CHARLES CHRISTIAN's

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT'S HOT (AND WHAT'S NOT) IN LAW OFFICE SYSTEMS

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And don't forget to visit http://www.cloudnine.co.uk

AXXIA ADOPTS WINDOWS NT FOR CASE MANAGEMENT

Axxia Systems has become the latest UK legal technology supplier to adopt Microsoft Windows NT as a platform for its products, with the announcement that its Arista Case Management system is now available on NT as well as on Unix.

Axxia's announcement coincides with a surge in demand for case management software from law firms of all sizes. Practices **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** has spoken to cite several different reasons for this, including a desire to minimise case handling overheads, pressure from commercial clients and anticipation of post-Woolf Report reforms to the civil litigation process.

Comment... What is particularly interesting is the growing number of firms now specifying in their ITTs (invitations to tender) that financial and practice management systems will only be considered if the supplier can also deliver a compatible case management package.

Along with those companies, such as Avenue and Pilgrim, who can deliver integrated suites of practice and case management software, this trend is also prompting a growing number of partnerships between suppliers.

The SOS/Solicitec relationship is probably the best known but earlier this year Admiral Legal Systems and Mercury Computing entered into an agreement, so Admiral can now offer Mercury's

→ InControl case management software as a complement to its own LegalMind practice management system.

LTi sources report at least one law firm is currently dropping heavy hints that it would find the CMS Open system more attractive if it was also compatible with InControl, so perhaps Mercury may find other suitors.

Set in this context, the Axxia announcement is a shrewd move as it means that even if Arista does not win the practice management contract, it could still be in the bidding to supply the case management system. And, making it available on Windows NT gives it a flavour-of-the-month appeal its Unix products lack.

Axxia has yet to announce when its core Arista practice management system will become available on NT. \Box

OYEZ AND STRAKER TO MERGE AND FLOAT

Two of the oldest names in the UK office supplies market – Straker Holdings, dating back to 1863 and Oyez, which began life in 1888 as The Solicitors' Law Stationery Society – have agreed to merge.

The new Oyez Straker Group will have annual sales of about £70 million and plans to apply for a full Stock Exchange listing in 1998. The largest single shareholder in the new group is NatWest Ventures, which has provided venture capital to both companies.

Oyez chief executive David Cox becomes chief executive of the new group and plans to continue Oyez's core legal sector activities, including stationery, software and the extensive range of hard copy and electronic legal forms.

Bar News...

Following the item in the last edition about the "can't learn, won't learn" mentality of some barristers, LTi has learnt that Owen Davies, the vice chairman of the Bar Council's IT services committee, is now examining the viability of some form of IT training for barristers (see also page 5).

Meridian Law (0171 356 0880) reports that 15 sets of barristers' chambers are now running the company's Windows NT-based chambers administration software. The system has also been ordered by the Liverpool-based chambers of Robert Fordham QC. which previously used ACE Infinity. Meridian, who earlier this year bought the rights to the rival Falcon system only to see several users defect to ACE, hope to win over a number of other Infinity users.

VIDESS MAKING A BIGGER SPLASH

Although West Yorkshire-based Videss Computer Systems has been involved in the legal market since 1977, it has had a reputation for being a primarily "Northern" business. But, thanks to new offices and new products, this position is rapidly changing...

Founder and current managing director Paul Sanderson admits that over the last 20 years the company has tended to concentrate on customer service issues rather than marketing, with the result the majority of Videss users are located in the North of England.

But, at the end of last year Videss launched its new Windows NT-based Legal Office system and opened a new regional office in Reading. This is headed by long-time Videss employee Chris Rose (© 0118 925 4232), who was recently joined by ex-Avenue salesman Tom Bell.

While Legal Office is inevitably attracting interest from existing Videss users looking to upgrade, Sanderson says the new system is also making an impact on firms in the south of England who were not users – and in some cases "had not previously heard of Videss".

Comment... One of the first firms to order and subsequently go *live* with the new Videss system has been niche "City" practice Brough Skerrett, which has taken a 21-user NT system.

Videss has always been guilty of keeping a low profile but they must be doing something right. In recent months **LTi** has heard a number of suppliers grumbling that they had lost orders to Videss that they had expected to win. □

KEYSTONE DEVELOPMENT COMPLETED IN UK

Keystone Systems this week formally completes development work on the UK version of its software. The project has been piloted in conjunction with

Ashurst Morris Crisp and according to Keystone UK manager Colin Morris "came in on time and on budget".

Since opening for business in the UK last year Keystone has expanded its London office (* 0171 583 6393) staff to eight and will shortly be joined by two additional technical staff who previously worked on the Phillips Fox implementation project in New Zealand.

OUILL USERS SEE THE POINT

Just over a year ago Quill Computer Systems effectively reinvented the accounts computer bureau with the launch of its PINpoint accounting and bookkeeping service for law firms.

Since then 15 firms have signed up for the service, which actually exceeds Quill's target for the first 12 months. Along with maintaining accounts ledgers and supplying partners with regular financial management information, several firms have also opted to let Quill handle their payroll and time recording.

Quill managing director Tony Landes says the cost of using PINpoint is generally less than the cost of employing a part-time cashier "yet users also obtain the benefit of a modern computerised accounts system without the need for additional investment in hardware, software or specialist staff".

The type of firms inquiring about the service (♥ 0161 236 2910) "range from the reasonably well-organised to the totally chaotic" adds Landes.

AXXIA IN IRELAND

Last Wednesday Axxia Systems held its first user group meeting in Dublin for the growing number of Irish firms now using its Arista system. The software has been customised to comply with Irish Law Society rules and since 43 partner McCann Fitzgerald, the largest firm in the Republic, ordered Arista last September, six other Irish "top 20" practices have now signed up with Axxia.

CROSSTOWN OFFERS BYPASS FOR SOFT SOLUTIONS USERS

US software house Levit & James has launched a new utility program to help users of the SoftSolutions document management system migrate to the rival DOCS Open product.

The company's vice president Ian Levit told **LTi** that the US document management market was in flux with a lot of SoftSolutions' law firm users very disgruntled with the way the product has been handled by Novell and looking to migrate to DOCS Open.

"SoftSolutions may be effectively dead," says Levit, "but lawyers want to be able to migrate economically and safely."

Having previously developed the MassTransit product to convert Wang VS files to the PC environment, Levit & James recognised the opportunity for a similar product for SoftSolutions users.

The result was CrossTown and since its launch in the USA in November, it has been taken up by over 17,000 Soft-Solutions users in 60 major firms. These include Goodwin Procter & Hoar in Boston where during an 11 hour period CrossTown was to able migrate over 225,000 live documents to DOCS Open.

Levit says the system has a number of benefits: "It is quick, it is reliable, it produces a fully documented audit trail, and it is cheap". Pricing is based on the number of SoftSolutions' licences a firm has – in the UK prices would range from £2700 for a 10 user site to £6000 for 100 users. It is also flexible, supporting migration from all versions of SoftSolutions from 2.0 to 4.1 to all versions of DOCS Open since 2.5.2.

CrossTown in the UK... The system has already been used by Travers Smith Braithwaite and in the London offices of Sherman & Sterling. CrossTown is now being distributed by PC Docs Europe (* 01268 270601) and their resellers such as TiKiT (* 0171 717 1580).

➡ In a related development Tom Lee, one of the founders of Quintec International, has exercised his options under the terms of the takeover by PC Docs and retired. In his place steps David Shaw, who has been involved in the document management industry for many years with companies such as Wang and Xerox. □

WEDDINGS BELLS FOR DART

After a chequered history that has seen the company pinball from one business relationship to another, DART Legal Systems seems to have finally found its ideal partner and been taken over by Tech Computer Office Ltd (TCO).

TCO, which has its head office in Twickenham and a support office in the Midlands, specialises in accounts and fee earner support systems for architects. Although this may seem a long way from legal software, TCO director Kevin Sparks believes there is a potential "synergy" between the two professional markets that will allow "future developments to be run in parallel".

One particular area Sparks points to is both professions' growing interest in interactive internet capabilities. In addition, because the TCO and DART systems were both developed using the same software environment, it is also anticipated that it will be possible to pool technical and support facilities.

As a result of the takeover, the DART software will now be sold and supported through TCO's new legal systems division. This will be headed by Sparks but all key DART staff, including Geoff and Jane Morris have joined TCO.

TCO says its initial focus will be on two areas: the expansion of the DART system's legal aid support facilities and enhancing the case management side of the product to increase its appeal to larger commercial practices.

TCO Legal Systems can be contacted at Tech Computer Office, Oak House, 9 Briar Road, Twickenham TW2 6RB or ♥ 0181 893 9039. □

Hardwicks sign with ACE Specialist "City" firm Hardwick & Co has placed an £80.000 order with **Applied Computer** Expertise (ACE) for a 20 user practice management system. ACE's **Infinity software** will run across a Windows NT network supported by twin mirrored servers. The system will also support remote access from partners' homes. **Stephen Murphy of** ACE says the order was won against strong competition from Axxia, Pilgrim and Admiral.

Linetime win **Preston order Preston-based** solicitors Lavery Shuttleworth have ordered new accounts, time recording, database and strong room register software from legal systems supplier Linetime. Practice manager Karen Dawson said a key attraction was the system's solid legal accounting core.

Information updates...

Child Support
Act Survivors
Guide It has been
confirmed that
PDQ Publications
no longer produces
its software guide
to the 1991 Child
Support Act (see
Issue No.41, p.4
for first report).

For Holoway Report The annual survey on the state of the UK computer industry has now been published (see Issue No.38, p.2 for first story). The report costs £1950 and is available from Richard Holoway on € 01252 724548.

For the record
Gremlins crept into
the production of
the last edition of
LTi, the phone
number for Client
Appeal (see page 6)
should have read
101734 776775
and the number for
the London law
firm with PCs to
sell (see page 4)
should have read
10171 405 4440.

Speech recognition systems

IBM AND PHILIPS EXPAND NATURAL SPEECH RANGES

Both IBM and Philips have released further details about their "natural" or continuous speech recognition product ranges.

IBM's first general purpose continuous speech recognition system is called ViaVoice and will be available from September 1997 at a suggested retail price of £169 (+VAT). The hardware requirement is a minimum of a 166MHz Pentium MMX and 32Mb of RAM. A more advanced product called ViaVoice Gold will be available later this year.

IBM has also cut the price of its entry level VoiceType Simply Speaking for Windows 95 product from £76 to £42 (+VAT). This is a discrete rather than continuous speech product and will run on a lower specification 100MHz Pentium with 16Mb of RAM. Also announced is Simply Speaking Gold, an enhanced version of VoiceType. This suggested retail price of £84 (+VAT) and includes a text-to-speech capability (so users can have typed documents read back to them by the computer) and direct dictation into popular wordprocessing applications such Microsoft Word.

For further information call Elaine Richards of IBM UK on © 0171 202 5606 or check http://www.software.ibm.com/voicetype.

Philips (01206 75555 and http://www.speech.be.philips.com/) has confirmed the first version of its Speech-Magic continuous speech recognition system is only available on a Windows 3.1.1 platform. However SpeechMagic 2, which is undergoing final testing prior to release later this year, will be compatible with Windows 95/NT hardware.

Also available now is the first of Philips' language *contexts* for legal applications. Property Law, which was developed by legal publishers Legalease \Longrightarrow

➡ will be followed shortly by commercial law, litigation and legal aid contexts. Prices are expected to start at around £450 and all products will be put through extensive testing prior to release by a panel of law firms including Olswang, Simmons & Simmons and Taylor Joynson Garrett.

Comment... After several years of everyone offering me-too products, we are finally seeing differentiation creeping into the market, with IBM pitching for the mass-market stand-alone sector while Philips concentrates on the needs of networked professional practices.

Since its recent acquisition by the Belgian Lernout & Hauspie group, Kurzweil appears to be rethinking its strategy. That still leaves Dragon as a player but its new NaturallySpeaking continuous speech product is being squeezed by the competition. The IBM system is much cheaper, whereas the Philips is more sophisticated. For example with Dragon you cannot "talk" directly into an application but have instead to cut and paste from intermediary dictation windows. And you have to make any corrections as you go along whereas with Philips you can delay or delegate editing.

Still in the realms of speech recognition technology, the aptly named Speech Recognition Company (♠ 0171 373 1996) is now in a position to supply both the Dragon and IBM continuous speech products to law firms. Prices range from £169 for IBM to £489 for Dragon. □

WORD BUG FIX POSTED

Microsoft has posted a software patch onto its web site that repairs a problem in the Word 97 wordprocessing application that had been causing file compatibility problems for users of the earlier Word 6.0 program (see Issue No.40 for first report). The patch can be downloaded from http://www.microsoft.com/officefreestuff/word Just run the file Wrd6ex32.exe and it will automatically fix the bug.

Legal IT education

ON-LINE & WIRED AT KING'S COLLEGE

In recent editions a number of suppliers have complained about the lack of basic IT skills among lawyers. This is in complete contrast to the findings of a study conducted by David Wall of Leeds University's Faculty of Law, which suggests it is a "myth" that lawyers have "a widespread cultural resistance to IT".

In an attempt to shed some light on this subject, **LTi** spoke to Antony Smith, the IT co-ordinator at King's College London's School of Law. As a former IT consultant (with Ernst & Young) and practising solicitor (with Masons) Smith has been able to view the lawyer-and-technology debate from several different perspectives.

One of the findings of the Leeds study is that three-quarters of law students now have some IT skills. Smith concurs with this view but points out that many of the "IT awareness courses" available are primarily generalist in nature. In fact one of Smith's current projects is "upgrade" the courses to make them both more "legally oriented" and to better reflect the needs of postgraduate students from undergraduates – and indeed first year students from those in their final year.

But, Smith adds, these developments are irrelevant if students do not have sufficient access to the hardware. This is a serious issue highlighted in the second BILETA (British & Irish Legal Education Technology Association) report on IT for law schools which found that law schools often lost out to their scientific brethren in the allocation of technological resources.

The position is changing, for example King's is planning to install 25 student workstations within the school, which will complement another 60 sited either within or close to the main law

→ library. "It is still not enough, but we have to start somewhere," says Smith.

An added complication is academics have traditionally been heavy users of Apple Macintosh technology but as none of the legal CD-Rom titles used by the school come in a Mac format, King's is now in the process of migrating to an all PC environment.)

Along with access to CD-Roms and online services such as Lexis, which are probably not as widely used in private practice as in academia, King's is also actively pursuing an internet/intranet strategy – another technology that is only just starting to take off in law firms.

The school intranet is being used not just to post up a wide range of staff-student notices (tutor lists, timetables etc) but also as a way of delivering teaching materials, including interactive notes for the school's CAL (computer assisted learning) courses. Smith says student feedback has been positive and hopes their experience of the electronic delivery of legal materials will act as a catalyst for both academics and students to make greater use of IT.

As for the internet, all desktop PCs in the school have access to email (via Euodora) and the web (Navigator is the installed browser). The web is being used to help create online discussion groups for students on distance learning courses. For instance students on the EC law course are physically located throughout Europe.

Email is also rapidly emerging as a popular way for students to file their essays and generally correspond with tutors. In fact Smith is currently involved in another project which is looking at ways of shielding tutors from being inundated by so much email.

Reflecting the increasingly commercially-aware nature of modern law schools, Smith's contract with King's also allows him to undertake IT consultancy commissions in the outside world. He can be contacted on ● 0171 873 2457.

Swings and roundabouts for Informix

Troubled database company Informix is currently enjoying mixed fortunes.

The good news is it has just been awarded a contract worth \$30 million over the next 10 years to install new administrative systems in over 700 US courts. The bad news is it is to make another 500 staff redundant.

However, there is consolation in the news that Informix is hiring Jo
Marengi as its new president. Marengi, who was previously the president of Novell, is the second president Novell has lost in 14 months. Novell is also making just over 1000 staff redundant.

Here in the UK legal system integrator TiKiT (\$ 0171 717 1580) has formed a "strategic alliance" with Novell network specialist Doherty Associates.

Seen around the Web...

The Bar Council has launched an official web site.
The content is perfunctory and the press releases/latest news section is blank. The URL is http://www.barcouncil.org.uk

Legal systems integrators
Text Systems (
0171 403 4033)
now have a web site

http://www.textsys.
co.uk Down load
times were slow
when LTi accessed
the site but at least
it contains
comprehensive
information about
the company's
products and
services.

New would-be legal lifestyle magazine Legal Life has a web site at http://www.u-net.com/tgroup/leglife Reflecting the magazine's origins in the recruitment sector, the site has no editorial content just a series of links to legal jobs agencies.

Communications & the Net

56 KBPS SPEEDS FINALLY ARRIVE

After repeated delays, high speed 56 kbps modem technology has finally arrived in the UK.

Two internet service providers (ISPs) have already rolled out full 56 kbps facilities to their dial-up customers. These are Global Internet (© 0181 957 1047 or http://www.globalnet.co.uk) and NETCOM (© 0990 668008 or http://www.netcom.net.uk). Unfortunately Global has opted for the *K56Flex* standard whereas NETCOM has gone for the rival *x2* system from US Robotics.

Availability

Modems supporting the K56Flex standard should be available from most suppliers and retail outlets. The Hayes Accura sells from £120 (+VAT). US Robotics (which has also finally completed its merger with the 3Com Corporation) has posted a free downloadable x2 upgrade for its Sportster Flash modems on its bulletin board at ● 0118 969 2200 or check http://x2.usr. co.uk for details of upgrade options on other US Robotics modems. The company has also launched a scheme allowing users of older non-US Robotics 14.4 kbps modems to trade them in for a new 56 kbps Sportster Flash for £125 (+VAT) and save £70 on the normal RRP.

BROWSING TO GET FASTER?

Although 56 kbps modems have only just become commercially available, some manufacturers are already talking about 100+ kbps modems being launched by the New Year. However, there is an alternative to faster hardware in the form of Internet acceleration software.

According to IMSI, who have just launched NetAccelerator, which is claimed to be the first product of its kind in the UK, the software takes advantage of modem idle time to "look ahead and "

intelligently" cache both the textual and graphical content of a web page's associated links.

The way it works is that if a user is looking at a particular site's home page, the IMSI software operates behind the scenes to seek out and download all the related hypertext links on that page, so when one of the links is chosen, the page is displayed almost instantly. IMSI claim it can increase browsing speeds by a factor of twelve.

NetAccelerator, which is expected to sell in the UK for between £30 to £40 a copy, is compatible with both Netscape Navigator 3.0 and Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0. For details call ● 0181 581 2108 or visit http://www.imsisoft.com where a 30-day free trial version of NetAccelerator can be downloaded. □

DUAL-PURPOSE SECURITY SYSTEM FOR EMAIL

US-based Wormhole Technologies Inc has launched what it claims to be the first internet software product to combine both file and email encryption, as well as anti-virus protection and full email functionality within a single application.

Called SecurText, the system is specifically designed for both internet-savvy and "non-technical" law firms who want secure "virus-free, hacker-free" email messaging and correspondence storage.

US pricing starts at \$99 however the company is looking for UK outlets. For further information call \$+1 201 325 8100 or check http://www.wormholenet.com

Related development... ITSEC, the UK government-backed IT security, evaluation and certification body, has revamped its web site at http://www.itsec.gov.uk to include an online version of its information service. The site includes an extensive product listing and is intended to provide businesses with an easy means of assessing software security systems such as internet firewalls.

TRENDS - LAWYERS DON'T SURF

Statistical evidence garnered from a number of recent surveys suggests that not only do lawyers not surf but they have also failed to recognise that increasing numbers of their clients and prospects are now surfing the Net.

Figures from the Law Society Research & Policy Planning Unit (see *Issue No.41*, page 2 for report) found that while 54% of solicitors in private practice have PCs on their desks, only 14% have access to the internet for even email.

This lack of enthusiasm is reflected in figures produced by the organisers of the *Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition*. A survey found that of the 6,600 people attending the 1997 event, 40% were partners in private practice. Asked to rate the communications tools (after the telephone) they found essential for everyday business, 82% named fax, 32% named mobile phones and just 23% said the internet.

A similar gloomy picture is painted by the legal IT supplier Applied Computer Expertise (ACE). At a recent seminar on the business potential of the internet for lawyers, out of (in the words of ACE) 55 "computer savvy" partners present, only three had ever used a web browser.

Turning to the use of the web by lawyers, there are currently approximately 12000 solicitors practices (including sole practitioners) in England & Wales. But, according to the latest figures on the Delia Venables Legal Resources web site at http://www.venables.co.uk/ as at 14th June there were just 210 firms in the whole of the UK (including Scotland, Northern Ireland, Channel Isles, the Isle of Man) and the Republic of Ireland with web sites. Excluding those belonging to "foreign" jurisdictions, this leaves just over 190 firms in England & Wales – or a mere 1.6% of the total.

Comment... Of these, approximately40% are D-I-Y sites comprising home

→ page plus "corporate" information about their firms. In other words typical "first generation" web sites. About 25% are either badly in need of updating, littered with "under construction" notices or containing so many Java and similar multimedia effects that most surfers will lose interest and go elsewhere before the pages download. And, less than a dozen possess features that could be described as interactive and transactional.

But, it is interesting to note that of the sites listed, over one fifth are "new" sites that have only gone *live* since the beginning of April this year.

For the record, a new report by the market research group BRMB (http://www.brmb.com) suggests there has been a 75% increase in the number of people with online access in the UK during the last 12 months and that 3.4 million people (71% are male, 47% are social group A/B) can now access the internet. (Although most do it from work rather than home.) BRMB also predicts that by the Year 2000, nearly 40% of the UK population (ie about 20 million people) will have become regular surfers.

Legal IT Diary Dates

C Practical Use of the Internet Workshops In conjunction with NKT Computer Consultants, Michael Kaye, senior partner of Kaye Tesler & Co, will be giving presentations on how solicitors can use interactive internet services to generate new business and expand their practices on: 2nd July, Royal Scot Hotel, Central London, 15th July, Ingram Hotel, Glasgow & 16th July, Grosvenor Hotel, Edinburgh. Admission £40 (+VAT). Morning and afternoon sessions, followed by workshops. Attendance attracts 2 CPD points. Call 181 809 6756 for details.

C July 10 - Norwel User Group Meeting at Radisson Grafton Hotel, London. Call Alison Bagnall on **⑤** 0161 945 3511 for details. □

☞ INSIDER SERVICES...

Need help or information?

If you need a phone number, product name, contact point or any other elusive item of information concerning legal technology, just call the Insider Info Line on \$\inf\$ 01379 687518.

Hotlinks

Readers with internet access can visit the Insider Hotlinks pages at http://www.cloudnine. co.uk/hotlinks/ where there are hyperlinks to all the web sites mentioned in this and previous issues.

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Issue No 43 of
the Insider will be
published on
Monday 14th July,
don't miss it.

Marketing systems

MANAGING CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

A few weeks ago LTi reported that systems integrators TiKiT had been appointed UK distributors for a new "contact relationship management system" called InterAction (see Issue No.38, p.5). But is this just a fancy name for a PIM/diary organiser?

Recently **LTi** spoke to Terry Holt, president of Interface Software, the US company that designed the system, who was adamant that InterAction "really is something different".

According to Holt, the problem many law firms face is that while they now have the technology to manage their finances, documents and legal work, the actual relationship with the client is still a "disparate affair" with data stored on time recording systems, partners' files and marketing records. "The result is firms cannot keep track of data and effort is wasted duplicating information."

As an illustration of the problem, Holt points to the fact that while it is usually the job of marketing departments to maintain the relationship with clients, all the day-to-day activity actually takes place at the legal team end. "It was to tackle these issues that we designed InterAction as a way of integrating and

relating all the client-facing data that individuals, departments and the firm as a whole now collect."

Depending on user numbers, InterAction sells from £200 down to £80 per seat. TiKiT is on ♥ 0171 717 1580. □

PROSPECT LOCATOR ON CD

Experian (formerly the CCN Group) has launched a new low cost CD-Rom direct mail product. Called Prospect Locator, it combines UK mailing lists with the Mosaic classification system identifying households by postcode "characteristics", such as "High Spending Greys", "Bijou Home-makers", "Gentrified Villages" and even "Graffitied Ghettos". Prices start at £299 (this includes a copy of the book Marketing on a Restricted Budget). For details call © 0115 934 43640.

LATE NEWS...

Keystone UK has confirmed it will begin rolling out its practice management system to its five UK sites on 11th July, with a view to the first firm going *live* in early 1998. Keystone also plans to increase its consulting staff in London to 13 by the end of this year. These will include two senior consultants who worked with Phillips Fox in New Zealand (the site went *live* in November 1996) plus staff Keystone will recruit locally.

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