

# LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

## iNSIDER

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

In association with



**In this edition...**

**Smith Bernal sets out web publishing plans... 2**

**Windows upgrades is it a pain? ... 3**

**Litigation support news... 4**

**Sellers Imago in low cost litigation software move... 4**

**Jobs - how to stop the rot and keep your IT staff... 5**

**IT salaries - who earns what... 5**

**Hexar and HP in least cost fax partnership... 6**

**Latest legal internet news... 6**

**No spam today, keeping junk email at bay... 7**

**Legal technology diary dates... 7**

**LTi services, index and advertising... 8**

## AIM GOES FOR 32-BIT NT AND A RESTRUCTURE

According to the last Robson Rhodes legal IT survey, AIM was the largest legal systems supplier in the UK. Now it has announced a new product strategy and corporate restructuring which deputy chairman Mike Booth says will keep AIM at the forefront of the market.

On the product side, AIM last week unveiled Evolution Client/Server, a new Windows NT client/server version of its Evolution accounts and PMS product. The system is available for delivery now.

As well as migrating to a 32-bit technology platform and supporting ODBC compliant databases, AIM has introduced various enhancements to the software, including redeveloped marketing and desktop billing modules that take advantage of a Windows 95 environment.

The new version of Evolution, which also features an entry-level case management system, is available in alternative versions that comply with the solicitors' accounts rules of the English and Scottish Law Societies. AIM also says it is committed to continuing to support and develop the original version for Evolution (now called Evolution Classic) for Unix users.

As part of the Evolution Suite, AIM has also launched: Evolution Advanced Case Manager - a Windows system available both as a generic system and ready-made modules to handle specific applications; Debtco for Windows - a Windows NT version of the widely used Debtco II debt collection package; and a new product called "My Work". This is a fee earner desktop-style utility ➔

➔ providing fee earners with a number of personal productivity tools, including to do lists, reminders of bill drafts awaiting approval and the ability to analyse their work by time and billing.

On the corporate side, the various subsidiary companies forming the AIM Holdings Group have been consolidated into two new operating divisions: Retail & Warehousing (which is not involved in the legal market) and Legal & Finance, focussing on solicitors in private practice, local government and inhouse legal departments. ...continued on page 4 ➔

## IN CONTROL UP FOR SALE

Systems integrator Mercury Computing has folded following a boardroom split over "irreconcilable differences" between the company's two main shareholders.

Mercury was probably best known in the legal market for its InControl Legal case management software, which was used by a number of major firms in Wales and the South-West, including Morgan Bruce and Clarke Willmott Clarke. The software was also sold by Admiral Legal Systems through a distribution deal.

The rights to InControl software are owned by a separate company, Impact Management, and former Mercury director Alby Smith hopes it will be possible to sell the InControl side of Mercury's business, including the development team, as a going concern and so continue to provide support for existing users.

Smith told L*Ti* he had received serious approaches from two legal IT suppliers in the UK and one in the USA. Another option being explored is a rescue deal by a consortium of law firms who already use the software. Prior to Mercury closing, InControl generated about £50,000 of maintenance income a year. □

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# LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

## LATEST NEWS COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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### New reports module from Axxia

Axxia Systems (☎ 0118 960 2602) has added a new reporting module to its Arista software. This will allow users to access files stored across multiple databases and then pull out relevant information to create reports by means of a simplified interface that employs plain English and graphical icons rather than computerese.

### Pardoes upgrade with Linetime

Somerset solicitors and longtime Linetime users Pardoes have upgraded their computing facilities by installing a kilostream link between their Bridgwater head office and new branch office in Taunton. Pardoes say the move lays the foundation for installing Windows based fee earner support systems from Linetime (☎ 0113 250 0020).

### SMITH BERNAL PLANS THREE TIER PUBLISHING MOVE

Following the announcement earlier this autumn that law reporters Smith Bernal International was diversifying into the online legal information services market (see L*Ti* 46 & 47) publishing manager Sarah Andrews has given L*Ti* a further briefing on the company's publishing strategy.

According to Andrews, after talking to potential users of Smith Bernal services, the company's plans have "crystallised into three core product streams" that will all be available from 1st January 1998 via the company's web site at <http://smithbernal.com>

The three services are:

- Case Track - a daily update service monitoring the status of (initially) Court of Appeal and Crown Office cases from listing through to the availability of a report. Subscribers to this service will also be alerted to relevant cases as soon as judgment is given,

- Transcripts - Smith Bernal currently make transcripts available on paper and disk. From January it will be possible to order, download and immediately access them directly from the company's web site. Subscribers to the Case Track service will also have direct access to transcripts.

In addition to the commercial services, it will also be possible to access and download transcripts of all cases on the Smith Bernal web site free of charge once they are over 28 days old.

- Value Added Joint Ventures - Smith Bernal is also investigating disseminating case transcripts in partnership with other electronic legal publishers. The first of these deals has already been signed up with Context, who are now piloting a new service called *JUSTIS Daily Judgments* which goes "live" in January. Call Context on ☎ 0171 267 8989 for details and see L*Ti* 46 for first report. ➔

### ➔ Related Developments

Along with court reporting and now its new internet publishing services, Smith Bernal has also made a name for itself through its development of courtroom technology, including the LiveNote realtime transcription system.

This was due to go into action again at the end of last month in a trial due to be heard at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand. The plan was for it to be integrated with a graphics package that could display on screen a simulation of the events leading up to the action, which involved allegations of arson.

Unfortunately the case (*Bansall*) before Mr Justice Rattee, settled before anyone could use the system. Instructing solicitors were Davies Arnold Cooper and Hammond Suddards. □

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### TECHNOLOGY WILL LET LAWYERS BE PUBLISHERS

Publishing consultants Catalyst Publishing Solutions (☎ 01993 708700) say the latest version of the Folio siteDirector software, which is now available in the UK, has the potential to give both smaller publishers, as well as other providers of specialist information such as law firms, the ability to commercially publish material on internet web pages.

Folio's best known product in the UK is FolioVIEWS, which is widely used in CD-Rom based legal publications. However Catalyst director Nigel Phelps says the attraction of siteDirector is it allows CD-Rom material to be published on CGI-compatible web servers in a Folio files format without the need for a lengthy and costly conversion process.

In addition, siteDirector also includes an API (in effect the software tools) to link the web information to a pay-by-usage metering mechanism. It then becomes possible for publishers (in fact Matthew Bender in the USA is already doing this) and law firms to sell material from their web sites on a per-page or per-topic basis. □

## WINDOWS UPGRADE STRATEGIES - IS IT ALL A PAIN ?

Over the past few months Microsoft has managed to sow confusion over its plans for the next generation of its Windows operating system. Add to this the conflicting claims being made for network computers (NCs) as a viable alternative to personal computers (PCs) and it is hardly surprising some firms have put their Windows upgrade strategies on "hold". LTi looks at some of the options...

**Should you bother with the Windows 95.5 upgrade?** This is an interim upgrade to Windows 95 intended as a stop-gap before Windows 98 is launched in the spring (although it may turn out to be the early summer) of 1998.

New features include updated MSN (Microsoft Network) and CompuServe clients, as well as an integrated version of Microsoft's new Internet Explorer 4.0 web browser. However, as the web browser is already freely available via the internet and the other elements are hardly to-die-for features, LTi suggests ignoring 95.5 and waiting for the full upgrade next year, which will include all these elements and more. (Readers buying new PCs in early 1998 are likely to find the hardware comes ready loaded with 95.5.)

### Should you upgrade to Windows 98 or go to Windows NT 5.0 Workstation?

Although both upgrades will be launched at approximately the same time next year and contain similar features, the party line now coming from Microsoft is that Windows 98 is just a consumer upgrade and NT 5.0 the serious business option. At a recent conference Bill Gates himself said organisations still running Windows 3.1 should upgrade to NT 5.0.

**Should you stay with PCs or move to NCs?** Although the supermarket group Safeway recently announced it was

➔ planning to replace 2000 personal computers with a network of NCs, the view at LTi is that NCs are an over-hyped gimmick that will never become a serious challenger to Windows-based PCs.

This view is echoed in a new report *The Risks and Rewards of Network Computers for Business* from IT analysts Ovum. Ovum believe PCs will continue to dominate the business desktop and suggest the only viable alternative is likely to be "Windows terminals" (such as the Citrix Winterm system) that allow "lite" users of Windows applications (such as secretaries only using wordprocessing) to get by with lower cost hardware. Further details can be found at <http://www.ovum.com/news>

➔ **Comment...** One upgrade that is worth pursuing is Windows CE 2.0, the first major upgrade to Microsoft's Windows style operating system for handheld PCs (H/PCs). New features include a pocket version of the PowerPoint presentations application, support for email attachments and automatic desktop PC to H/PC file synchronisation.

A number of H/PC manufacturers have already committed to shipping CE 2.0 in new models and Casio, Philips, NEC and Hewlett Packard have announced upgrade schemes for existing H/PC users. For more details visit <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsce/hpc/> ☐

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## CARPE DIEM UPGRADE

At the Comdex Fall IT trade show in Las Vegas next week, the time tracking products division of Sage US will be previewing the new version 2.2 of the Carpe Diem time logging system.

Carpe Diem is used by a growing number of major law firms in the UK and the new version of Carpe Diem (whose developer ProSoft was recently acquired by Sage) includes improved data import facilities and comes bundled with a copy of the Seagate Crystal Reports report writing application. ☐

## Old faces in new places

➔ Terry Lawley, until recently a main board director at Laserform Law, has joined Andrew Levison's team at the David Andrews Partnership, the legal consulting arm of Grant Thornton. Barry Hawley Green of Laserform said the move was entirely amicable and reflected Lawley's desire to develop his career in new directions. Lawley will be working as a senior consultant at David Andrews on a variety of projects, including some consultancy for Laserform.

➔ Masons' outgoing IT director Martin Telfer, who is joining Mallesons Stephen Jacques in Australia, says he will actually have little to do with the firm's Keystone implementation as his main role is to assist with an overhaul of all support services and ensure IT delivers real benefits to clients and lawyers.

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# LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

## LATEST NEWS COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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### Litigation support news

☞ **Litigation support specialist Bowhawk Consulting** (☎ 01252 716694) has launched a revised version of its web site at <http://www.bowhawk.com>. Like the new site of rivals Elliott Slone, (see last issue of LTi) the Bowhawk site includes an online quotations facility and recruitment pages but it is marginally easier to use.

☞ **Publisher BTC** has just produced the 1997/98 edition of its *Document Management Resource Guide*. Although it is packed with supplier, services and product information, with the exception of DPA-Egami, none of the companies listed in this £15 guide specialise in the legal market. There is also an online version of the guide available on the web at <http://www.net-serv.co.uk/docman>

### SELLERS IMAGO PLAN LITIGATION SUPPORT FOR ALL

**Law reporting services-to-legal systems provider Sellers Imago has launched a new software product the company believes will make litigation support an affordable technology for barristers and law firms of all sizes.**

The result of a recent merger between law reporters and legal software specialists, like market leaders Smith Bernal, of LiveNote fame (see also page 2), Sellers Imago is offering a mixture of conventional and electronic law reporting and transcription in conjunction with litigation support services. Where the company breaks with the competition is in also selling a stand alone Windows litigation support package called T/A-Law Standard.

☞ **Comment...** LTi recently tested this software in its Windows 95 format (it will also run under Windows 3.1) and found it a well-constructed, intuitive product that makes maximum use of the latest Windows technology. If you are familiar with the litigation process, using this program should be second nature as it performs on screen all the tasks – searching for text, highlighting passages, adding annotations, producing analysis reports – previously performed manually with card index systems, Post-it notes and coloured marker pens.

True enough, there are other easy to use litigation support products on the market but none are so aggressively priced as this, retailing for just £195 (+VAT) per single user licence. At this price (and there is even a money-back guarantee) it becomes a viable option for any law firm – not just the City of London giants – to at least dip their toes into litigation support technology.

It is also worth noting this is a full-blown product capable of handling an unlimited number of cases – and an unlimited number of documents in ➔

➔ each case. Perhaps more importantly, when a big case does come to court, T/A Law Standard is fully compatible with other Sellers Imago products and bureau services, including the T/A-Law Realtime onscreen transcription system, which works along similar lines to LiveNote.

Sellers Imago can be contacted on ☎ 0800 590012. Readers with web access can download a free evaluation copy from <http://www.sellersimago.com> ☐

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### DEVELOPMENTS AT AIM

➔ *continued from front page...* The Legal & Finance division, which will trade as “AIM”, encompass the business activities conducted by AIM Professional (English & Welsh legal sector), AIM Solutions (the old Scottish-based H G Usher business), and AIM Data Systems (previously Law Data). As part of the rationalisation, the resources within the former subsidiaries are also being consolidated to remove duplication of effort and provide what AIM say will be more focussed product development and support services.

Along with Mike Booth, the new management team at AIM is headed by managing director Peter Garton, with Jim Chase taking responsibility for product development strategy, Anne Mansfield heading customer services, including training and support, and John Beasty in charge of technical services.

The legal division's head office is located in Hull (☎ 01482 326971), with branch offices in Leeds, London and Edinburgh.

☞ **Comment...** Jim Chase of AIM says the company undertook “a complete bottom-up redevelopment” of its core practice management system because “we recognised the trend towards the Windows NT client/server platform is unstoppable”. Fair comment. Less than three years ago there were only two legal IT suppliers with serious Windows NT offerings. Now, after AIM's moves, there are only a couple of suppliers who don't have NT products. ☐

## STOPPING THE ROT - HOW TO KEEP AN IT TEAM TOGETHER

If you are a law firm IT director or manager, you face challenging times hanging on to your staff. The first sniff of trouble or better money and they are off. So how do you keep your quality staff. Longbridge recruitment consultant Craig Coverman reports...

The starting point is to look at the salary and fringe benefits being provided to the team members. Salaries have to be broadly competitive to keep the person in the job – staff have a habit of finding out if they are being underpaid! Benefits packages are also important although less so to younger/junior staff, who tend not worry much about pensions.

A factor of equal or possibly even greater importance is experience. The “holy grail” for most IT staff is to have a job where they can continue to build up their technical expertise. This is achieved either through training or providing a wider breadth of work.

Consider “empowering” your team with management responsibilities over junior staff or getting them involved in project and strategy work. This additional responsibility (and with it kudos) is more likely to keep a person in their role than a few thousand more on their salary.

Lynn Gemmell, Networks Manager at Lawrence Graham, suggests an ideal occasion is when people **do** leave a department as this provides an excellent opportunity to reassess the people you still have on board, to see if any of them would like to swap jobs or take on some of the responsibilities of the individuals who have left.

This is all well and good but without solid leadership, in the current buoyant market, there is a risk an IT team will just drift away to other jobs. Witness a recent hire by one firm: the candidate had just received over £5,000 of training from his last firm but due to what he perceived as an unacceptable working ➔

➔ environment caused by weak management, he moved on. One firm’s loss was another’s gain.

IT staff are no different from most people in wanting to be led. A firm hand at the helm, providing a clear message as to the direction and vision of the IT function will help pull a team together. Managers therefore need to master the following skills...

- **Communication:** providing direction for the IT strategy and communicating the “vision” to the team.

- **Listening:** allowing a team to air their views, letting them feel they are listened to and not being deaf to criticism.

- **Providing feedback:** monitoring staff and valuing their worth, both monetarily and with praise.

- **Loyalty to the team:** being supportive generally and constructive when dealing with weaknesses.

- **Setting expectations:** don’t make false promises. The legal IT market is becoming more interesting technologically but don’t promise experience people won’t pick up. (Again, consider providing a breadth of experience – one candidate we were sure was going to quit, stayed because of a move to his firm’s Internet team.)

In the current market it is more imperative than ever to avoid the slippery slope of a “mass exodus” where once staff lose confidence and start moving on, it is difficult to stop the rot – as a number of firms found to their cost this summer.

One legal IT director said his firm’s management were most upset by a recent run of departures but conveniently forgot that for the last five years the team had been extremely stable.

Perhaps because the IT jobs sector was so quiet during the early-to-mid 1990s, firms have grown complacent and risk overlooking the fact people do move on. Now the market is busy again, firms need to anticipate the possibility of departures and be creative in keeping teams happy and fulfilled. That way you improve the odds of hanging on to your team when all around are losing theirs. □

## IT Salaries

ITi has been conducting a survey of the salaries now being earned by senior law firm IT staff. Although there are a few “stars” earning between £80,000 and £100,000 a year, the going rate for IT directors in the London area falls in the £55,000 to £70,000 bracket. For firms in the regions the rate is nearer £45,000 to £55,000.

For IT managers, either working under an IT director or responsible for running a smaller firm’s IT operation, the rate is £40,000 to £55,000. (Regions £30,000 to £40,000.)

For help desk supervisors, senior technical support staff and network supervisors, salaries are in the £24,000 to £30,000 range compared with £17,500 to £28,500 outside London.

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# LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

## LATEST NEWS COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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### Seen around the Web...

☞ **Derwent Information**, which specialises in the supply of patent information, has launched **Patent Explorer**. This is a new web based "point and click" system for searching through the records of the US and European Patent Offices. The service can also be configured to scan for specific types of new patent and send the user an email alert when a registration is pending. The main Derwent URL is <http://www.derwent.com> however a preview of the new service can be found at <http://www.patentexplorer.com>

☞ **Butterworths** later this month publishes *Researching the Web*, a new book by Nick Holmes and Delia Venables looking at the various legal resources available on the internet. The book will be available from book shops priced £45.

### HEXAR AND H-P IN JOINT "LEAST COST" FAXING PROJECT

Network fax system developer Hexar has announced the formation of a "strategic partnership" with Hewlett Packard to produce what is claimed will be a cost effective alternative to the conventional fax machine.

The project involves the integration of Hexar's FaxSwitch fax server software with Hewlett Packard's HP Network ScanJet 5 network scanner hardware to create a system that will allow users throughout a law firm to scan and fax out hardcopy documents.

In addition, because FaxSwitch supports an LDAP (Lightweight Directory Access Protocol) centralised directory and RedBox media router technology, every fax sent from a scanner can be "least cost" routed over corporate LANs, WANs, intranets and the internet to ensure fax transmission charges are kept to the minimum.

☞ **Comment...** The deal with Hewlett Packard is a useful complement to the FaxSwitch system, which already gives users the ability to send faxes created electronically (ie on a WP system) directly from the desktop, as well as receive and print off incoming faxes.

With international fax charges now accounting for almost half the phone bill in larger law firms, least cost routing is also an attractive option.

Hexar will be running seminars to promote the integrated FaxSwitch/HP option, call Simon Watkins on ☎ 0181 563 9000 for details. ☐

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### END OF LINE FOR CC:MAIL ?

Lotus Development has announced that Lotus cc:Mail Release 8.1, the latest version of email software, will be available in the UK from the end of November.

The new release features a number of enhancements, including support for ➔

➔ Novell's SPX networking protocol and version 3.0 of Microsoft's Internet Information Server (IIS), as well as a revised Windows 95/NT client.

Lotus is also stressing that Release 8.1 supports internet security and connectivity standards that will "help existing cc:Mail customers upgrade to Lotus Notes and Domino".

This aspect of the announcement has fuelled speculation among users that Lotus is planning to phase out the cc:Mail product and wants to encourage users to migrate to the Notes and Domino environment.

Release 8.1 is expected to retail for £35 per user for Lotus Passport volume purchasers. Customers who purchased cc:Mail maintenance through the Passport programme will receive Release 8.1 automatically at no charge. The full list of cc:Mail Release 8.1 components can be found at <http://www.ccmil.com> or call ☎ 01784 455445 for details. ☐

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### NOVELL TO OFFER BETTER NT MANAGEMENT

Novell has released details of the soon-to-be released Version 2.5 upgrade to its ManageWise local area network (LAN) management system.

New features include the Novell Application Launcher (NAL), which should reduce operating costs by allowing network managers to distribute and upgrade software electronically rather than having to visit and physically install the programs on each user's desktop.

Version 2.5 also incorporates InocuLAN virus protection software and improved Windows NT desktop management for networks running on NT servers.

The product will begin shipping later this month. All customers who have purchased ManageWise 2.1 on or after 1st September 1997 will receive a free ManageWise 2.5 upgrade.

For more details call ☎ 01344 724000 or visit <http://www.novell.com/products/managewise> ☐

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# LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

## LATEST NEWS COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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### INTERNET JUNK MAIL - NO SPAM TODAY

More and more computer users are complaining about the increasing volume of unsolicited - or "junk" - messages they are receiving in their email. But can anything be done to stop the activities of the "spammers" who send out these messages?

Currently there would appear to be no legal remedy against spamming. In fact attempts by the US Congress to frame anti-UCE (unsolicited commercial email) legislation are already being criticised for infringing the constitutional right to freedom of speech.

One possible approach is to use the "filters" now incorporated in most email software to block or send direct to the "trash" mailbox all suspect email messages. But, this will only work if the junk email contains obvious clues in the "subject" line of a message's "header".

Unfortunately most spammers are smart enough not to include words such as "bargain" or "free offer" in the header. And there is always a danger this could prevent messages of genuine interest from legitimate sources from getting through.

A related approach for law firms with their own email servers is to filter all incoming messages through some form of "firewall", so they can be monitored before being forwarded on to their intended recipient. Leaving aside the obvious confidentiality issues, the main drawback of pre-screening is that it is labour intensive (and consequently expensive) and slow - which tends to defeat the whole purpose of sending email.

Possibly the clearest advice relates to what you should **not** do.

Even if there is an invitation to do so, do not send a message asking for your name to be removed from the spammer's mailing list - this merely validates your address for future spamming. And, do not waste your time sending them emails or threats to bill them at your normal ➔

➔ hourly rate. Anecdotal evidence suggests this only encourages them to send even more messages. ☐

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### LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

**November 12 - Interactive Internet Sites for Lawyers, Leeds.** Two half-day seminars hosted by Michael Kaye of Kaye Tesler looking at ways law firm web sites can generate new business. Commences at 10.00am and 2.00pm. Cost £40 (+VAT) and qualifies for 3 CPD hours. Another seminar will be held in Bristol on 27th November). Call NKT Consultants on ☎ 0181 802 6817 for details.

**November 18 - Is your Practice ready for Library Automation? Luton Hoo.** Euroserve, the developer of the Masta-Lib legal library software system is holding an open day at the Hunting Lodge on the Luton Hoo Estate. Starts 11.00am, for details call Garry Simpson on ☎ 01582 455322.

**November 19 - How to Meet your Goals, Stoke City FC.** Part of Avenue Legal Systems' series of regional road-shows looking at the way IT can help law firms meet their business goals. All seminars held at the conference facilities of major football clubs around the UK, ending at Sheffield Wednesday's ground on 26 February. Call Avenue on ☎ 01621 776 4387 for details.

**November 26 - LITigate '97, London.** Second annual one day conference and mini exhibition looking at case management technologies and litigation strategy. This year's event, which is once again sponsored by **Legal Technology Insider**, will include speakers from Davies Arnold Cooper and Dibb Lupton Alsop, as well as sessions looking at web enabled case management and intranets. Takes place at Café Royal, Regent Street, commences 9.00am. Cost £380 (+VAT). Call Forum on ☎ 0181 445 8060 for details. ➔

➔ *Legal IT Diary Dates continued...*

### **December 9 Intranets for Law Firms, London.**

New event organised by Osney Media and sponsored by **Legal Technology Insider** looking at the practical issues associated with developing intranets and internal know-how systems etc. Speakers include consultant Neil Cameron, Richard Brockbank of Oxford Law & Computing, Clive Whitfield Jones of Jeffrey Green Russell, Andrew Taylor of Linklaters and Jane Henderson of Macfarlanes. Takes place at the Business Design Centre, Islington. Starts 8.45am. Cost £449 (+VAT). Call Osney on ☎ 0171 880 0000 for details.

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## LATEST NEWS COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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**Next issue...**  
**Issue 51 of the Insider will be published on Monday 24th November.**

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### SUBJECTS IN THIS ISSUE

Accounts & PMS systems .....	<b>1, 2, 3</b>
Barristers systems .....	<b>4</b>
Case management .....	<b>1, 4</b>
Courts & legal institutions .....	<b>2</b>
Electronic mail .....	<b>6, 7</b>
Employment issues .....	<b>5</b>
Internet & online services .....	<b>2, 6, 7</b>

Legal IT events .....	<b>7</b>
Litigation support systems .....	<b>4</b>
Legal publishers .....	<b>2, 4, 6</b>
Security (inc hacking & viruses) .....	<b>6, 7</b>
Solicitors practices .....	<b>1, 2, 3</b>
Supplier disputes .....	<b>1</b>
Telecommunications & networks ... ..	<b>6</b>
Web site URLs .....	<b>2, 3, 4, 6</b>
Windows 3.x, 95/98/NT(WS) .....	<b>3</b>

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For informal and confidential discussion, contact Craig Coverman, Longbridge International plc – tel 0171 726 4011, fax 0171 726 0036 or email [coverman@longbridge.com](mailto:coverman@longbridge.com)

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