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£100m MBO at CS Group

The Computer Software Group (which last year bought the legal IT suppliers Aim, Laserform and Vides) is about to delist from the AIM market as a result of a management buyout and refinancing deal worth £99.6 million although the total package is worth just over £122m. Venture capitalist HgCapital is putting £120m into the project and the MBO team includes Vin Murria, Michael Jackson, Barbara Firth and David England from the existing CS Group board. Murria told the Insider it would very much be business as usual for the CS Group however she went on to say that by taking the company private, it would give them far greater flexibility and room to manoeuvre than when they were AIM-listed. *Continued on page 5*

Eclipse top 100 win

Thomas Eggar has selected a Proclaim personal injury case management system from Eclipse Legal Systems. Eclipse has also worked with Thomson Elite on an integration project so Proclaim can share financial data with the firm's Elite PMS.

The Insider website is 10

This month the Insider's website celebrates its 10th anniversary. To mark the occasion we've given the site a major facelift to further enhance accessibility and usability. All the old favourites are still there: the archives, the top 250, the events diary, the Orange Rag breaking news blog, the jobs board and the buyers guides – we've also given our guide to practice and case management systems a revamp – and we are planning some additional blogs for later this spring. Once again the redesign was handled by Wirebox Designs.

www.legaltechnology.com

Inside this Insider...

- 4 Comment & opinion on know-how
- 7 Escrow – what is it good for ?
- 8 Digital pen needs a careful think

The future is Microsoft - 1

Lewis Silkin, a firm that consistently punches above its weight in terms of its adoption of innovative technologies, has decided the days of the dedicated DMS are over. The IT team, headed by Jan Durant, has been given the green light to replace its old Hummingbird software with a new document management system built around Microsoft SharePoint. Insider sources suggest several other top 250 firms are planning similar moves.

The future is Microsoft - 2

Another innovative firm bucking the trend is Cambridge based Taylor Vinters, which has just announced it has selected Microsoft Dynamics for its CRM platform. IT director Steve Sumner said Dynamics "compared favourably against other well known CRM products" including InterAction, but was seen as offering a closer integration with the firm's core Microsoft infrastructure – the firm already has an intranet based on SharePoint – and Miles 33 PMS. The firm has avoided the cost of a full Outlook client deployment by setting up an intermediate database from which SharePoint handles any queries. *See also Microsoft CRM Legal story on back page*



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News in brief

Linetime partner up with ISYS Search

Linetime will now be offering its users the option of running search technology from ISYS Search, in particular the Intelligent Agent feature which performs repetitive queries in the background and alerts users of new hits as they appear.

www.isys-search.com

Two new start-up sites pick TFB

Two new start up firms – London IP practice Powell Gilbert LLP and Teesside personal injury lawyers Eason Law – have ordered Partner for Windows accounts and, at Easons, case management systems from Technology for Business.

Olswang signs up for SolSearch

Olswang has selected Solcara SolSearch to provide a federated search system, uniting information from multiple know-how resources both inside and outside the firm.

Harvey Ingram to roll out pdfDocs

Calvis (01748 813900) has won the deal to roll out Docs Corp's pdfDocs Desktop and OCR Server systems to 226 users at Harvey Ingram's Leicester and Birmingham offices.

10 years ago today...

March 1997 was the month the English Law Society finally faced up to reality and admitted that its attempts to create a software system for small firms – the High Street Starter Kit – was over budget and going nowhere fast. Amid reports that the very phrase 'HSSK' had become a source of embarrassment in Chancery Lane, the Society's council killed the project without even bothering to take a vote. This month also saw the rot set in for the old SOLEX event at the Barbican, with eight of the then leading PMS suppliers announcing they would no longer be exhibiting there.

Law London event delivers the goods

To the surprise of an increasingly sceptical legal IT vendor community, the Solicitors Group's Law London event at The Olympia earlier this month delivered one of the best delegate attendances (just under 2900 people over two days) any UK legal event has managed in recent years. The secret seems to have been standing the usual business model (put on an exhibition and throw in a few seminars) on its head and instead organising a comprehensive seminar programme (some of the IT sessions were standing room only with 140+ delegates) with a supporting exhibition. Add in a sensible floor plan – so delegates had to pass through the exhibition stands on their way between the seminar rooms and the refreshment areas – plus a timetable that provided adequate intervals between the sessions, and the net result was an event that left the IT exhibitors who were present with queues of people wanting to talk to them about their systems.

- The organisers are hoping to repeat the success of the London event in June (6th & 7th) at the Birmingham NEC.

www.thesolicitorsgroup.co.uk

PISCES to tackle addressing

The PISCES e-commerce standards organisation has set up a new workgroup to try to resolve the confusion surrounding the different formats used for storing private and business address data, a common reason for systems being unable to talk to each other. For details email Roger de Boehmler at roger@pisc.es – see also pages 7 & 9.

Pilgrim in £200k Berryman deal

Nottingham-based Berryman has signed contracts with Pilgrim Systems to install and implement LawSoft v.6 and Redwood Analytics. The contract, worth £200k, will see the firm switch to LawSoft in July 2007. Peter Owen of Lights-on Consulting advised on the selection process, which came down to a shortlist of three suppliers.

- A shortage of space last time curtailed our coverage of Pilgrim's partnership with Redwood Analytics, who have developed the Business Intelligence management reporting and key performance indicators (KPI) suite. One consultant told the Insider that Redwood's software "is going to be massive this year" as firms wake up to the value of the business data locked up inside their accounts systems.

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Events: all change at By Legal For Legal

The organisers of By Legal For Legal, the UK legal IT market's most popular networking event, have brought in Informa to manage the event on their behalf. Jan Durant, one of the quartet of law firm IT directors who originally devised the event, told the Insider it had grown to such a point that it was increasingly difficult to find the time to organise BL4L and do their day jobs. "We decided we had to either give it up completely or get someone else to run it. Informa are managing it for us but we are still very much in the driving seat." The only immediate change is the date has been switched from late September to late May (23rd-to-25th at the Ashdown Park Hotel, East Sussex) as this offers scope for a wider range of venues and better weather. Tim South of Informa (020 7017 4538) is handling sponsorship and delegate booking enquiries.

- Goodbye GlenLegal. Informa has changed the venue of its annual Legal IT Forum from Gleneagles to the Westin Turnberry Resort near Ayr in Scotland. The dates (10th to 12th October 2007) remain unchanged however Jason Hulme of Informa says the new venue is far better suited for the event and will allow them to develop the forum to provide a better experience for delegates.

www.legalitforum.com

Worldox launching UK push

Thomas Burke, the president of World Software (the company behind Worldox, the 'other' major player in the US legal DMS market) says the company is set to make a concerted push into the UK market. Although Worldox dominates the small-to-mid-size sector in the US (it has 500 solo firms on its books as well as firms with as many as 1200 users) Burke admits distribution channel issues have limited its impact in the UK. However the company now has Tom Price, previously with Worldox user Howard Kennedy, working for them and recently won Worthy King, its 5th 'top 250' site. Burke says key features of Worldox include its close integration with the Elite PMS and its ability to manage WP documents, emails, scanned documents and even website pages (including Hotmail) through a 'soft pop-up' technology that lets users access Worldox from within virtually any application. Worldox will be exhibiting at the NEC in June.

www.worldox.com

News in brief

Two Videss wins in the North

Lambert Taylor Gregory in Gateshead and John Robinson & Co in Hull – the latter a Griersons/Italax site – have ordered Legal Office case and practice management systems from CS Group Videss.

Trethowans turn to e-marketing

South of England law firm Trethowans has selected the e-marketing services agency Abachi to develop an online campaign to support its current offline marketing.

www.abachi.co.uk

BPL go with Alcatel for voice & data

BPL Solicitors in the South-west has selected an Alcatel OmniPCX Enterprise comms system to support the firm's new voice and data infrastructure. OmniPCX uses an IP (internet protocol) platform and will initially be used at BPL to provide call centre functionality, direct dial, voicemail, caller display and unified messaging.

Pannone agree further deal with Legal TX

As part of its 570 law firm strong Connect2Law legal support and referral network, Pannone LLP has awarded Legal TX preferred supplier status to offer copiers and printers to Connect2Law members through the associated CostController buying group.

www.legaltx.co.uk

TimeKM now available on Win Mobile

Pensera's time capture system (sold in the UK through TimeKM Europe) is now available for Windows Mobile devices.

Quote, unquote

"I haven't been so excited about a piece of software since *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault* came out." – the normally cynical finance director of a top 100 firm after seeing a demo of Elite's new 3E system.

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Editorial: KM 2.0 – the second coming ?

We're currently hearing a lot of buzz about know-how and knowledge management and whether it is about to enjoy a second coming after the generally disappointing performance it delivered at the end of the 1990s. Needless to say some vendors are interpreting this as an opportunity to try to sell law firms new systems to replace the ones that failed to deliver last time around – but that is really missing the point of KM 2.0.

KM 2.0 is not about bigger and better technology, typically smarter search engines with which to interrogate the document management repositories. If anything, it is about simpler, more accessible technology – such as social media (blogs and wikis etc) – that lawyers can actually use. It is not about systems that require major ongoing commitments from IT departments, extensive training, months of consultancy from third party integrators and/or are so complex that updating content becomes a major issue.

KM 2.0 is also not about systems that require legions of PSLs (professional support lawyers) that nobody can afford to employ anyway – once again it is about getting the know-how straight from the lawyers without the expense of an intermediary.

And KM 2.0 is definitely not about document templates (*see Opinion column in this issue*) nor what one top 25 firm's KM partner recently described as "bloody taxonomies". Instead, it is about obtaining a far more holistic view of know-how and business intelligence relating to clients, matters and areas of practice – check out Gretta Rusanow's 2003 book *Knowledge Management & the Smarter Lawyer*.

This is what KM 2.0 is about – but it is still not going to stop a bunch of men in suits from trying to hijack the second coming and sell you another search engine.

...Charles Christian

Opinion: know-how is not all about precedents

Having been invited to write about a subject that gets me ranting, I elected to go for the binocular view of know-how subscribed to by many firms. When 3Kites talks to a firm about know-how, we are invariably directed towards a number of precedents, documents and articles that undoubtedly provide a useful starting point for the lawyers. However, by the time documents are being drafted, one of the main advantages of know-how may already have been passed by. I'm referring to the know-how accumulated for matters as a whole rather than the sub-atomic items from which they are made up. Not only do real matters help a firm create templates for the steps and stages that are likely to be needed in the context of a particular piece of work but, in addition, each matter will have data recorded against it in the firm's practice management system such as time captured, time billed and time written off.

After enough matters of a similar type have been completed, the firm will have a picture of how long these take on average, how much they cost, and even, possibly, what is their contribution to profits. Using this data, more informed estimates can be provided to clients about the likely timescales and costs of matters the firm is pitching for. In some circumstances, it may be this allows the firm to feel more comfortable providing a fixed price, enabling them to compete for work where clients demand it and where they are otherwise excluded. Unfortunately, the idea of fixed price still jars with many firms who see this as dumbing down or, worse still, reducing the potential for billing as many hours as possible. This view is probably correct in the case of high value, bespoke transactions however there are a number of matters for which a fixed price approach makes increasingly good sense.

If a firm is able to systemise work which is usually repeated for a particular type of matter, it could be charged at a lower overall total than previously whilst being more profitable. For example, a matter which has usually been charged out at £10k may, through effective application of past experience, now only need to be charged at £6k. But – and not least because of potentially speedier delivery (which may also be seen as an advantage over competing firms) – the firm could justifiably charge clients £8k. Clients would have work completed more quickly and at a 20% reduction over previous costs. But of course this won't happen because know-how is only about precedents and documents, right ?

...Paul Longhurst, consultant, 3Kites Consulting

Nflow offshore deal

nFlow Software has won a contract to supply offshore law firm Conyers Dill & Pearman with a digital dictation system to replace its old analogue tape devices. One of the prerequisites of the deal was that DDS could be installed without the need for extensive pilots and suppliers sending teams to work onsite in Bermuda. The firm's IT manager Ken Siggins said nFlow was the only supplier willing and able to implement the solution remotely through Citrix. "As an offshore firm we face challenges when evaluating and implementing technology. Geographical distance from our suppliers can often prove difficult however the nFlow team were not phased by this and provided a faultless proof of concept and implementation remotely due to their extensive expertise," said Siggins.

Digital dictation news in brief

Wheelers go with TFB DictaNet

Wheelers Solicitors, who are based in the Blackwater Valley area (the Farnborough to Aldershot district in old money), are rolling out digital dictation based on a DictaNet system supplied by TFB.

Hansells anticipate culture change with Winscribe

Hansells, which has six offices across North Norfolk, is anticipating a 'culture change' following the introduction of its new digital dictation system as it will allow staff within the different offices to work as a team. The firm is rolling out Winscribe through reseller partner Mayday.

UJG Netherlands choose BigHand

UJG, one of the largest legal service providers in The Netherlands, has just completed the switch from analogue to digital dictation. The firm has selected BigHand3 software, running on a Terminal Server environment. The sale and implementation is by Morningstar Systems.

www.morningstarsystems.nl

Keyhouse report surge of interest in digital dictation

The Irish systems supplier Keyhouse Computing reports a surge of interest in DDS, with a number of users of its accounts and case management software recently investing in digital dictation. These include Crowley Millar, Marrens Solicitors and the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

www.keyhouse.ie

Tikit publish results

The AIM-listed Tikit Group has published its financial results for its trading year to 31st December 2006. Turnover was up 17% to £23.52m and profits before tax, goodwill and share option charges were up 38% to £2.89m, representing an operating margin of 12.3%. Tikit currently has a market capitalisation of £42m. Elsewhere in the results, group chairman Mike McGoun talks about the key performance indicators "that have underpinned our success to date". These include customer retention, with the company claiming an annual renewal rate "in excess of 90%", which includes 92 of the UK's top 100 law firms.

Interestingly, when the report goes on to talk about business risks, it highlights the same factor. "A second risk issue, competition, arises in relation to our strong position with the large law firms. Given that there is no external direct competition of any size in this market, we must be careful not to abuse our position.. ..our services are designed to complement and assist internal staff rather than replace them." Tikit has also identified its "dependence on our people" as another potential source of risk and as a result is proposing to introduce a LTIP (long term incentive plan) share option scheme to help retain key members of staff.

CS Group MBO

Continued from front page... In particular, Murria said she anticipated the pace of acquisitions increasing, with the first deal being announced possibly as soon as within one month. "It's all systems go," she said, "we will be moving onwards and upwards faster than before." The Office of Fair Trading has invited representations on the MBO – the closing date is 4th April – although this is standard procedure with private equity deals of this type.

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People & Places

New head of IT at BPL

BPL Solicitors, which has offices in Yeovil and Dorchester, has appointed Martin Lake as its new head of IT. Lake was previously with Virgin Mobile/NTL and joins the firm, which last year grew by 65%, at a time when it is 'investing heavily in new best of breed systems'.

A logical move

After over 20 years in Kentish Town, Rod Voyce's Logical Office (previously Logical Planet) business has moved to 7 Apollo Studios, Charlton Kings Road, London NW5 2SB. The new phone number is 020 7482 7077.

www.logical-office.com

Kelvin McGregor now at Deloitte

Kelvin McGregor-Alcorn, who for a long time has been Mr Litigation Support in the UK, has joined the litigation support and e-discovery team at Deloitte.

Jan France joins Merrill Legal

Jan France has joined Merrill Legal Solutions as senior litigation consultant with a brief to develop Merrill's electronic presentation of evidence offerings. He was previously at Kroll Ontrack.

New Lightspeed director

Roland Malcolm, previously with Hummingbird, has been appointed sales director at Lightspeed Systems Europe.

eCopy open new European HQ

eCopy has opened a new European HQ at Chalfont Park, Amersham, Gerrards Cross. The phone number is 01753 895000.

PCC partners with Whitworth Associates

Bill Kirby's Professional Choice Consultancy has formed a partnership with Lee Williams' client development consultancy Whitworth Associates.

DSS standard upgrade for digital dictators

Grundig, Olympus and Philips – who together make up the International Voice Association – have enhanced their DSS format standard for digital dictation files. The new version, called DSS-Pro, now has 16Hz sampling, which makes it better for use in speech recognition applications, and an encryption algorithm for added security. The IVA, who are hoping to make DSS 'the PDF of the digital dictation world', have also introduced a DSS player application so dictation files can now be opened and played by users who do not have a full digital dictation software system installed on their PCs. The player is available as a free download although at the time of writing we could only locate it on the Olympus website.

www.olympus-europa.com

On the hardware front...

Following hard on the heels of the announcement of DSS-Pro, Philips has stolen the lead on its competitors with the launch of its 9600 series of digital recorders. As well as being the first recorders to market supporting the new DSS-Pro standard, they also have a more robust 'drop proof' metal casing, one of the largest backlit LCD screens we've seen on a device this size, improved control buttons including a 4-position slider switch and a more intuitive on-screen menu. Files can be encrypted and password protected, the rechargeable batteries can be charged via a USB connection to a PC and the 9600 also uses removable SD/MMC memory cards.

- Philips has also released a LAN docking station for the 9600 which permits files to be transferred to transcriptionists without having to go via a PC.

Meanwhile at Grundig...

Grundig may not yet have a DSS-Pro device on the market (more new product releases are scheduled for this year) but the company continues to differentiate itself from the competition through its technology. It was the first supplier to offer password protection and now it is the first to market with a wireless mike. Called the DigtaCordEx, this provides authors with the freedom to move around a room with the dictation files being received at a docking station, which doubles as a battery charger and USB link to a PC. As to the old argument as to what happens if the wireless link is lost, the DigtaCordEx includes a 2 minute buffer so even if the link is down, the dictation will not be lost.

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Reader poll: escrow what is it good for?

The great and good (well at least the Law Society and some IT consultants) have been recommending for at least the past 15 years that law firms should always enquire whether the source code for a software application is available in escrow before making a system selection but is escrow a concept that has now had its day? At least one major PMS supplier's user group is already questioning whether it should continue with an escrow arrangement, because not only does it currently cost about £10,000 a year to have the code verified by the NCC but also most firms' core systems (wordprocessing, email, database etc) are now based on Microsoft software and there are no escrow arrangements available on that.

The user group has also been swayed by a recent poll of members which found that although the majority felt escrow 'was a good thing,' few actually understood the limitations of escrow. This view is echoed by one of the UK's leading suppliers of digital dictation software, who offer escrow free of charge to anyone wanting it – and so far have had it taken up by less than one percent of their user base. As one of their directors points out: source code alone is of little use if you don't have the underlying knowledge as to why it was compiled that way and it could take a programmer the best part of 12 months to effectively reverse engineer that code. That is assuming you can find or afford a suitable programmer, which could be problematic if the code was written in an older or less widely used programming language.

But escrow still has its fans. Axxia's user group has had an escrow agreement in place since 2003 and the group's chair Jill Wiseman, of Porter Dodson, believes "Business continuity is the buzz word of the day. If we have not already done so then we all need to look at our businesses to ensure that we have arrangements and processes in place to cope with any 'disaster' that might befall us. For end users, software escrow is a vital part of an intellectual property plan and strategy – it is an insurance policy against unexpected events – peace of mind that whatever happens we continue to have access to the source code."

So are you for or against escrow? This month's online readers poll is devoted to the subject, so have your say.

www.legaltechnology.com

Whatever happened to PISCES ?

Despite all the effort organisations such as LSSA have put into the development of PISCES standards for residential conveyancing transactions, is the market heading in the opposite direction? Several case management and conveyancing software suppliers the Insider has spoken to recently report they are being asked to develop bespoke integrations for firms working with bulk providers of conveyancing instructions.

Ironically the requirement is always for an XML integration but not with the PISCES flavour of the XML standard. The explanation, which is also echoed by the refusal of some government agencies to follow the PISCES standard, is that commercial and business exigencies mean these organisations need the flexibility to set and change their own standards at short notice rather than wait for them to be agreed perhaps months later by some PISCES working party. This makes sense but it also raises the question whether PISCES members are now wasting their time setting irrelevant standards nobody will follow.

News in brief

Kells roll out client extranet

Kells, who have offices across New South Wales, have implemented a client portal that allows clients secure extranet access to case documents. The system was developed by Timeframe Systems.

www.time-frame.com

Hill Dickinson gets OCS reprographics

Hill Dickinson LLP has awarded One Complete Solution (08702 200914) a contract to run its new reprographics centre at its Liverpool office.



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News in brief

Merrill acquire Lextranet

The Merrill Corporation (best known in the UK for its legal division, previously Wordwave) has acquired Lextranet, a US provider of web-based litigation support and case management systems.

www.lextranet.com

Quiss to offer Lightspeed

Quiss Technology (01827 265000) is now offering the Lightspeed Total Traffic Control email management system as part of an unified IT security package for law firms using Quiss outsourcing services.

www.quiss.co.uk

Praxis pick Waterford for email

Praxis Partners have installed a MailMeter Insight email management and reporting system from Waterford Technologies.

www.waterfordtechnologies.com

Al Tamimi selects Interwoven

UAE-based Al Tamimi & Co, the largest independent law firm in the Middle East, has selected Interwoven WorkSite to provide its new document management platform. The implementation, which also includes email management and a web interface for remote access, will be handled by Morningstar Systems.

Insider featured job

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Fresh on the radar

PaperIQ's digital pen – it needs thinking about

One of the more fascinating products on display at the recent Law London event was the digital pen system from PaperIQ, which was being demonstrated on the O2 stand. Although this is one of those devices you really need to see in action – and then think about before you get that light-bulb moment – it is nevertheless a device that could prove handy for some lawyers. In its simplest form you use the pen to make notes in the normal way on a special digital paper notepad however because the pad is covered with a matrix of tiny dots, the pen can store a digital image of what you are writing. This file can then be downloaded to a PC as a PDF for storage or OCR-ed to a Word file for subsequent processing.

PaperIQ offer two versions of the system: enterprise for larger firms and a hosted service for smaller firms, which includes 12 months use of the handwriting recognition system. The hosted version has a web browser interface, so files can be downloaded to any compatible device, and at the Olympia event O2 were running the digital pen in conjunction with BlackBerrys (the device is compatible with the new 8800 model) to provide a completely mobile solution. We could see this being useful, for instance, for lawyers who need to attend police stations as they can make notes on a pad, upload them via a BlackBerry and subsequently access them back at the office without the need to lug around tablet PCs or fiddle with scanners. The hosted version of the digital pen service for BlackBerry costs £195 a year (the BlackBerry is extra) and the system can also be used in conjunction with printed forms.

www.paperiq.com

Iconic unveil legal offerings

The Hartlepool Iconic Group (01429 239555) – not a company we've encountered before – has launched two products for the legal market. It is now supporting the OpenHand secure email service alternative to the BlackBerry and it has introduced a bolt-on legal module for the 3Com VoIP phone, which includes call screening.

www.iconic-group.co.uk

Intandem for archiving

Intandem Software (020 7247 2100) offer what they describe as a cradle-to-grave tracking system for physical files and paper documents that uses RFID (radio frequency identification) technology. Addleshaw Goddard have already installed the system and there are currently pilots running at both Hill Dickinson and Slaughter & May.

www.intandemsoftware.com

Who are you – do you really know your client?

According to a recent survey of 400 conveyancing firms carried out by ConveyanceLink, despite a well publicised increase in identity fraud, many firms still do not have rigid enough systems and procedures to check and validate client identities. Over nine out of ten (91%) admitted they photocopied documents, such as passports and driving licences, as proof of identification but did not verify them against official databases. When shown a passport and driving licence and asked if they were genuine or fake, almost three quarters (71%) chose incorrectly – and of the firms that were correct, most admitted they had made an educated guess.

ConveyanceLink’s Malcolm York said the survey illustrated how difficult it is to tell fakes from real documents. “What is concerning is the number of firms still assuming that if a client can produce a number of different forms of personal identification then they must be authentic. It is vital firms realise that with the vast improvement in the quality of fake IDs on the market, and the ease of obtaining them over the internet, they need to ensure their verification procedures are watertight and comprehensive.” (*Check out the website www.foolthem.com where driving licences, pay slips, passports and P60s can be obtained for as little as £15.*)

ConveyanceLink’s own solution is an online anti-money laundering and consumer identity verification service called ID Your Client that’s been set up in collaboration with the GB Group. The service verifies IDs by checking their contents against 15 different data sources.
www.idyourclient.co.uk

- OneSearch Direct’s online personal search facility is now available as an integrated part of ConveyanceLink’s conveyancing case management system.

HIPs & e-conveyancing news

Richards Gray links up with Quest system

Independent property search organisation Richards Gray has linked up with IT supplier Quest Associates to produce an online HIPs ordering system. The software was demonstrated at the recent Law London event.
www.richardsgray.co.uk

Hipstar to use VisualHip platform

HIPs provider HipStar has committed to delivering “several thousand” HIPs a month using the VisualHip platform developed by LexisNexis Visualfiles.

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Microsoft CRM – and then there were three

Microsoft looks to be heading for a London bus scenario with its Dynamics CRM software. There is never a system around when you want one – and then along come three of them at once. Along with Taylor Vinters' home grown initiative (*see front page story*) last week Aspective (01784 410420 – the company is part of the Vodafone group) launched its Microsoft Dynamics CRM for Legal system. This involves close integration with Microsoft Outlook and is being pitched as a system that will streamline business processes “without changing the way you work” because Aspective “understand that time lost adjusting to traditional CRM systems translates as lost billable hours and revenue” – which is presumably a dig at LexisNexis Interaction. Aspective are running a series of briefings at Microsoft and Vodafone offices in Reading, Warrington and Edinburgh on the 3rd, 4th and 17h April.

www.aspective.com/legal

The third contender is a system called CRM4Legal. This was developed in the US by Client Profiles and is currently being tested by early adopter firms in Boston, Dallas and New York. This is also based on Microsoft Dynamics CRM 3.0 and is claimed to be the only system that integrates directly within Microsoft Outlook and Office. We're still waiting a formal announcement but believe it will be sold into the UK legal market by Atos Origin for larger firms and Deltascheme. Paul Tilling (020 3008 4596) is the sales and marketing director for Client Profiles in the UK.

www.clientprofiles.com

Keep on running and trekking

- IT director-turned consultant John Rogers will be running in the London Marathon on 22nd April, when he hopes to raise £1700 for Asthma UK. In an effort to avoid making a Jade Goody-style early exit, he's now out training five days a week – and is looking for donations. You can find more details on the Just Giving website.

www.justgiving.com/gfi

- And, at its annual party earlier this month (which took place at the Shakespeare's Globe Theatre on London's South Bank) the Neil Cameron Consulting Group raised another £300 for the Trek China charity fundraiser. You can find more details on the Insider website events page.

Harry Townsend wins the IT factor

The votes are in and we now have the results for our *I'm a Legal Technology Celebrity, get me out of the Big Brother House because I have the IT Factor* readers poll.

In reverse order, the wooden spoon award is shared by Liam Flanagan of Tikit and Rob Lancashire of nFlow who both polled 4% of the votes. Julie Berry of RPC, Ann Elia of Travers Smith, PR maestro Sally Bellwood and Jeremy Hill of the Legal Tech Awards all scored in the 5-to-7% range. Nathan Hayes of Osborne Clarke – now rated the sharpest dressed man in legal IT – came in third place with 10% of the vote. In joint second place – each scoring 18% of the total votes – are Jan Durant of Lewis Silkin and Ann Hemming of LexisNexis Butterworths. And the winner, with 28% of the vote, is the original godfather of the legal IT sales world: Harry Townsend of Thomson Elite. Congratulations and/or commiserations to everyone who took part and voted – now we're off to find some witchetty grubs.

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