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Has Interwoven got the killer app?

Although discrete document management systems have come in for criticism in recent months as being dinosaurs that will be swept away by Microsoft Sharepoint (see *also page 3*) Interwoven at least is demonstrating there is still plenty of potential in the DMS platform. For example, last month it launched two new features that even some of the most cynical law firm IT directors in the market are describing as 'killer apps'. The first, which is available as a free service pack upgrade with Worksite 8.2, is a 'send and file' facility for email that automatically files messages in the correct client/matter folder rather than relying on the alternative time consuming, and frequently problematic, 'drag and drop' approach. ...*continued on page 2* ⇨

Insider launches new webzine

Legal Technology Insider has launched a new webzine – called the Insider Colour Supplement – to complement the Insider's coverage of legal IT developments and events. It allows us to carry longer feature articles that, for reasons of space, could not otherwise be accommodated within the newsletter, and colour photography, which is infeasible in a newsletter printed in black ink on orange paper (unless the pictures are of David Dickinson). The next issue will be published on Monday 24th September and can be accessed free of charge at www.theinsidermag.net

- With diversity now becoming an issue for UK law firms, readers should check out the article on diversity strategy, by Norm Mullock of Redwood Analytics, which appeared in the August issue of the Insider Colour Supplement.

Government admits to SDLT problems

The minutes of the latest HMRC SDLT & Third Party Developers forum at the end of July reveal that the government's Gateway system for handling the e-submission of SDLT (Stamp Duty Land Tax) forms is still not working properly. The latest problem arose during the last two weeks of July when it was discovered that the system had generated over 15,000 duplicate copies of SDLT submissions. According to forum member and systems developer Archie Courage, HMRC's initial reluctance to acknowledge there was a problem (caused by a software upgrade on the Gateway system) had caused some law firms to switch back to paper forms and "gave e-submission a bad reputation which it does not need in an apathetic market place". Full minutes of the meeting, which also looked at phasing out of 2D and CD barcodes can be found at www.hmrc.gov.uk/ebu/dev-forum-minutes.htm

Cameron McKenna in £10m outsource deal

CMS Cameron McKenna has entered into a £10 million, five year agreement to outsource IT infrastructure management, support and application development to HCL Technologies in India. The firm's IT director Philip Rooke said "This co-sourcing solution has been tailored to our very specific needs resulting in HCL taking responsibility for elements of the IT service onshore and offshore, and the firm retaining responsibility for others." The outsourcing consultancy princeOMC advised Camerons on the project.

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News in brief

Stevens & Bolton select Phoenix for DMS

Guildford-based Stevens & Bolton LLP has selected Phoenix Business Solutions to implement and deliver an electronic matter file platform. This will be based around Interwoven's email management and Worksite document management systems, combined with Phoenix's own Intelligent Filing application.

Timeslice committed to legal aid

With yet more changes to administrative procedures coming into force on 1st October, case and practice management systems supplier Timeslice says it is committed to continuing to support firms undertaking civil and criminal legal aid work. Software updates will be covered by standard maintenance agreements.

Countrywide automate mailroom

Countrywide Property Lawyers has rolled out a mailroom activity automation system, based on Kofax scanning and workflow software, plus the outsourcing of routine tasks to India, to help process the 25,000 legal documents it receives each day. Countrywide project manager Rob Hunt said the project had boosted overall productivity by about 15% and still meant legal teams had all essential documents on their desks by 10:30am. "What used to take 30 man-hours every day now needs just three man-hours in the UK and four hours administrative support in India." The system was designed and implemented by Digital Vision (01606 331234).

www.dvfl.co.uk

Quote, unquote

"Hideous week, horribly behind with paperwork and no life!" ...a sales director of a legal IT supplier explains to the Insider why he's answering emails at 11:00pm on a Saturday night.

Interwoven's killer apps

⇒ *continued from front page...* The second development is a new Universal Search system – in effect a Google-like search engine with a simple to use web interface. The search facility is powered by Vivisimo Velocity, whose users include Proctor & Gamble and the US Department of Defense, and will be available free to all Interwoven DMS users with the next release of Worksite later this year. But, in addition, the Interwoven Universal Search system is also being licensed as a stand-alone enterprise search engine that can connect into and search all the other data repositories to be found in modern law firms – a move that will place Interwoven in the knowledge management arena and pitches it into head-to-head competition with the likes of ISYS, Recommind and Solcara.

Avanquest – we're not back, we've never been gone

Back in the 1990s, when fax was still hot, Kommunicate with its RightFax system was the big name in network fax technology. Since then, the company has become part of the Avanquest group and had a lower profile in the legal market, while focusing on other business sectors and other technologies, such as unified messaging.

Now it's back (although managing director Chris Thompson says it has never been away as it still retains its law firm customer base) and over the next few months will be launching a series of vendor-independent products and services addressing issues in the areas of mobility, unified communications and disaster recovery. As part of this renewed push into legal, the company has appointed Darren Saunders to manage business development in the legal sector. For more details email legal@avanquest.co.uk

Hits, hope and charity

Litigation support specialists Legal Inc have just revamped their website and, to encourage traffic, for every unique visitor the site receives between now and the end of October, the company will make a donation to its Legal Pink fund. Legal Inc director Lisa Burton explains "Legal Pink is a collective fund into which all the company's charitable efforts go, to be donated to Breast Cancer Care at the end of the year. Hits on the website will bring help and hope, so visit today and tell your friends.

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Microsoft heading for critical mass ?

Is the Microsoft Dynamics platform starting to head towards critical mass? Over the summer two firms – Dundas & Wilson and Reed Smith – announced they were moving (from old Elite Apex systems) to Dynamics CRM. Reed Smith partnered with Client Profiles Inc, who have developed their own CRM4Legal implementation based on the Microsoft application, whereas Dundas & Wilson has gone with a Dynamics CRM project handled by ePartners, which will give users a Microsoft Outlook front end.

www.epartnersolutions.com

Here on the Insider, we are also hearing that another legal systems supplier is looking into the viability of a CRM 'lite' application for High Street firms based on Dynamics. A possibly even more significant development is that some suppliers have started to view the Dynamics Financials (the old Great Plains accounts system) as a potential legal market offering. The first supplier to go public on this is Timeslice, who envisage their current Lawman PMS running as both an end-to-end system for smaller firms and as the legal 'front end' for Dynamics Financials in larger firms looking for an ERP-type solution. Timeslice will be holding executive briefings on the Dynamics project in London on the 9th and Manchester on the 11th October. For details call Elwyn Morgan on 020 7231 0073 or email maria.jackson@timeslice.co.uk

- Staying in Microsoft land, the IRIS/CSG group has confirmed that IRIS Document Management for Legal, a DMS based on Microsoft Sharepoint, will be available for AIM Evolution users from this autumn, with similar options for Videss and Mountain Connected users next year.

TFB win ILCA award

TFB plc has won this year's ILCA Software Users Award. The award, organised by the Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators and voted for by Institute members, law firms accounts department staff and cashiers, focuses exclusively on the functionality, usability and associated support (including the adequacy of training) of legal practice management systems. TFB achieved a score of just under 92%. The runner-up, in a field of 20 suppliers, was Cognito Software, who also gained top marks for the speed and quality of their helpdesk support.

News in brief

Two sign up for Redwood Analytics

Charles Russell LLP and Wiggin LLP have signed deals with Tikit to implement business intelligence (BI) applications from Redwood Analytics. Charles Russell is taking a wide range of Redwood systems, including business development and the Redwood Dashboard for lawyers, while Wiggin say they want "to move beyond the PMS (Elite Out of the Box) and get to a level of analysis that hasn't been possible before".

DocsCorp appoints two partners

PDF integration technology specialist DocsCorp has entered into strategic partnership with two UK suppliers: TFB and Axxia. TFB will be integrating DocsCorp's pdfDocs application with Partner for Windows, while Axxia will be integrating it with Axxia DNA.

Woodford Stauffer order AlphaLaw Uno

Woodford Stauffer, a 40-user law firm, has selected an AlphaLaw Uno system as its new case management package.

- AlphaLaw has recently added two new facilities to the Uno system – an electronic SDLT5 returns certificate for conveyancers and integration with the URU identity verification system to help firms comply with anti-money laundering regulations.

Cozens-Hardy are HIP

Cozens-Hardy LLP in East Anglia is now producing its own Home Information Packs on its LawFusion case management system from Select Legal.

Baker Mack renews with Maxima 3net

3net, the recently acquired subsidiary of AIM-listed IT systems and managed services company Maxima, has secured a three year contract renewal from Baker & McKenzie. The contract covers data network support and consultancy services.

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Record results from Tikit and Eclipse

The Tikit Group and Eclipse Legal Systems have both reported record results for their most recent trading periods. AIM-listed Tikit reported turnover for the first six months of its trading year (to 30th June) up 16% to £13.19 million (2006: £11.41m). Operating margins also improved to 12.1% (2006: 11.7%) and profit before taxation was £1.51m (2006: £1.29m), an increase of 17% on the previous year. Tikit anticipate the second half of the year being stronger than the first six months.

Meanwhile in Bradford, Eclipse finished its trading year to 30th June with a turnover of £4.25 million, a 33% increase on the previous year's (2005/6) record high of £3.2m. Pre-tax profits doubled from £500k to £1 million. Highlights of the trading year included 71 new customer signings, ranging from small start-ups to regional heavyweights, including Blakemores, ASB Aspire, Fletchers and Thomas Eggar.

News in brief

LawNet selects Callcredit

LawNet, the network of 62 independent firms across the UK and Ireland, has awarded Callcredit preferred supplier status for the supply of its CallML anti-money laundering system.

EPC portal goes live

Surveyors, valuers and energy assessors Christopher Rodgers (Home & Energy) have launched a web portal for solicitors and estate agents wanting to instruct inspectors to conduct EPC surveys for the energy performance certificates required under the new HIPs regime. The firm already has over 100 inspectors on its books and anticipates handling between 300,000 and 400,000 EPC surveys a year.

www.chrisrogers.co.uk

Corporate news – summer catch-up

For those of you who did not catch these stories on the Orange Rag blog during July and August, here are the corporate news stories you have missed...

Buyout at Miles 33

European Capital SA has invested £56 million in the buyout of Miles 33 Group Ltd. As a result of the investment, European Capital is the majority shareholder with an approximate 60% share. Miles' previous owners and senior management, who also invested in the company as part of the buyout, hold the remaining 40%. European Capital's investment took the form of equity, subordinated debt and senior loan facilities.

Professional Plus being bought by First Equity

Professional Plus, the software development and IT services consultancy originally set up by Colin Morris and Niamh Eadie (and probably best known for its involvement in the Keystone implementation at Clifford Chance) is in the final stages of being bought by Dublin-based equity house First Equity Group. The company, which went into administration earlier this summer following Morris's departure from the business in March, is now headed by Eadie as CEO and Jonathan Booth as the new chief operations officer.

BPM – Whitehill acquired by Skywire

Whitehill Technologies, best known in the UK legal market for its billing automation and BPM (business process management) systems, has been acquired by Skywire Software, a US company that focuses on niche vertical markets. Whitehill V-P for legal sales Kevin Berry told the Insider that apart from the inevitable rebranding, plus access to greater resources to put into R&D, it would be "business as usual for Whitehill customers and sales partners" as the company would be retaining its current staff, office locations and product ranges.

BPM – Metastorm acquires Proforma

Whitehill's big competitor in the BPM market – Metastorm – has also been on the acquisition trail and, on the same day as the Skywire deal, announced its acquisition of the Proforma Corporation although it is not immediately apparent what impact, if any, it will have on Metastorm's activities in the legal sector.




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Latest PMS deals

Strange days we're living in: the summer was traditionally the quiet season for accounts and practice management systems deals but this year has seen a whole raft of them being announced by suppliers of all shapes and sizes.

Olswang announced that it was upgrading from its Axxia Arista system to the new PMS-meets-BPM **Axxia DNA** product. July proved to be a record month for sales at Axxia, with new customer **London Borough of Merton** Legal Services also ordering DNA, as well as existing users **Weightmans** and **Scarborough Borough Council** upgrading to DNA. Thomson Elite announced another **Elite 3E** win – this time at patent and trademark firm **HLBBshaw**, which has about 100 staff at six offices around the UK. And **Kemp Little** announced that it had selected **Pilgrim System's LawSoft** as its next generation PMS platform. The firm will be running LawSoft to handle time recording, billing, credit control, accounts, management information and CRM.

At Aderant the emphasis has been on rapid deployment and return on investment. **Mishcon de Reya** announced it had implemented the PMS part of **Aderant Expert** in five months and, on the strength of this, also decided to deploy Aderant's Mobile Office application. The firm says that running it for six months resulted in an increase in time capture for participating fee earners by as much as 15%. The German firm **Luther** (now part of the Pinsent Masons Luther Group) also announced it had implemented the Aderant PMS at 13 German and five international offices (Ankara, Brussels, Budapest, Istanbul and Singapore) in only seven months. The firm needed to move quickly as it had terminated its association with Ernst & Young and could no longer share IT infrastructure and services.

Closer to home, the **CSG/IRIS Group** has been clocking up more sales. In a deal worth £190k, **Rowlands** in Manchester has signed up for **Videss Legal Office v10**, **Lovegrove & Elliot** is upgrading to **AIM Evolution Insight**, and both **Neves** in Hitchin and **Capital Law** in Cardiff have selected the **Mountain Software Connected** system as their new PMS platform. Mountain say this brings the total number of orders received for its new .NET-based Connected system to almost 70 firms.

Other PMS deals include **Rogers & Norton** in Norwich upgrading from an old Linetime Practice II system to ➔

➔ the newer **Linetime Liberate** product. HR law specialists **Ellis Whittam** selected **TFB Partner for Windows** as its new PMS. CEO Mark Ellis said he identified 15 prospective suppliers at this year's Legal IT exhibition but soon cut this down to two, with TFB winning out on price and the quality of the product. TFB has also had a run of orders for its SPE Small Practice Edition, including orders placed by **Lester Dominic** and IP firm **Azrights**.

Breytenbachs, who specialise in providing legal services to South Africans living in the UK, have selected **SOS** to replace their old South African Lexpro accounts software. SOS will be providing access to their software on a monthly subscription basis. Another SOS user – **TLT LLP** – has extended its use of the SOS PMS following its acquisition of Constant & Constant, who were previously running Norwel. And family and mental health specialists **Dunning & Co** have selected **AlphaLaw** to replace their current Pracctice Osprey PMS. Other AlphaLaw wins this summer include **RFB Solicitors** and **Lester Dominic**, as well as the **University of Derby**, who will be using AlphaLaw to demonstrate law firm IT systems to law students.

News in brief

Charles Russell encrypts with Entrust

Charles Russell can now offer email encryption, based on Entrust Entelligence Messaging Server technology, for clients concerned about the security. The server is shipped as a hardware appliance with embedded PKI capability.

www.entrust.com

Device lock at Irwin Mitchell

Irwin Mitchell has rolled out SmartLine's DeviceLock endpoint security system to control access to all ports and devices, including WiFi links and memory sticks.

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Editorial: Microsoft licence issue ignored?

Last week, after putting the project out to tender, Osborne Clarke awarded Ultima Business Solutions (best known in the legal market for outsourcing services but they are also a Microsoft large account reseller) a contract to handle the next round of its Microsoft software licensing and, in particular, the renewal of its Microsoft Enterprise Agreement (MEA). But, why is this noteworthy?

The answer, according to Osborne Clarke head of IT Nathan Hayes, is that despite being one of the single largest expenses in a legal IT department's budget, Microsoft licensing seems to go under the radar with many firms renewing their MEAs pretty much automatically and without subjecting them to the rigorous vetting other IT bills receive. Hayes thinks this is because Microsoft is seen as such a monolith that MEA licences are treated the same way as the VAT bill, the electricity bill and the rates bill – as something that, like it or not, you just have to pay.

What concerns Hayes – which is why he brought in Ultima – is that as well as being a major expense, enterprise licensing is also an incredibly complex process, with a real risk that if you don't correctly anticipate your firm's needs over the next three-to-five years, you could find yourself having to buy additional licences at a far less attractive rate. And, Osborne Clarke is not the only organisation aware of this problem. FAST Corporate Services (now part of the IRIS/CSG empire and in the process of reinventing itself as a 'carrot' rather than a 'stick' business) has also identified Microsoft enterprise licensing as an area where it can introduce services that will be of genuine interest and value to the legal market.

...Charles Christian

Opinion: putting an end to distress

Ask someone to characterise litigation support and the words 'distress purchase' will be right up there. And if there are four weeks and 40,000 documents between you and your first court date, then you could be forgiven for feeling anxious. But why are you in that position? Why is there still such an ad hoc, reactive approach to case preparation when introducing process and control into the very fabric of litigation can optimise legal outcomes and maximise business returns?

I can't think of another major area in the legal enterprise that hasn't been permanently ordered through the deployment of enabling technology. Case management, document management, CRM et al, firms have invested in all these and are enjoying the financial fruits of automation and reengineering. But the concept of litigation management or readiness, the proactive development of strategies, methodologies and IT frameworks to improve delivery and secure success, is still languishing in the stalls. Running waywardly ahead of it is the crisis response which simply has one on the back foot from the off.

When I don't get the rather urgent phone call, when instead I am asked in to consult with no case to answer, then I will know that we're away and the front foot beckons. Just consider the legal outcome of a new level of preparedness. You take a quasi-ISO approach that expedites the expert and thorough collection, culling and collation of data; it's done efficiently and cost-effectively, to a set process and into a proven database-driven review environment. Here the team can immediately and exclusively devote their energies and intellect to legal matters, not logistics. All around is order, a shared awareness of tasks, activities and requirements, and a clear structure for case progression. There's more time, less stress, more context, less conflict, more collaboration, less confusion – absolutely the conditions for getting the best result. And ultimately isn't that what litigation should be about? Efficacy?

One irony is that those who most appreciate efficacy, the managing partner, is rarely concerned with litigation support. That's probably because no one sells the business benefits of litigation management. ➔



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⇒ It's not just about being empowered to make the best case or the best defence or the best settlement. It's also about bringing efficiencies to a notoriously resource sucking arena. It's about reducing risk and securing compliance; about delivering legal services more cost-effectively; about better staff utilisation; about doing the job well and aiding client retention; about enhancing your reputation and boosting client acquisition. And ultimately, it's about profitability at a time of immense competitive pressure.

Distress? Not if you revisit litigation support with a management mindset rather than a 'Mayday, Mayday' one.

...Lisa Burton, Legal Inc, www.legalinc.co.uk

Plan-Net win Simmons IT refresh project

Simmons & Simmons has selected IT services provider Plan-Net (020 7353 4313) to help with the firm's complete IT infrastructure refresh project. The firm's IT director Abby Ewen said there was a pressing need to upgrade the infrastructure, with the roll-out being implemented on a 'big bang' basis. She added "Over the past 2 months I have worked with many large IT companies that did not visualise the project in the way Simmons & Simmons had hoped. I found Plan-Net to be a breath of fresh air."

SAP rising in the South?

We've not heard much from SAP in recent months however one of our contacts in Chile reports that the decision by the Spanish law firm Garrigues to implement SAP, in conjunction with Accenture, is being closely watched by some of the larger Latin American firms, with any subsequent system selection likely to come down to a two horse race between SAP and Thomson Elite.

S J Berwin buy some FaceTime

SJ Berwin has purchased the FaceTime system from Agnew Associates (0121 354 3727) to protect the firm from malware (adware, spyware etc) and enable them to control Instant Messaging and other peer-to-peer applications such as Skype. The implementation, taking place over the course of this autumn, will cover all ten of the firm's international offices and allow them to centrally control and inoculate all of their users machines from London.

www.facetime.com

Readers discount: 20% off CPD courses

The Insider has negotiated a 20% discount on all courses that attract a fee at the Law Autumn 2007 event (1st & 2nd October, Olympia Conference Centre, London). A total of 22 courses are running over the two days, covering a wide range of topics from IT to property law. All the courses are competitively priced, with up to 6 hours CPD only £99 + VAT. Delegates also have the opportunity to book places on free courses with a further 12 hours CPD available. For more details visit www.thesolicitorsgroup.co.uk or call 01332 226601 to book a place.

International news

EMEA deals for Interwoven

Bowman Gilfillan, one of the largest law firms in South Africa, has selected Interwoven Worksite 8 as its new DMS platform, as has Sorainen, which is based in Estonia.

Visualfiles expands Australian team

LexisNexis in Australia has expanded its Visualfiles team with the recruitment of Tony Bleasdale as business analyst and Paul Grummett as project manager.

Vincent's gone back to New Zealand

Steve Vincent, who used to head up the Go Interactive and ActiveLawyer website and portal design businesses, has moved back to New Zealand.

Dutch firm implements Sharepoint portal

The Dutch law firm Dirkzwager is now running Handshake Software's Microsoft Sharepoint-based portal product on top of its Aderant PMS. The implementation was handled by local legal IT specialists Timesoft, who have also secured an order to supply the Aderant Expert PMS to another Dutch firm – Schipper Noordam.



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People & Places

New head of software at Visualfiles

Aamir Yusuf, most recently head of IT for Emerald Group Publishing, has joined Leeds-based LexisNexis Visualfiles as head of software development, effectively taking on the mantle of company founder Neil Ewin. No pressure there then.

All change at EMIS IT

EMIS IT has reorganised its development, sales, implementation and support services so that they will all be able to draw on the larger facilities of the parent Egton Software services group. As part of these changes, legal market sales are now centralised under the management of business development director Paul Banks.

Hands across the ocean

Legal IT PR agency PureTech Marketing has formed a strategic alliance with its US counterparts Edge Legal Marketing. This means Edge can assist PureTech clients in the US, while PureTech can assist US vendors wanting to break into the UK by providing them with local support.

Four new faces at SOS

Ryan Swann and Robert Ware have joined Solicitors Own Software as application support analysts, David Orr joins as a conversion specialist and Melodie Snyman joins as a helpdesk receptionist.

New sales manager at TutorPro.

E-learning specialist TutorPro has appointed Simon Meager as its new sales manager for the UK and Continental Europe. Prior to joining TutorPro, Meager was the founder and CEO of e-learning materials developer You To Coach.

ConveyanceLink now CPD accredited

Conveyancing software supplier ConveyanceLink has become a Law Society accredited CPD course provider.

Bighand gets foot in Magic Circle

Linklaters has become the first 'magic circle' law firm to invest in a widescale digital dictation implementation, and has just confirmed the rollout of Bighand3 software to 2500 users, with a further 700 users scheduled to take the software in the next phase of the project. Linklaters is using Philips portable and SpeechMike hardware and there are plans to integrate Bighand with the firm's Metastorm workflow system used by the document production teams.

So, good news for Bighand but it does rather beg the question: considering digital dictation has been such a runaway success in all other sectors of the legal market, how come the magic circle has been so slow to adopt it? In fact, in common with Linklaters, both Freshfields and Clifford Chance have been evaluating DDS for several years however the real stumbling block seems to be cultural rather than technological. One factor is because M&A work tends to involve teams of lawyers working on large projects, there is less need for individual lawyers to be able to dictate individual documents, while a second factor is City firms seem to attract more tech-savvy lawyers who can do their own keyboard work and don't need to send dictation off to secretaries.

- In addition to Linklaters, Bighand has also been enjoying success at home and abroad. Burness LLP in Scotland has completed the rollout of Bighand3 to 180 users in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The firm's IT director Ian Ferguson described the system as "the best thing since sliced bread with no crusts". The system has already been integrated with Visualfiles and the next phase will see it linked to the firm's Interwoven DMS. In the US, Wisconsin law firm Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek has rolled out Bighand3 with Citrix linking its Milwaukee and Madison offices. And, Dutch law firm Trip Advocaten & Notarissen has rolled out Bighand3 – the system was supplied and implemented by Morningstar Systems.

Digital dictation news in brief

Anderson Fyfe roll out Crescendo

Scottish law firm Anderson Fyfe LLP has rolled out a Crescendo DigiScribe-XL digital dictation system to 40 users in its Glasgow and Edinburgh offices. ➔

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⇒ Dublin firm rolls out Winscribe

Irish reseller Docman has completed the installation of a Winscribe digital dictation system to 35 users at the Dublin offices of Reddy Charlton McKnight.

Philips launch mobility halfway house

Philips has just announced details of its new SpeechExec Mobile technology. This is a combination of software and adaptors that will allow lawyers to use a PDA, Smartphone or Blackberry to submit dictation files for transcription from a remote or mobile location without having to carry a laptop with them or gain access to a desktop PC. The key point to note is you **do not** dictate directly to the PDA or Blackberry. Instead you dictate, as normal, on a Philips portable recorder and then physically transfer the file on an SD memory card from the recorder to the Blackberry or PDA for onward transmission as an email file attachment.

Although the transfer process does sound fiddly (and the adaptor another device for lawyers to lose) Philips is of the opinion that Blackberrys, Smartphones and PDAs “offer no convenient way to dictate for the professional user (who prefer to work with dedicated dictation equipment”. While this view is regarded as heresy in some quarters, there are many IT directors who feel it is realistic. Or, as one director put it “It’s hard enough to get lawyers to use their Blackberrys as phones never mind for anything else.”

- As far as Planet Philips is concerned, there is probably more interest in the company’s plans for the next version of its enterprise digital dictation software. Reports suggest this is already being trialed in the US offices of White & Case and if it is launched, it will put the company in direct competition with Bigband, Winscribe and nFlow, all suppliers who, up until now, had been widescale implementers of Philips dictation hardware.

Try it or your money back

Grundig has launched a ‘6 month money back guarantee’ promotion for its digital recorders. The idea is to remove any concerns for firms worried about the migration from analogue tape to digital dictation, so that it becomes a risk-free exercise with a “no quibble” refund if they are not satisfied with the devices. Grundig has also launched two new desktop mikes: the DigtaSonicMic, which includes a mouse, the DigtaSonicMic Classic without a mouse. ⇒

⇒ Trowers go with flow

Trowers & Hamblins has rolled out nFlow digital dictation across its eight UK and international offices. The firm’s IT manager Marina Herbert said because the international team needed to be able to share work between offices, a fundamental requirement of the system had to be the ability to offer global scalability and resilience without sacrificing performance at the user level. “nFlow,” said Herbert, “was the only digital dictation supplier with the ability to offer a fully proven solution with the replication capabilities we recognised would be able to support our operation and with customers (10 firms at the last count) where SQL replication is in place and working.”

By using Microsoft SQL Server replication, nFlow can deliver a resilient segmented system that acts as a global service provider. Users can see all the data they have permission to access across the system but if there are network link problems between sites, the segments act as individual systems (providing local dictation and transcription) and then automatically update themselves when a link is re-established. Herbert says nFlow’s replication capability “has already been tested when the Oman office had to shut down all servers for four days because of a cyclone. Within two hours of restoring the servers, Oman had full access to global data again on their local servers. Replication has definitely proven itself.”

- nFlow has also formed an alliance with Phoenix Business Solutions to develop an Interwoven module that will provide what the two companies hope will be the most advanced document management/DDS integration available on the market.



Barnetts roll out HIPs

Volume conveyancing specialist Barnetts Solicitors has rolled out and begun using a home information packs (HIPs) creation application developed for it by Eclipse Legal Systems. The Barnetts' HIPs offering – called Click HIPs – uses the Eclipse 'document collation' system, which allows users to select numerous disparate documents and combine them within a single, paginated electronic 'pack' within a single operation. The same document collation facility can also be used within other Eclipse case management products to prepare court/trial bundles.

www.clickhips.co.uk

Know-how news

New Solcara connector for Interwoven

Phoenix Business Solutions and Solcara have developed a new Solcara SolSearch connector for the Interwoven Worksite 8.2 DMS. Solcara say it simplifies the interface and streamlines searching across multiple workspaces, libraries and databases.

Recommind grow UK consulting team:

Michael Williams has joined the Recommind London office as a technical consultant, where he will be working directly with customers on the implementation of Recommind's search and categorisation systems. Prior to Recommind, he was with Interwoven and before that at the National Audit Office, working on their Valid/Hummingbird EDM system.

New ISYS connector for Interwoven

ISYS Search Software has developed a new advanced search connector for Interwoven Worksite Server. This lets users incorporate Interwoven content into their document collections, all of which can be searched simultaneously via a common web interface, such as an intranet.

Fresh on the radar

Due diligence from PLC

The Practical Law Company (PLC) – best known for its commoditised knowledge management products – has launched a new tool designed to improve the due diligence process. Called PLC Diligence, it can be used by lawyers working in law firms as well as inhouse legal departments. Does the process need improving? Well according to research conducted by PLC before starting the project: 85% of heads of legal think the due diligence process "could be improved significantly". They also said they believed law firms could improve the quality and value of the due diligence services they provided.

Since the tool was launched earlier this year, it has already been taken up by a number of law firms (including SJ Berwin, BLP, Cobbetts, Salans and Kemp Little) and general counsel with organisations including BP, Dawnay Day and Scottish & Newcastle. Another user – Paul Wright, general counsel with Taylor Nelson Sofres – says "the increase in efficiency for producing the diligence report was spectacular – around 75% quicker. Both Wright and Claire Wilkinson, general counsel at Omega Funds, say they now prefer to work with law firms that also use the PLC Diligence system. For more details call Daniel Brown at Practical Law (07879 627007).

www.practicallaw.com/marketing/diligence.html

Document filing for Microsoft Word

Paul Rigby, who used to be with WP document template specialists Kutana, is now with a new company called Awgar Stone (0845 051 0641) which specialises in Word VBA and other software development services including document management and assembly, HotDocs, Outlook customisation and database, intranet/web systems integration. The company has also developed a document filing application for Microsoft Office called ActiveFiler. ActiveFiler is compatible with the Amicus Attorney system.

www.awgarstone.com

Intelligent load balancing at BLP

Yet another new supplier name and product – this time the F5 range of load balancing systems for IP networks, which was recently implemented at Berwin Leighton Paisner by Nebulas Security (020 7654 0088). The purpose and significance of this technology is explained by Anthony Wong, BLP's senior security analyst. ➔

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⇒ “Our growing use of the internet as a communications medium means increased freedom and mobility for many of our staff. Whilst we welcome this, it also means a growing dependency on a handful of ISPs (internet service providers) for all our connectivity. Even minor problems with one connection could cause potentially serious disruption of our business processes – and if the problem lay with the ISP itself we would have no means of resolving it directly. Such a situation is unacceptable – we require robust, high availability internet access. We simply cannot afford any level of vulnerability when it comes to business communication and data security.”

BLP’s research indicated the best way to achieve the required level of resilience and flexibility was through ‘intelligent load balancing’, whereby data traffic is automatically distributed across multiple ISP and server connections and adjusted according to the capacity of the connections and traffic patterns. Nebulas suggested that while the F5 Big-IP Link Controller addressed immediate needs, other F5 products would help BLP achieve other goals. These included the F5 FirePass, to provide secure VPN access for remote workers, and the F5 Big-IP Global Traffic Manager to support the firm’s disaster recovery plan by allowing data to be seamlessly transferred between two parallel sites using failover and replication.

The F5 systems were actually implemented earlier this year at BLP to coincide with the firm’s *big bang* migration of its entire IT estate from Microsoft NT 4.0 and Windows 2000 Pro to Active Directory/Exchange 2003 and Windows XP. Wong says the project “has meant enormous peace of mind – and a reduced workload for the IT department. All our data network service management is now inhouse, meaning there’s no danger of being caught out by ISP difficulties or unpredictable data traffic patterns.”

www.nebulassecurity.com

99% less spam at Keoghs

Keoghs LLP say that as a result of implementing a new Mimecast email management system, they have reduced the amount of spam reaching their network by 99%. In addition, the problem of false positives, with genuine emails blocked as spam, has been practically eliminated, and the time messages spent in quarantine cut from two hours to a matter of minutes. The project was handled by North-West based security consultancy Network Defence.

www.networkdefence.com

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2008 Legal Technology Awards launched

Legalease has opened up nominations for the 2008 Legal Technology Awards. There are a total of 27 awards categories for law firms, IT teams, IT directors, inhouse legal departments and suppliers – including the award for the supplier of the best integrated system, which this year is being sponsored by the Insider's breaking news blog The Orange Rag. Nominations close on 31st October, so you've got just under 6 weeks to submit your entries – the nomination forms can be downloaded from the awards website. A shortlist will be published in mid-November and the awards gala dinner will take place at the Marriott Grosvenor Square on Thursday 31st January.

www.legaltechnologyawards.co.uk

Elite – all change at the top

Earlier this month Thomson Elite announced that Jitendra Valera, previously Vice President International, had been appointed to a new role within Thomson Elite as Vice President Global Strategy & Planning, and that Kaye Sycamore, previously Regional Director for UK, Ireland & Asia Pacific, had been promoted to Valera's previously held role of Vice President International.

Valera's new role, which will be based in London, will focus on developing Thomson Elite's global strategy, including responsibility for co-ordination between Thomson North American Legal (TNAL) and Thomson International Legal & Regulatory (TILR) in the areas of software and services. Sycamore, who now also joins Valera on the Thomson Elite executive management board, will focus on operations in the UK, Continental Europe and Asia Pacific regions. Both Valera and Sycamore assumed their new roles with immediate effect.

What they did with your taxes

In case you were wondering how much it cost to rebrand the Department of Constitutional Affairs (aka The Lord Chancellor's Department) as the Ministry of Justice, the answer is £1.59 million. The figures, which were sneaked out just before the parliamentary recess, reveal that the biggest costs were £700k going on IT, which seems a lot of money for changing a few email addresses, and £275k on new offices and signage (in other words the logo).

10 years ago today...

The top stories in September 1997 included reports that Legalease, the company behind the then still popular Link email and online information service, was being criticised for the way it handled its second major switch of technology platform in just 4 months. And Corel hammered a few more nails into the coffin of WordPerfect by scrapping its cross-platform Java initiative and launching WordPerfect 7 for 16-bit Windows 3.1. Unfortunately the rest of the software industry was developing applications for 32-bit Windows 95/98 and NT platforms.

Gossip central

Which legal IT industry salesman is so excited about becoming a father that he has taken to flashing pictures of his girlfriend's ultrasound scans along with his sales brochures. As one lucky recipient put it "Too much information. I haven't even met the woman, yet I already know what the inside of her womb looks like!"

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