



Susskind outlines the next 10 years

At a reception at The Royal Society earlier this month Richard Susskind delivered the Society for Computers & Law's annual lecture on the topic of 'The Next Ten Years'. The title was chosen as it is now ten years since he delivered a similar SCL lecture outlining the ideas contained in what was to become his best-selling book *The Future of Law* and because it marks the half-way point in what Susskind believes is a transition in legal services that will take 20 years to complete.

In his lecture Susskind reviewed progress over the past decade and gave his revised predictions for the future. These include that the pace of development in the coming decade will be more profound than during the last. He also introduced a new scheme that explains the evolution of legal services from a bespoke to a commoditised model. If you missed the lecture, don't worry because the launch edition of the *Legal Technology Journal* – to be published this April – will contain an article by Susskind explaining these ideas in depth. The *Journal* is available free of charge to subscribers to *Legal Technology Insider*. You can also find a podcast of the Susskind lecture on the SCL website.

www.scl.org

SRC win Baker Mack DDS deal

SRC has won an order to supply Baker & McKenzie with a new digital dictation solution based on the WinScribe system. The firm, which intends to make SRC/WinScribe its global DDS platform, will initially rollout the system in London – the largest of the firm's offices, and at its Manila based Document Support Centre.

The London office had previously run a digital dictation pilot with BigHand, while Baker & McKenzie recently won an award for Project Bayanihan, which is also based at its Philippines facility. Baker & McKenzie London's head of IT Duncan Eadie said the combination of WinScribe technology and SRC services and support were seen as providing the best solution for adequately fulfilling the firm's objectives.

New venture capital group has plans for UK legal suppliers

The Insider has learned that a Bedford Row-based venture capital company is currently talking to at least six UK legal systems suppliers – including some well-known and long established names – about creating a 'super supplier' that would both consolidate the market and become the dominant vendor in the small-to-mid-sized firms sector. A director of the venture capital company, who is also the chief executive of a computer software group, told the Insider the project was still in its early stages but that she hoped to be able to say more within the next month.

Normally attempts to 'consolidate' the legal market take one of two forms. Either company A buys company B and then merges the product lines, usually by end-of-living company B's systems and migrating their users over to company A's products. Or, by bringing together suppliers who have complementary rather than competing products. By contrast, from what the Insider has learned about this proposal, although the management of one supplier would head up the new group, the different brands, product lines and even sales forces would be retained as separate entities. The nearest analogy is General Motors or the old British Leyland with their different marques competing against each other but with economies made centrally.



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News in brief

Stephenson Harwood overhauls WANs

Stephenson Harwood has overhauled its UK WAN infrastructure with a bespoke network supplier by ethernet specialists Exponential-e. The network now handles the 6+ terabytes of data mirrored between the firm's key systems at its City office and its West London business continuity site.

www.exponential-e.com

IOS helps with LLP conversions

Integrated Office Solutions (020 8249 6530) says its InterAlia file management and document production system has been used by a number of firms, including Wollastons and Paris Smith & Randall, to handle the documentation and correspondence associated with moving to limited liability partnership status. Wollastons used InterAlia to create an extra menu item within Word linking through to the LLP documents. IOS has also launched a slimmed down version of InterAlia – called :Lite – for smaller firms. Prices start at £3000 for a 5 user system.

www.iosl.co.uk

New FWBS partner

Warren Wander's Scottish legal IT company LawWare (0870 2000 577) has become the latest FWBS software partner.

Quote, unquote

"Lawyers seriously need to rethink their priorities. We had one firm that was quibbling over the cost of replacing the server hardware for their email system. They were trying to save space by randomly deleting email files yet the partner negotiating with us had just spent twice the cost of the new server on a sound system for his car. That wouldn't be so bad except I happen to know he only ever listens to Radio 5 Live." ...a legal IT supplier talking about a law firm customer.

Copittrak - the Elite choice?

Last month's story, about Billback cost recovery systems now being used in 55 firms who run Elite, brought an interesting response from Copittrak Systems (020 7621 2350) chairman Keith Child. According to Child, firms should ignore vendor marketing alliances and concentrate instead on buying trends. On this basis Copittrak is the system of choice, now being used globally by over 120 law firms who also run Elite, including 20 in the UK. In other news, Copittrak's new sales executive Catherine McGee has won her first order – from Collyer Bristow. Copittrak is currently recruiting for additional sales staff.

Skype gets serious

From originally being almost a gimmick for enthusiasts, the Skype internet phone service – which effectively provides free VoIP – is now moving into the more mainstream small business market. In fact over the past month we have encountered more Skype users than ever before, including one legal IT supplier who is using it to provide a free support line for users and another – EMIS IT – that uses it to hold conference meetings between sales staff. While we wouldn't suggest Skype as an alternative to a practice-wide VoIP network, it does offer a stable, secure and free telecoms alternative for some law firms and suppliers who do have long distance, including international, contacts they need to call on a regular basis.

www.skype.com/business

Pivotal plan CRM challenge

Following its recent win in a two-horse race against InterAction at Field Fisher Waterhouse, Pivotal (01604 614131) says it will soon be announcing two more wins in the legal CRM (client relationship management) market, including "a significant InterAction swap out". Pivotal is also promoting its MarketFirst module as a way for users of rival CRM systems – including InterAction, Elite Apex and e1 – to benefit from advanced marketing functionality without having to replace their incumbent systems.

Meanwhile Thomson Elite has just launched version 6 of its Business Development suite. This includes new marketing functionality and a new 'web center' that makes it easier for business development teams to create client specific extranets, blogs and websites that can be accessed via PDAs and handheld devices.

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Ex-Siemens Solution 1 team back with comms

Nathan Hill-Haimes, Adrian Honey and Jon Evans, all previously with the Siemens Solution 1 communications group, are back with a new business. Called Managed Communications (0870 803 4645), it provides a range of telecommunications services, including VPNs and managed firewalls, but probably the most interesting is its 'Mcom one bill' solution.

This is for firms that over the years have built up a variety of different telecommunications suppliers, such as for land lines, mobile calls, mobile data calls and internet services. What the one bill solution seeks to do is wrap up all these services into one contract so the company can then use its buying power to negotiate better rates, with the savings being passed on to the law firm.

www.managedcomms.co.uk

Easy Convey deal threatened

Last December's deal, which saw RemoteLaw Online Systems of Canada invest £3 million in UK conveyancing case management systems supplier EasyConvey, could be under threat because RemoteLaw has become the subject of a takeover bid by Interlude Capital, another Canadian business. According to the terms of Interlude's letter of intent, published on RemoteLaw's website, by the end of March, RemoteLaw is required to have "renegotiated the existing agreement (with) EasyConvey on terms satisfactory to Interlude". The takeover is due to be completed in April.

It's been a long time coming

Following reports that a case management software supplier has given notice to most of its salesforce for failing to hit their targets, it seems some suppliers have still to realise the UK legal market can be very slow to make purchasing decisions. For example we reported back in June 2003 that Thomas Eggar was planning to move from Docs Open to an Interwoven (or iManage as it then still was) document management platform. Well, last month they finally placed the order. Interwoven has also picked up an order from Bevan Brittan. Technically this is another competitive swap-out as in a previous incarnation, as Bevan Ashford, it was the first and only firm to buy the Meticulist DMS although it was never fully rolled out.

News in brief

Videss pick up two more sites

Two more firms have selected Videss case and practice management systems. They are 9-partner Wortley Byers LLP in Brentwood and 210-user Barlow Robbins in Surrey. Managing partner David Knox said Barlows considered Elite, Axxia and SOS before picking Videss. The incumbent supplier at both firms was Axxia.

Berwins (of Harrogate) select Linetime

Six-partner Berwins of Harrogate has selected Linetime's Liberate as its new case and practice management system. The firm will run conventional case management for conveyancing and family work, as well as Liberate Express, which provides a non-prescriptive, flexible approach to case management from within Microsoft Outlook.

Five go with Mimecast

Transam Microsystems (020 7837 4050) has now implemented the Mimecast anti virus and anti spam managed service for email at five firms: Stephenson Harwood, Payne Hicks Beach, Radcliffes Lebrasseur, Taylor Walton and Silverbeck Rymer. Mimecast offers similar services to those of MessageLabs and BlackSpider but with a business continuity/disaster recovery option to store messages in a 'warehouse' for an agreed number of days. If a firm suffers a server crash, users can then access recent emails via a web browser.

First DNA win for Axxia

Axxia Systems has reported its first order for its recently launched DNA 'business management system'. The customer does not want to go public, so all we know is that it is a 200-user commercial firm in the South-East who selected DNA because it provided a 'single application, single source' alternative to integrating several different products from different suppliers.

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People & Places

New head of marketing for Elite

Alison Sharp has been appointed international marketing manager for Thomson Elite's European and Asia-Pacific regions. Sharp, who will be based out of Elite's Aldgate offices in London, was previously marketing manager at Verity prior to their recent acquisition by their rivals Autonomy.

JM Computing rebrands

JM Computing, which later this year celebrates 25 years in the legal technology business, has rebranded its trading name and will now be known as JMC IT.

www.jmc.it

Justis appoints new sales director

Legal electronic publisher Justis, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this month, has appointed Jonathan Daymond as sales & marketing director.

All change for ITAC

The government's Information Technology & the Courts Committee (ITAC) has had a change of helm, with Lord Saville standing down and Lord Justice Neuberger taking over as chairman. Richard Susskind, who has been the IT adviser to the Lord Chief Justice since 1998, has been appointed co-chairman of the committee.

Boyle rejoins Pilgrim

After a 3 year break to pursue outside interests, Robin Boyle has rejoined the board of Pilgrim Systems with responsibility for business development and customer relationship management.

New on Insider website

Latest additions to the Insider website KM resources section include a case study by TutorPro looking at the way Paul Hastings Janofsky & Walker used e-learning systems to facilitate the rollout of Interwoven WorkSite 8.1 to over 2000 users in 17 different locations.

www.legaltechnology.com

Is outsourcing killing speech recognition?

There used to be an argument that digital dictation was a stepping stone on the way towards the implementation of full speech recognition. According to this theory, the SR engine could learn the user's voice patterns 'in the background' from conventional dictation files and then, at some future stage, be 'switched on' so a transcription could be handled automatically rather than by a secretary.

This, it was suggested, could be useful in those situations where fee earners did not have access to a secretary to handle the transcription. But, in recent months, the balance seems to have switched in favour of outsourcing – if there is no-one available in the office to handle the transcription, you send it to a bureau to process. According to Rob Lancashire of nFlow "It all depends on how a firm views the capital versus revenue expenditure. Outsourcing is much cheaper to set up, even if you buy a digital dictation system at the same time. Conversely speech recognition might be cheaper over a five year period but has a potentially higher risk of failure."

Lancashire says another consideration is you still need a secretary or fee earning time to proof read the results of speech recognition. "I think outsourcers are getting to the point where returned documents are just as good as if they were typed internally. We found with nFlow's integration with Voicepath that their service essentially becomes just another secretary on the system – a neat way to increase or decrease resources as and when needed. We are seeing a new trend," adds Lancashire, "of firms going straight from analogue tapes to a DDS/outsourced solution rather than DDS first and then outsourcing. If asked to put money on it, I would side with outsourcing as the set-up cost is lower than speech recognition and the ongoing cost is a variable that can be controlled in proportion to income."

Grundig alliance paying off

Nine months on and Grundig's alliance with SpeechWrite (0121 236 2626) is paying dividends, with over 30 firms having now ordered the Grundig/SpeechWrite digital dictation package. SpeechWrite managing director Andrew Davies said that while most orders come from firms in the 20-to-60 user size "they invariably want the same thing: functionality plus software that delivers all the necessary workflow but without complexity or a high price tag". He added that, after evaluating the options, one of their recent signings opted for Grundig because "it gave them 80% of the features at 30% of the price of a competitor system".

New face on DDS scene

At a time when the founders of one DDS supplier are negotiating a buy-out with venture capitalists and, in an increasingly mature market, some smaller suppliers are struggling to win orders, now might not seem the perfect moment for a new player to enter the digital dictation scene. But that has not stopped Reading-based V7 Technology (0845 434 9992) from taking the plunge.

The company's system – the V7 Digital Dictation System – offers all the standard workflow functionality and hardware integrations you would expect from a modern DDS however technical director John Strudwick says V7 was also designed with the benefit of listening to the complaints from users of existing systems. The result, he says, is a system that is a lot simpler and more flexible to use. Current users include Hereward & Foster, Flack & Co, Sills & Betteridge and barristers chambers Hardwicke Buildings. V7's largest site is a 550 seat firm of surveyors. V7 say they will be announcing further enhancements to the system later this spring.

www.v7technology.com

Digital dictation news in brief

Voicepath transcribes its one millionth document

Voicepath, the UK 'onshore' outsourcing service for digital dictation transcription, has just reached the milestone of processing its one millionth document.

www.voicepath.com

New win for DictaNet

Crawley-based Rawlison Butler has completed the rollout of a DictaNet digital dictation system. IT manager Dennis Emson said although the firm had only used the system for a few months "the investment is already beginning to pay dividends". DictaNet has also signed up Medical & Legal Business Services (0845 686 0057) of Wakefield as a new transcription services partner.

www.dictanet.co.uk

Capsticks go with SRC/Winscribe

Healthcare law specialists Capsticks has rolled out the Winscribe digital dictation system to over 130 staff at its Putney offices. The system was supplied by Winscribe partner SRC, who also handled a pilot project for the firm.

www.src.co.uk

Product review: the Grundig Digta 410

Grundig's new Digta 410 does for digital dictation recorders what the Apple iMac did for PC design – you no longer have to have a boring square box with control buttons dotted around it like confetti. The 410 has a pleasing, fit-in-your-hand friendly design, a USB link for either transferring files to a PC or using as a PC microphone, and a user interface that doesn't look like it came from the DOS era. Ergonomically and aesthetically it is the most attractive recorder on the market today. That's the good news.

The bad news is it doesn't have a removable memory card, rechargeable batteries nor a docking station (unlike its soon to be available big brother the Digta 415, which is pitched as a competitor to the Olympus DS-4000). Not fatal weaknesses but in a cost conscious market like the UK, the 410's price of £215 + VAT does put it at a disadvantage when compared with the better specifications and more competitive pricing of some of the rival offerings from Olympus, such as the DS-2300 and DS-3300.

www.grundig-gbs.com

Kemp on Lawtel

Sweet & Maxwell's Lawtel online arm is now carrying a new version of the Kemp personal injury awards service. Features include a database of over 4000 PI awards claims spanning 25 years and a series of online awards calculators. Among them is one based on the *Roberts v Johnstone* decision, which allows lawyers to calculate a claim for expenditure arising where special accommodation needs to be provided for a claimant. According to Sweet & Maxwell director Alina Lourie, most of the calculators are both new and exclusive to Lawtel.

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Latest website news

Buy second-hand software legitimately

Our thanks to the reader who drew our attention to Discount Licensing's website. This lets you buy second-hand disused or unwanted Microsoft software licences (both server and application products but not operating system licences) from insolvent or downsizing companies while still staying within the terms of Microsoft's transfer conditions. Discount Licensing, who claim they are currently the only legally compliant 'pre-owned' reseller of this kind, say their prices average between 20-50% less than conventional sources.

www.discount-licensing.com

Scottish Law Society go minimalist

The Scottish Law Society has relaunched its website with a new, minimalist look. This clean design extends through to the navigation and content, which caters both for solicitors and members of the public. The site is fully searchable, with plenty of links to downloadable documents.

www.lawscot.org.uk

Find your CPD training on the web

Legal Training Manager Ltd has launched an interesting website that creates a portal for solicitors looking for providers of Law Society CPD accredited training courses.

www.ltml.co.uk

Insider Job of the Week

Pre-Sales Consultant, £40-£60k + comm

The London office of an international electronic invoicing & spend management systems supplier is looking for a pre-sales consultant with strong technical skills, ideally from a legal software background. For details call Mark Lennard on 0870 800 9494 or email mark@jplgroup.com

The Insider Jobsboard

The Insider Jobsboard 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

Fresh on the radar

Building a better virtual dealroom

Six years ago virtual deal and data rooms were headline grabbers but since then the hype has subsided and reality set in. One company now trying to re-ignite interest in the concept is General Counsel Direct (020 7958 1676), which was set up by solicitor Louis Plowden-Wardlaw. What GCD does is create a document and data platform – in effect a virtual data room plus document management system – that meets modern risk management and compliance standards, as well as more accurately reflects real-world business structures and entities.

GCD, which is already in use at one hedge fund, is supplied on a hosted/subscription model, with pricing – which starts at £10 a month for a 1Gb facility – based on the amount of space required. As there are no restrictions on the number of users who can access GCD, price should not be an issue. The GCD website contains a product tour and you can also register for a free trial of the system.

www.generalcounseldirect.com

New time and activity recording system targeting legal

We're not sure if the legal world needs another time and activity recording system or another Carpe Diem but if it does then Activity Tracker from ImageFast (01604 622882) should fit the bill. ImageFast managing director Riccardo Emanuele said Activity Tracker had been designed to meet concerns of lawyers that current time tracking systems and timesheet procedures were so laborious that they added to fee earner workloads.

Activity Tracker can be used in conjunction with barcode technology and remote devices such as Blackberrys, and can also be integrated with Hummingbird and Interwoven document management systems. ImageFast is now actively recruiting reseller partners for the legal market.

www.imagefast.co.uk

Product review: turn your mobile phone into a scanner

So you've got a new phone with a fancy camera but what are you going to do with it now? Scanr Inc have launched a service that lets you use the phone as a scanner. We've tried it. You just take a picture of a document and email it to Scanr, who will enhance the image and then send it back to you as a PDF file that is far crisper than the original photo. The service is currently free of charge and all you need is a megapixel camera phone or digital camera.

www.scanr.com

Product review: on-demand conferencing from Pericom

Pericom's new legal conferencing service, which is based on the MeetingZone system, comes in three flavours. There is a conventional audio conferencing service. But forget the old squawk box – the sound quality is excellent with no echoes or delays. Next comes managed legal conferencing, which is primarily designed for *inter partes* procedural hearings during litigation, with all the administration coordinated by an operator. Full recordings of these sessions are made available on audio cassette or CD. Finally, there is web conferencing, which can be run in tandem with an audio conference. This provides all the usual webinar facilities, including the ability to share a screen with up to 15 people and collaborate on the editing of documents. Two welcome plus points here are the system will work with a wide range of browsers – not just the latest version of Internet Explorer – and users do not need to download any plug-ins or client-side applications.

We liked these services. They do precisely what it says on the tin. And, because they are all available on an ad hoc pay-as-you-go basis, with full reports for billing purposes, you really can forget about making capital investments in technology and just turn to Pericom as and when you need a conferencing facility.

News in brief

Scottish property firm win for TFB

Boyd Property, who claim to be 'like no other solicitor-estate agency in Edinburgh,' have implemented TFB's Partner for Windows system to automate their processes from the estate agency stage through to conveyancing completions and accounts. In England, Beaumont Residential, the conveyancing arm of Beaumont Legal, has also ordered new systems from TFB, as has legal expenses insurance specialists Abbey Legal Protection.

Zantaz email archiving now available in Europe

The Zantaz Digital Safe hosted email archiving and disclosure product is now available in Europe. Features of Digital Safe include built-in processing for email including metadata extraction of email and text attachments; and the automatic conversion and delivery of electronic data in a litigation-ready file format.

www.zantaz.com



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Events news in brief

Interest in Law 2006 building up

Support for The Solicitors Group's new Law 2006 conference and exhibition is growing, with the latest IT suppliers to book stands at the event including Bigband, Laserform and TFB. Over 100 stands have already been booked at the event although a couple of suppliers have told the Insider that space is currently available at bargain prices ranging from as little as £500 per stand. The event, which includes an extensive programme of free CPD courses, takes place at the Birmingham NEC on 14th & 15th June. www.thesolicitorsgroup.co.uk/lawshow

Lex Connect makes connections

The Ark Group's Lex Connect event, which took place in London at the end of February, looks to have been the most successful yet, with a record number of exhibitors and attendees. There was a good vibe on the day we attended and (always a rarity) we didn't hear any grumbles from exhibitors. Lex Connect remains unique in the legal market for its format of combining conventional seminar sessions with networking opportunities and pre-arranged one-to-one meetings between suppliers and delegates.

Mixing business with pleasure

Ken Agnew, of Agnew Associates, has devised a novel way to differentiate his consultancy's technology briefings from the competition. For his spring events, which take place in Birmingham today (23 March) and London next week (30 March) he is combining the briefings with a beer tasting (Fullers beers) and networking opportunities. The events run from 12:00 noon until 3:00pm and attendees are also being offered a free instant messaging, peer-to-peer and spyware audit on their networks, worth £2000.

www.agnewassociates.co.uk/NandE.htm

International news

Two more Oz firms pick BigHand

UK digital dictation systems market leader BigHand has won two more deals in Australia – with Abbott Tout, who have offices in Sydney and Brisbane, and Clayton Utz, who become the first of Australia's 'big six' law firms to roll out a digital dictation workflow system firmwide. About 1200 Clayton Utz staff will be using the BigHand system at seven offices across Australia. BigHand is working in conjunction with local partner CCH Workflow Solutions (formerly Diskcovery) on both projects.

Clifford Chance Germany go DictaNet

Clifford Chance Germany and the Berlin office of White & Case have both rolled out digital dictation systems supplied by German-based DDS supplier DictaNet. 630 user Clifford Chance said one of the attractions of the DictaNet was it did not need to be integrated with the firm's SQL Server architecture. The firm automatically deletes dictation files 14 days after a transcription has been completed.

www.dictanet-wf.com

Carroll & O'Dea Axxia win

Sydney firm Carroll & O'Dea has awarded Axxia a contract to upgrade its IT platform. The project will see the firm roll out Axxia case and practice management software.

Timeframe website

In the last issue we inadvertently gave the wrong web address for Australian legal IT specialist Timeframe Systems. The URL is:

www.time-frame.com

Hoping to be big in China

After lengthy negotiations, which first began four years ago, Newcastle-based IT supplier Griersons has entered into a partnership with Boli Digital Science & Technology to sell the Griersons practice management system into the fast growing Chinese legal market. Boli will initially sell the software in the Shanghai area.

www.griersons.com

Making backup pay for itself

Faced with a need to update its backup systems, Cripps Harries Hall has migrated to an online solution provided by Thinking Safe. With this approach, information is encrypted and sent over the internet to Thinking Safe's Docklands data centre, where it is then stored on disk. The net result is the firm is saving at least £3500 a year on tape storage, has cut administration and can complete backups five to ten times faster than before. According to the firm's head of IT Mike Burton "We couldn't find a more economic and flexible backup system. It has given us centralised management of all backup, recovery and archive activity, so our service delivery has improved dramatically. Previously, in the event of a tape drive failure, we had to take a server offline to backup."

Ed Jones of Thinking Safe argues that "Tape as a backup medium is definitely on the back foot as the economics of using it no longer work. It even has questionable viability in the archiving market. For example, IT staff typically use tape backups to recover email exchanges. The challenge is that a month-end snapshot of the email system cannot remember all the emails that were sent during the month it was created. It is an example of operational backup technologies being forced into service as a long term archive. Historically this was good enough, now it isn't."

www.thinkingsafe.com

Product review: the new BlackBerry 8700 series

So RIM, the company behind the BlackBerry PDA, has successfully fought off the legal challenges to close it down but how is it coping with the technology challenge presented by smartphones, such as the O2 XDA? RIM's answer is its new 8700 series device but does it really take us any further forward than the classic BlackBerry 7230, which has now been around in the UK for three years?

We recently tested an 8700 and were, frankly, underwhelmed. Yes, it now has Bluetooth, instant messaging and a much clearer backlit display. But its ability to handle attachments is still limited – you can view but not edit. Using it to browse the web remains a grim experience. However probably the biggest flaw is that while it has been trimmed down in size, it is still not comfortable enough to use as a regular phone – and the slimmer size means the keys are now just that little bit tighter together, so it is easier to hit the wrong key and make typos. Our verdict: stick with the classic 7230 series.

The Insider poll - which factors influence you most?

For last month's Insider online survey, we asked which information sources did law firms and inhouse legal departments rate most highly when they were looking for new IT systems? In joint first place (and streets ahead of anything else) as 'very important' sources were feedback from other firms and internet research & webinars. Rated as 'moderately important' were industry reports & buyers guides, followed by consultant's recommendations and then vendor presentations & roadshows. Finally, the sources most people rated as 'not important' were exhibitions and conferences. Consultants were runners up among the least important sources and nobody described consultant's recommendations as 'very important'.

Microsoft's next version of Windows – Vista – is now on the horizon, while in June the company is ending support for Windows 98 and ME. But just how important is end-of-living these days? In this month's survey we ask: how long have you been running your current desktop operating system and when do you plan to upgrade it? You can find the survey form on the Insider website.

www.legaltechnology.com

News in brief

Linex Legal now covering liability law

The online information distributor Linex Legal has joined forces with the British Institute of International & Comparative Law's product liability forum to develop an online legal information service for product liability lawyers worldwide. The new service will provide a fortnightly email bulletin on the latest legal developments.

www.linexlegal.com/productliability

Five more councils pick Iken case management

Five more local authority legal departments have selected Iken to supply them with case management and time recording systems. The authorities are the London Borough Harrow, Corby BC, Redcar & Cleveland Council, East Northants Council and Braintree District Council.

www.iken.biz

Attenex adds email functionality to Patterns

The latest version of the Attenex Patterns e-discovery system now contains content analysis features for handling large volumes of unstructured information, such as email. This includes a 'social network view' that displays email communication flows to and from individuals or domains.

www.attenex.com

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By Legal For Legal goes European

The fourth annual By Legal For Legal conference will take place this autumn (20-to-22 September) at the Down Hall Hotel near Bishops Stortford. Due to increased demand, this will be the biggest BLFL yet with over 60 law firm IT directors/heads of IT already confirmed as attending, including representatives from firms as far afield as Spain, Portugal, France, Norway and Sweden.

For those unfamiliar with BLFL, the format places a big emphasis on networking, providing ample opportunities for sponsors – who are expected to focus on relationship building as opposed to the hard sell – to mix with delegates. Instead of ‘death by PowerPoint’ presentations there are a series of roundtable conference sessions covering topics determined by delegates rather than sponsors. A new feature this year will be an ‘experience register’ where IT directors who have recently completed a project or implemented a solution – and are willing to share those experiences – will be informally paired with those seeking help or know-how in those areas. And the event also has a strong social element including the refreshingly frivolous *Witchies* spoof awards dinner.

www.bylegalforlegal.co.uk

Elite skills at a premium

Ever thought you were in the wrong business? We’ve just encountered a 21-year-old non-graduate who has worked with the Thomson Elite billing system for the past couple of years and, because Elite skills are at such a premium, is currently earning £26,000 a year.

Conveyancers try new channel

Conveyancing specialists Barnetts has become the first firm in the UK to sign up for Sky TV’s new e-business portal. This allows anyone with a website to create a special version of the service that can be accessed through the Sky Interactive platform. Barnetts will offer a conveyancing quote calculator and a case tracking service so you could, for example, be watching Sky TV and monitor the progress of your sale during an advertising break. The portal goes live within the next few weeks – just press <interactive> on the Sky remote control, select Sky Active from the menu and then key in the word Barnetts (22763887).

10 years ago today...

The big news story in the Insider in March 1996 was the announcement – premature as it transpired – that the English Law Society would launch its High Street Starter Kit at the annual SOLEX exhibition at the Barbican. The project, which staggered on for another year before the Law Society council pulled the plug, envisaged the HSSK – an accounts and practice management system for smaller firms – being sold by the Law Society in direct competition to the 40 plus other legal systems already available on the open market. Other news that month included the UK debut of two new practice management systems for larger firms: the CMS Open and Keystone products – both now part of Aderant; and FileNet acquiring Saros Mezzanine and announcing its strategy to challenge Docs Open and SoftSolutions in the legal document management systems market.

60 years ago today...

In March 1946 IBM launched the 603 Calculator. Despite containing 18,000 valves, the 603 is now regarded as the world’s first production line range of electronic computers.

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