's who, FAQs, on the fly surveys, e-newsletters, discussion forum, forms, online training and even virtual dealroom-style collaborative workspaces.

Conscious sales director David Gilroy says Dashboard offers all the functionality of custom-built intranets but at out-of-the-box prices. Pricing, which starts at £450 a seat, is based not on end-users but the number of administrators needing access to manage and update the site. Conscious reckon Dashboard is suitable for firms from about 50-60 users in size and suggest it will take under a week to be up and running, including implementation and training. www.intranetdashboard.com
www.conscious.co.uk

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Legal IT pay in London - still huge variations

Graham Gill Recruitment's legal IT division has just published its latest annual survey on the salary levels being paid to IT staff within London law firms. As in previous years, the figures demonstrate not only that there is a huge variation in pay between the different categories of staff but also that even within a particular category, there can be big differences between the best and poorest payers.

For example, helpdesk analysts/1st line support staff find themselves at the bottom of the pile with an average salary of just over £26k, whereas IT directors are the best paid, earning an average of just under £108k. But the variation for helpdesk analysts ranges from as low as £16k to as high as £34k – and to put the latter figure in context, there are some firms still only paying their technology managers £35k a year. As for IT directors, the variation here runs from £70k to a stratospheric £172k, a figure a lot of London solicitors can only dream of earning.

Wendy Phillips of Graham Gill says the variations can be explained in many cases by the different sizes of firm and the scale of their respective IT responsibilities. Still the figures do reveal that for all categories of job, if you are prepared to shop around, it is possible to earn between 25% and 50% above the going rate. In fact in many positions, you could earn more from a lateral move (doing the same job but for money) than seeking promotion to a higher grade job at an average or below average salary, where the responsibilities would also be more onerous. For a free copy of the survey call Wendy Phillips on 020 7421 2815 or email wp@grahamgill.com

Microsoft shed light on .NET

Confused by the rival claims now being made by software suppliers over the merits of their respective Microsoft .NET applications? And is it possible for some .NET products to be a purer .NET application than others?

In an attempt to level the playing field, Microsoft has now introduced a '.NET connected' accreditation scheme, complete with its own distinctive gold logo, to identify systems, applications and services that meet Microsoft's own .NET technical requirements. In the legal sector, both FWBS and Linetime have applications that have already been tested and qualified to receive the .NET connected logo because they are 'built on the Microsoft .NET Framework and expose or consume Web Services'.

www.microsoft.com/net/logo

Legal IT at the polls

Once again the subject of legal IT was strangely absent from any of the major political parties' manifestos in the recent general election however it did surface on the periphery. Legal systems supplier MSS ran a short advertising campaign with the slogan 'Fed up with politicians talking a lot of bull' to highlight the fact MSS got the highest ratings in the market research carried out for this year's Law Society *Software Solutions Guide*. And John Hemming, the man behind the old JHC IBM midrange accounts system used by a number of law firms in the late 1980s and early 1990s – but probably better known now as the deputy leader of Birmingham City Council and one of the men who tried to save the Rover Longbridge plant in 2000 – won the Birmingham Yardley seat for the Liberal Democrats on an 8.8% swing from Labour.

Out of Africa

Hamilton Harrison & Mathews, one of the largest firms of solicitors in Kenya, is currently upgrading to Linetime's Liberate integrated case and practice management system. The Nairobi firm has been a Linetime customer since 1989, when it purchased a customised version (some of the fields had to be adapted to handle the local currency – the Kenyan shilling) of the old Practice II accounts system.

Legal Technology Insider

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Each issue of the Insider is now read by an average of 6500 legal IT professionals. For editorial, subscription, advertising and any other enquiries contact: Legal Technology Insider, Ferndale House, Harling Road, North Lopham, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 2NQ

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The next issue of the Insider (No.177) will be published on Thursday 23rd June 2005.