LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

TFB to offer users Microsoft CRM

At its annual user conference later this week, TFB will unveil plans to resell a version of the CRM4Legal client relationship management system (which is based on Microsoft Dynamics CRM software) to its users as a fully integrated add-on to the company's Partner for Windows case and practice management suite. CRM4Legal has been developed by the US supplier Client Profiles, which has recently established a presence in the UK, and TFB is confident a number of its larger users will commit to the system in the first few months of next year. The first public demonstrations of TFB's implementation of CRM4Legal will take place at the Islington Legal IT show in February, when TFB will also be announcing details of what it describes as an attractive pricing structure that will finally make CRM affordable to non top-100 sized law firms. TFB will also be rolling out the system for the company's own internal use over the next few weeks.

Other CRM news in brief
• On 30th November, Dundas & Wilson strategic projects director Tom Clowes will be talking about the importance of CRM at a half-day seminar in London organised by Microsoft Dynamics CRM consultancy ePartners Legal. For details call 020 7190 2829 or visit the website.
www.epartnerslegal.com

• Addleshaw Goddard has upgraded its old Elite APEX CRM system to the Elite Business Development Suite. The system will be implemented by Hubbard One, a Thomson Elite business which recently opened a UK office.

November's big deals

Duo of Elite 3E wins
Thomson Elite has secured two more orders for its Elite 3E next generation practice management system. The orders were placed by 44 partner Lewis Silkin and 14 partner professional indemnity specialists Fishburns. Lewis Silkin's IT director Jan Durant said 3E was chosen because it offered easy integration with the firm's existing technology strategy "which is based on the increased use of intranets and CRM". Both firms will be replacing older legacy systems.

Campbell Hooper swap-out Firmware
Westminster law firm Campbell Hooper has selected Pilgrim Systems' LawSoft as its next generation practice management system. The 130-user firm, which will also be using LawSoft for CRM and workflow applications, had been running the old Tikit/ResSoft Firmware system.

RJW extend Visualfiles footprint
Russell Jones & Walker has extended its investment in LexisNexis Visualfiles technology by increasing its number of Visualfiles personal injury case management software users to 150 and by opting to roll out Visualfiles' M2 matter management system on a firm-wide basis.

Browne Jacobson picks SRC Winscribe
Nottingham-based Browne Jacobson has selected SRC to implement a Winscribe digital dictation system across its three offices. The firm will initially deploy DDS to 200 users in its corporate and banking division before rolling it out firmwide. Browne Jacobson will be replacing an older DDS that lacks Winscribe's workflow management features.

News in brief

Clarke Willmott extend outsource deal
Clarke Willmott has agreed a new IT operations outsourcing contract with Silversands (01202 360000) for three years with an optional fourth. This will be Silversands second spell as an outsource provider to Clarke Willmott, who first outsourced their IT operation in 1999.
www.silversands.co.uk

Programme Vanilla goes overland
As part of the firm's ongoing 'Programme Vanilla' IT infrastructure update and replacement initiative, Overland Storage (0118 989 8000) has been awarded a contract by Simmons & Simmons to roll out its NEO 8000 tape library. The tape library is the final element in the firm's disaster recovery and data backup facilities, complementing a disk-based SAN storage area network system. The firm's chief technical officer Peter Attwood estimates Simmons will initially need at least 90 terabytes of storage to support its London, Rotterdam and Hong Kong offices but added that with the new NEO kit they were "achieving quite phenomenal backup rates of 60 gigabytes to a tape in 40 minutes and reading back at between 5 and 7.5Gb a minutes".
www.overlandstorage.com

EHL upgrade Linetime system
EHL (Loughborough) Ltd has upgraded its Linetime IT systems to the supplier's newer SQL-based Liberate software.

More protect with Lightspeed
Five more firms – Boodle Hatfield and Howard Kennedy in London, Thorntons in Dundee, Rowe & Cohen in Manchester and Geldards in Cardiff – have ordered the Total Traffic Control email, web and network traffic monitoring, control and security system from Lightspeed Europe.
www.lseurope.com

ReWord re-moves delays for RPC clients

Glacier Re and Hiscox are the latest insurers to sign up for the new ReWord extranet service from Reynolds Porter Chamberlain. ReWord is a benchmarking system that allows insurers to compare and contrast component clauses used in standard reinsurance contracts within minutes. In addition to facilitating the systematic review of contractual clauses, ReWord also provides a related legal commentary. Since its launch at the end of last year, a total of 15 insurance and reinsurance services have taken out subscriptions to ReWord.
• The Reynolds Porter Chamberlain service (which we believe is a world first) follows changes in London insurance market practice whereby all terms in insurance and reinsurance contracts must now be clear and unambiguous before the inception of the reinsurance period. Traditionally contracts were made but their precise legal scope was not agreed until several months later.

IntApp gearing up for UK launch

IntApp Inc, the US developer law firm productivity utility software, is gearing up for the launch of its systems in the UK. Eldean Ward, who was with Billback until earlier this year, is IntApp's director of business development and responsible for the launch. Over the past three years more than 30% of AmLaw 200 law firms have purchased IntApp systems. These include: Integration Builder, which helps firms address matter provisioning issues such as matter lifecycle management and lateral hire intake; Wall Builder, which helps deliver and enforce information access controls for confidentiality and regulatory/compliance scenarios; and, Time Builder, which enables firms to capture time that might otherwise go unbilled.
• In the UK and Europe, IntApp will come to the market both directly and through authorised reseller Thomson Elite. Firms using Elite WebView will be offered a custom version of Time Builder called Time Builder WV.
www.intapp.com

No mobiles please, we're rural

Much as we love hearing from readers, could you please NOT call the editor on his mobile. The Insider office is located in a black hole for mobile phones so use the 01986 788666 landline instead. Thank you.

Phoenix to resell nQueue in UK

Phoenix Business Solutions has become a certified reseller partner for the nQueue costs and expenses recovery systems in the UK. nQueue vice president John Gilbert said "Not only do we believe we found a great partner in Phoenix but they align so well that we have offered them an exclusive partnership for the entire UK market."

Gilbert also commented on the status of Rupert Murray, who joined nQueue as a vice president for sales in June 2005 but left the company earlier this summer. "While Rupert was a valuable member of the nQueue team, he never hid the fact that his desire was to work and live in the US, specifically Washington DC. He was offered a position in June with another company and much as we missed losing a member of our team, we realised this was important to Rupert and we wish him well." .

News in brief

Patent Attorneys pick Open Text DMS
Patent attorneys Mewburn Ellis LLP are to implement Open Text eDocs DM5 software as their new document management system. The implementation, which includes integrating Open Text with the firm's Lotus Notes email system, will be handled by KnowHow Consulting.
www.knowhowconsulting.co.uk

• In a joint move with Microsoft, Open Text has published a new white paper on the topic of *Extending the Value of Microsoft SharePoint in Law Firms with Open Text Legal Information Management*. In other words how the Open Text/Hummingbird DMS platform can co-exist with SharePoint in a matter-centric environment to the benefit of law firm users. You can download a copy of the white paper, as a PDF, free of charge from the know-how resources section on the Insider website.
www.legaltechnology.com

Axxia DNA now available as fully hosted service
The Axxia DNA PMS/case/workflow system is now available as a hosted service, with 100-user West Midlands firm Martin Kaye the first to sign up for it. The ASP services, which include full disaster recovery facilities, are provided by e-know.net on a guaranteed SLA of 99%+.

News in brief

Mimecast on target for 30% share
Email management and security systems specialist Mimecast says its on target to have 30% of the top 100 law firms in the UK using its software by the end of this year. The most recent signings are Capsticks, Shepherd & Wedderburn, Bircham Dyson Bell, TSS Law, Thomson Snell & Passmore, Osborne Clarke, Mishcon de Reya and Woollastons. Arthur Cox in Ireland has also implemented the system and Taylor Wessing has upgraded to Mimecast's forensic email archiving facility, replacing their current Cryoserver implementation.

New anti money laundering check
LexisNexis Visualfiles has launched M2 AML, a new risk and compliance system designed to help law firms cope with the revised anti-money laundering regulations due to come into effect on 15th December. The system combines the Lexis KYC ID service launched earlier this autumn with the Visualfiles M2 matter and process management system.

Aderant goes into Brussels firm
Timesoft has implemented an Aderant Expert Back Office PMS at the offices of 65 fee earner employent law specialists Claeys & Engels in Brussels.

New on the Blog

The Insider's Orange Rag blog has been seeing a heated debate on the merits of the EDRM XML standard for e-discovery. Opinion is split between those who think it a good idea and those who regard it as an attempt by litigation support system vendors to hijack the standard. You can add your comments to this or any other stories, including Richard Susskind's views on Web 2.0, by visiting the blog.
www.theorangerag.com

Editorial: Are law firm IT spends up or down ?

The Insider is currently revising its *Insider 250 Chart*, which looks at the IT systems used by the UK's largest law firms. Now that accurate law firm turnover figures are more widely available, one of the new features we are considering is a column identifying approximately how much each firm spends on technology each year.

Our original plan was to take an average figure for IT expenditure as a percentage of turnover and extrapolate the real value from the firm's actual turnover. But then we realised there was no longer any clear consensus on what this average percentage figure might be. A figure of 5.5% has been the accepted norm for some time but this year we were quoted 3%, 4%, 5%, 7% and as high as 8.89%.

An added complication is that with many firms currently enjoying record turnovers, although their actual IT spend is the same or more than last year, as a percentage of turnover the figure has fallen. Nevertheless applied to a firm like Linklaters, a spread of 3% to 8.89% is meaningless as it could imply an IT spend of anything between £33 million and £100 million.

To shed some light on this issue, the Insider, in conjunction with a leading systems supplier, is planning a major research exercise into law firms' actual IT budgets. More details to follow but in the meantime this month's readers poll (to be found at **www.legaltechnology.com**) is investigating those elusive percentage figures, whether they have increased or decreased since last year, and what they are likely to be next year.

...Charles Christian

Opinion: Outsourcing - a marriage of convenience

Outsourcing your IT infrastructure management is a major decision for any IT director and its going to have serious and lasting implications. If it goes right, you can significantly cut costs, enhance service levels and generally make yourself popular with the fee earners. If it goes wrong, you could be letting yourself in for a world of recriminations and failed projects. With these two end games in mind, what can the legal IT director do to ensure that he's the one who gets it right?

Whether it's dipping your toe in with some offshored helpdesk or going the whole hog by sending all your IT to Mumbai, accessing low-cost overseas human resource is increasingly seen as the next logical step in IT procurement. However outsourcing isn't like any other IT purchase. Yes, you need to look at the capabilities and costs of competing vendors but the implementation process isn't just matter of throwing development time at it. You need to think not only about the technical and strategic ramifications but also about the softer, more relationship-focused aspect of the process.

The comparison I always try and draw with outsourcing is with a marriage. The engagement between outsourced provider and client is, whether you like it or not, going to be a relationship. It is (hopefully) going to be for the long term and will require give and take on both sides. So, when you're setting up your outsourced relationship you want to think about how that marriage is going to work.

The marriage contract

Law firms are notorious within the IT world for the emphasis they place on the contractual aspect of relationships with vendors. This is right and good but is something that is particularly relevant when you are thinking about establishing a lasting and effective working relationship with an outsourcing vendor. Because the relationship between you and your outsourced partner is necessarily going to be iterative and developing, you need to consider that, whilst contracts do oblige partners to deliver on their terms, they can also restrict or ➡

⇨ disincentivise those partners in equal measure. If you tie your outsourcing partner up in a web of delivery commitments and SLA's you could actually find that you are preventing them from going that extra mile and delivering you more or that you are stifling their creativity in delivering the best possible solution. Going back to the marriage analogy, when you're getting married you don't want to start the relationship by arguing over a hugely detailed pre-nuptial agreement. Yes, you want to have a shared understanding of the rights and responsibilities inherent in the marriage contract but you don't want to stifle what is hopefully an organic relationship by the imposition of restrictive obligations and limitations.

A long courtship
The marriage analogy can also be taken further when considering the way in which the relationship between client and outsourcing vendor should be developed. In the general scheme of things, we don't normally select a partner and then immediately marry them. Normally a period of time is spent in getting to know and understand the partner fully before committing to the totality of a married relationship and the same should be true of the outsourced IT engagement.

Whilst the temptation with outsourcing is to go the whole hog and offshore as much as possible as fast as possible, it is a process that has to be taken carefully and thoughtfully. Rather than selecting a partner and committing to an in-depth relationship, you should initially go on a few dates – perhaps giving them a peripheral, non-customer facing aspect of the department to manage. If that goes well you can move onto a more involved 'engagement' and then onto the commitment of a fully featured outsourced IT marriage. In this way you can be assured that not only can you trust the vendor but that the relationship is well bedded in and functioning before the full weight of the partnership is brought to bear on it.

Married life
The marriage analogy might be an extreme example but it does serve to illustrate a key point anyone thinking about outsourcing needs to consider. Outsourcing is not about buying a service and just plugging it in – it needs to be considered at a deeper level. The nature of outsourcing means that it involves people and relationships and the best way to make it work to your advantage is to ensure that those relationships are fully functioning.

... Jack Diggle, Prince OMC, www.princeomc.com

News in brief

Gordons extends TFB site with merger
Gordons LLP has extended its TFB Partner for Windows case and practice management system implementation following the acquisition of the Bradford firm David Yablon. Yablons, with 79 staff, previously ran a Videss system.
• Fifty user firm Mander Hadley & Co in Coventry has selected TFB to supply its new practice management system. Other recent TFB wins include Kinsey Jones in Cardiff, Austin Weinberg in London and Palmer Biggs Legal in Sussex.

500 days of continuous email uptime
US law firm Gunderson Dettmer is reporting that since installing a Teneros Application Continuity Appliance for Microsoft Exchange, it has enjoyed 500 days of unbroken email continuity. The firm now has a single Exchange Server supporting the email boxes of nearly 250 lawyers and staff at the firm's four offices across the United States, plus numerous laptops and mobile devices, whereas previously it had one fully redundant Exchange Server located in Boston to provide 24x7 uptime in an emergency.
• Other firms to have recently signed up for Teneros systems include Paul Hastings, Jones Waldo and Miles & Stockbridge. **www.teneros.com**

Workshare launches unified content system
Workshare has launched its Unified Content Protection Suite 6 (UCP) security system, designed to tackle information leaks and mobile data loss in what the company describes as "today's perimeter-less world" where information can spread outside organisations via email, portals, laptops, PDAs and USB memory sticks. Features include disk encryption and the ability to monitor new communications channels such as Blackberry traffic, instant messaging and web mail.

People & Places

New engagement for Hart
The IT and business process outsourcing consultancy Prince OMS, has appointed Andrew Hart as Engagement Manager. Hart has worked in the legal IT industry for 15 years, most recently as head of IT strategy at CMS Cameron McKenna.

G'Day and Goodbye
Andy Turner, the head of development at Cobbetts, has left the firm to relocate to Australia. He describes his departure as "reducing the firm's immoral footprint".

Richard is David
Last month we reported that Recommind had recruited a new vice president of product management from Zantaz but we got his name wrong. He is David (not Richard) Baskin. Apologies.

Legal Process outsourcing ahoy !
IP services company CPA is moving into the legal process outsourcing market and is currently recruiting for a Litigation Specialist and a Contract Review & Management Specialist. Send CVs to
alex@asteeleassociates.com
www.cpaglobal.com/cpa_legal_services

Norton Rose case study

The latest document to be added to the know-how resources section on the Insider website is a case study looking at the way Norton Rose has used ABBYY recognition server technology to help manage the digitising and retrieval of paper-based documents.
www.abbyy.com
www.legaltechnology.com

Insider readers poll: Blackberry is critical

For last month's Insider Readers Poll, we asked a series of questions to see whether the Blackberry device was still regarded as a handy gadget or had now become a business critical application for law firms. The first finding to stand out from the results was the wide range of tasks Blackberrys are now being used for: 100% said email (no surprises there), 95.5% said calendar and scheduling, 77.3% said they also used it as a mobile phone, 9.1% said it was being used for digital dictation, 4.6% said billing and 22.7% cited accessing 'other applications'.

This topic was also discussed at the lunch hosted by the Insider and Avanquest earlier this month, where the point was made that the ability of the latest versions of document management systems to integrate with Blackberry and effectively handle the filing of email messages had significantly boosted the status of the Blackberry from handy to critical. This view was echoed in the survey, which found that 66.7% of firms agreed that the Blackberry Enterprise Server (BES) must be considered a critical application for business continuity and disaster recovery purposes.

When asked how long a firm could function effectively without access to a BES, 27.3% said it would become critical after between 30 minutes and two hours; 22.7% said between two and four hours, and 41% said between eight and 24 hours. But there were also 9% who said a BES crash would have no impact on them. Given this apparent importance, it is surprising that only 50% of respondents said their Blackberry infrastructure was part of their firms' current DR and business continuity strategies. There again, the BES does seem robust, with 50% of respondents saying they had suffered no server failures over the past 12 months, and 45.5% saying they had only lost user connectivity on between one and five occasions.

As to who gets a Blackberry, the most popular response (45.5%) was all partners and fee earners who ask, with only 9% issuing them to all lawyers as a matter of course.

Digital dictation news in brief

More firms sign up for Bighand subscription service
Another six law firms, including Sloan Plumb Wood in Stamford, Lamb & Co in Moreton and Jordans in Cheltenham, have signed up for Bighand's subscription pricing model, which offers smaller firms a cost-effective alternative to an up-front investment in a new digital dictation system. The monthly subscription is 1/36th of the configuration cost, typically £1 per seat, per working day and subscribers qualify for free replacement hardware on the third anniversary of their commencing a contract.

Clifton Ingram integrate Winscribe with IRIS Videss
Thames Valley based Clifton Ingram has integrated its Winscribe DDS with its IRIS Videss software. Dictation can now be instigated from within the Videss Legal Office case management application and the resulting transcription stored against the relevant matter file.

Olympus extend 28-day free trial
Olympus has extended its 28-day free trial on selected digital dictation equipment – including the popular DR 2000 tethered/USB mike and the DS 3300 and 4000 portable recorders – until 31st December 2007.
www.olympus.co.uk/testdrive

nFlow in FAST triple whammy
We don't normally report Deloitte Technology Fast 50 rankings as, over the years, everyone and their uncle has featured in the listings however we're making an exception for DDS supplier nFlow. They have been ranked 23rd in the 2007 Deloitte Technology Fast 50, a ranking of the 50 fastest growing technology companies by revenue in the UK. Rankings are based on growth over five years, with nFlow achieving a 1597% growth rate. The rankings also see nFlow positioned as the fastest growing software company in the South East Region (excluding London) and the 4th fastest growing software company in the UK.

LawNet name Voicepath as preferred supplier
The LawNet group (comprising 62 mid-sized law firms and about 3000 lawyers across the UK and Ireland) has selected outsource transcription specialist Voicepath as a preferred supplier.
• Voicepath has also achieved ISO 9001 quality management standards accreditation. We know there is a lot of cynicism about these standards but, for example, ➪ if Voicepath did not have ISO 9001 they would not have won the LawNet deal, as LawNet requires both its member firms and any suppliers to demonstrate a commitment to quality standards.

Try-before-you-buy transcription
Apple Transcription (01706 231997) is offering prospective law firm and barristers chambers customers a try-before-you-buy deal on its online transcription service. Users upload dictation onto the Apple website and specify the timeframe in which they want it returned. The transcribed document is delivered as a Word file and users pay only for the number of minutes dictated. Apple, who name Irwin Mitchell as a flagship client, are offering one week's free, no obligation, transcription to prospects between now and 31st January.
www.appletranscription.co.uk

Lean, mean hardware machine
Grundig had added two new hardware digital dictation hardware devices to its product portfolio. The first is the Digta Conference Station, which appears to be a very handy device for conference and meeting scenarios where it is necessary to accurately and securely record proceedings but without the need to employ a note taker. The device relies on an array of eight microphones and what Grundig describe as a 'radar-like technology' or 'listening beam' to locate and home in on whoever is speaking at the time. This uses a sampling process, whereby background noises and sounds from other parts of the room are filtered out, while the speaker's voice is recorded in high quality audio.

The second new device is the Digta Sonic 420, the first portable digital recorder from Grundig to support the recently improved DSSPro standard for voice recording.
www.grundig-gbs.com

Barristers failing to update their websites

Back when pussy was still a kitten, Insider editor Charles Christian and others would regularly remind conference and seminar audiences of the importance of keeping website information up-to-date and using topical news stories to keep sites fresh and avoid becoming 'cobweb sites'. Clearly nobody was listening at the Bar as a new survey by web communications consultancy LawComms (07798 604851) has found that ten of the 22 sets of barristers chambers to win awards in last month's *Chambers Bar Awards* failed to give the new awards any prominence.

According to LawComms director Gerald Newman: several home pages mentioned awards from 2004 or 2005 with no reference to the 2007 awards or other more recent achievements; three sets had no news pages at all; four had badly out of date news items – in one instance the top item dating back to 2001; and three had their news pages buried several clicks away from the home pages in locations where visitors were unlikely to find them.
www.lawcomms.com

News in brief

D-I-Y HIPs from Searchflow
Searchflow has launched what it describes as a 'do-it-yourself HIPs solution" to help law firms assemble the key components of a HIP (including ordering EPCs) for their clients and estate agency contacts. The move follows a recent Law Society survey which found that 45% of law firm respondents were actively preparing HIP content in-house. Searchflow is also launching a series of modular services to provide locality specific searches covering flood, contamination, subsidence and neighbourhood information.
www.searchflow.co.uk

Fresh on the radar

Lawbyte link up with new case supplier
Papercase (01223 475046) are a new case management software supplier who have just announced an integration link-up with long-established legal software vendor Edgebyte Computers, the company behind the Lawbyte accounts system. The Papercase system, which also supports both SMS text messaging and online matter progress monitoring via an intranet, has a one-off price of £1500. This includes installation, software customisation and unlimited training, after which firms pay a fee of £20 per case. Papercase envisage this sum being passed on to clients as disbursements.
www.papercase.co.uk

Online time recording for barristers
Intendance (020 7242 7160) best known for its research and consultancy work in the law firm website space, has launched an online time recording service for barristers practicing in England & Wales. Called BarTime (and based on technology developed by Clicktime Inc in the United States) this is a hosted system that allows barristers to log time and expenses from anywhere with an internet link. Logged data can be viewed on the web, printed out, saved to PDF and exported to an Excel spreadsheet. BarTime also has its own reporting tools and data can be viewed in a number of different layouts and formats There is a one-off set up fee of £250 per chambers, with subsequent running costs as low as £10 per barrister per month. There is no minimum contract term and Intendance is currently offering a 30 day free trial of BarTime.
www.bartime.co.uk
www.clicktime.com
www.intendance.com

CaseCheck for online access to Scottish case summaries
Scottish legal IT and consultancy services provider Moore Legal Technology (0845 260 5664) has launched CaseCheck, an online service providing registered users free access to a continually updated archive (currently dating back to 2005) of Scottish Court and Employment Appeal case summaries. The service's founder Stephen Moore says he wants to apply Web 2.0/wiki technology to the law and provide lawyers with a platform on which they can comment on the latest case law developments.
www.casecheck.co.uk
www.moorelegaltechnology.co.uk

➯ Aquarium offers software as a service

Aquarium Software (0800 781 7570) has sold its AquariumClaims claims management system into Farley Dwek LLP, a new start-up (founded by two former Rowe Cohen partners) that specialises in RTA, personal injury and employers liability work under the brand name of Claims Made Simple. Aquarium Software – a company the Insider has not encountered before (the latest release of their software is version 2.1) – operate on a SaaS (software as a service) model, with the application delivered from their servers to user organisations via web browser. Farley Dwek have also opted for Aquarium's weekly pay-as-you-go pricing scheme. Other recent Aquarium customers include the Claims Assist claims management company.

• Aquarium has set up a "60 second" online test that allows law firms and claims management companies to compare their current processes with claims processing using the Aquarium system. The test, which can be found on the Aquarium website, is free and confidential, with results emailed back immediately to users.

www.aquariumclaims.com
www.claimsmadesimple.com

Recommind enhance federate search functionality

Recommind this week released version 5.1 of its MindServer enterprise search platform. The most significant new feature is the enhanced federated search capability, that will allow the user to search multiple internal and external systems and information repositories from a single, tightly integrated search interface. Other features include asynchronous searching, so users can receive some results without having to wait for other, slower, external sources to deliver their results and 'source grouping' of search results. Recommind is the first search technology specialist to respond to the challenge of Interwoven's universal search facility and Insider sources say version 5.1 also puts some clear water between Recommind and competitors such as Solcara and ISYS.

www.recommind.com

Debt recovery up by 360%

Southampton City Council say since switching to a new debt recovery system from Civica IT (01384 453400), its Legal Department is collecting 360% more debts than in previous years. The debt recovery team say the new system not only allows them to keep on top of new debts but also to make inroads into the backlog accumulated before the Civica system was implemented.

Insider subscriptions

Conveyancing – case management or else

Archie Courage, who heads the SDLT.co.uk conveyancing case management and SDLT forms software business, is predicting that as many as 3000 solicitors practices will close between now and 2010 as conditions within the residential property market become more difficult. He says the economics of conveyancing means firms without case management systems will not only be unable to handle the requirements of the new e-conveyancing regime but will also lack the costs framework to compete effectively.

Courage adds that over the past 12 months he has encountered a 10% increase in start-ups that have broken away from older, more conservative firms "that haven't seen the light " and are unwilling to invest in technology. "All firms need to be better at selling and to meet the needs of an increasingly demanding 'Middle England'. But I think there will always be a market for small local firms that are tech savvy and for the factories. It's the mid-sized firms that need to worry with their higher costs, sluggish responses to change and because they lack the volumes and negotiating clout of the factories."

Missing our Mark

Clearly we should never risk playing *Trivial Pursuits* with our readers, as we've lost track of the number who emailed in to say we named the wrong Mark in the 'Rolex and pirañas' story we ran in the October issue. The brains behind that stunt was not Mark Woodward of Solicitec/Visualfiles but Mark Fletcher of LawData. Sorry.

However Neil Ewin – Mark Woodward's former boss at LexisNexis Visualfiles – did remind us of another story. Once again it involves a SOLEX exhibition at the Barbican and, as was the practice in those days, most of the exhibitors used to stay overnight in a local hotel. On this particular occasion, the fire alarms went off in the middle of the night, the hotel was evacuated and a few dozen legal IT salesmen – many the worse for wear after a long evening in the bar – were left standing on the pavement in their dressing gowns. "Anyone seen Mark Woodward?" someone asked. Was he trapped in the hotel? Hadn't he heard the alarm? A couple of minutes later he emerged, dragging a crate of beer with him. "May as well enjoy ourselves," he said – and so the party continued.

10 years ago today...

The big news story in November 1997 was that Reynolds Porter Chamberlain had become the first UK law firm to sign up for the US-based CMS Open accounts and practice management system (now Aderant Expert). At the time this was being sold by PC Docs, who had bought the original CMS Data business but were themselves bought by Hummingbird before being sold to Solution 6 and later becoming Aderant. As part of the deal, RPC would work with PC Docs to ensure the PMS complied with VAT and English Law Society regulations. As part of a 'big bang' tech upgrade, RPC also purchased the Docs Open DMS (now Open Text).

Next Insider Colour Supplement

The next edition of our companion webzine – the Insider Colour Supplement – will be published on Monday 26 November.
www.theinsidermag.net

Legal Technology Insider

www.legaltechnology.com
www.theorangerag.com
www.theinsidermag.net