



S J Berwin rolls out digital dictation

Top 20 law firm S J Berwin is rolling out BigHand's TotalSpeech digital dictation and workflow system to the whole of its 120 strong property department as the firm starts to shift away from analogue tape systems.

The move follows a successful pilot project that has seen one of the largest client service teams in the property department running TotalSpeech for over two months. Once the results of the rollout to the remainder of the department have been evaluated, the firm will consider a more widespread implementation throughout the rest of the practice.

Commenting on the project, S J Berwin IT director Simon Kosminsky said "We are happy with the progress of this project. 'Law at the speed of business' is our commitment to better client service. Technology that can genuinely streamline internal workflow is rare but TotalSpeech appears to provide some impressive benefits on that front." The firm says its experience with the pilot suggest TotalSpeech "appears to offer the opportunity to reduce the cost of producing written material for clients" while at the same time optimising the use of secretarial resources.

The Insider web site

For the latest news plus legal technology resources - including IT jobs, events diary, industry links and extensive search facilities - visit the award winning Insider web site.

www.legaltechnology.com

ASP crash - no drama and no crisis

Three weeks after the applications service provider The Hub called in the receivers, Chris Cann - the systems partner at Telford-based Martin Kaye, is pleased to report that despite being the largest law firm using The Hub's services "there was no drama and no crisis" when the ASP crashed.

According to Cann, there was no disruption to the firm's access to its data or applications and since then the service "has just kept going, as good or even better than before". Cann attributes this to precautions the firm took when it first started down the ASP route two years ago. These included the choice of an ASP that had a safety net - in this case The Hub's services were housed at XKO Network Systems' data centre, so it was a relatively simple matter for XKO to take over the service. And the choice of a legal software supplier - in this instance Axxia - that was prepared to help Martin Kaye make the ASP option work.

Axxia and Martin Kaye hope to finalise negotiations on a permanent replacement for The Hub within the next few days but in the meantime Chris Cann remains convinced that ASP remains the ideal solution for many law firms who don't want the hassle associated with running an inhouse IT operation.

■ On a technical note, the only thing Cann says he might do differently now is opt for the 'pizza box' rather than mainframe approach to ASP hosting services the firm currently uses. With the latter, the firm's data and applications are housed on one big system along with those of other ASP customers. With the former, each ASP customer has their data and software stored on their own dedicated server, giving them more flexibility both to upgrade the system or even switch to another ASP.

■ Another legal market ASP - Freedom 2000 who provide ASP services to barristers chambers, report they are "in acquisition mode" and hope soon to announce a deal that will expand their involvement in this sector.

Poor design and stale content holding back law firm web sites

A new report by web design consultancy Intendance says many law firms are let down by poor web sites because of a failure to keep them up to date in terms of both their content and design.

Based on a review of 48 mid-sized firms (20-to-50 fee earners) the report warns that along with poor navigation, many sites now have an outdated feel because they have not been revised since they were originally designed three or more years ago. The "most urgent deficiency" however is out of date content with, for example, some firms still promoting events that took place over a year ago. Interestingly, there is no obvious correlation between the size of the firm and the quality of the site - in fact some of the largest firms in the sample had the worst sites.

Copies of the report are available free of charge - call James Tuke of Intendance on 020 8788 5604. *See also page 5.*

www.intendance.com

News in brief

■ PERCEPTIVE PURCHASE BY TJG

Taylor Joynson Garrett has purchased a 600 user licence version of the Mentor 'value added portal' /knowledge management system from Perceptive Technology. The firm will use Mentor to provide the framework to develop and implement a "total information management system".

■ A&O IMPLEMENTS ELITE GLOBAL

Allen & Overy has completed the successful implementation of the Elite Globalisation Release at its London and Luxembourg offices and will be rolling the system out to a further 23 offices during the course of this year. EGR is a version of the Elite practice management system designed for international firms that need to support multiple operating units, languages and currencies and then be able to produce worldwide management accounts on a product line or geographic basis within a day of month end from just one location.

Document assembly news in brief

■ AMICUS TO HAVE GHOST LINK

The popular Amicus Attorney practice and case management system (distributed in the UK by Gavel & Gown) will shortly be complemented by a new document assembly application called Amicus Assembly. The system is based on the OEM version of the GhostFill document assembly engine (distributed in the UK by Syscorp) and will be available to the 150,000 Amicus Attorney users worldwide during Q2 2002. Further details, including pricing and UK availability, will be announced during the Amicus annual user conference in Toronto later this month.

■ TWO MORE FIRMS THINK DOCS

Field Fisher Waterhouse in London and Glasgow commercial practice MacRoberts have implemented new document assembly systems based on the thinkDOCS application. Both firms are iManage DMS users and the authors of thinkDOCS have just introduced a special pricing deal for existing iManage users through its UK and European sole distributor Kramer Lee & Associates.

www.kramerlee.com

ROI - the new math of legal technology

As reported in recent editions of the Insider, more and more firms are now adopting a more fiscally prudent approach to the purchase of technology, with serious attempts being made to measure cost-benefit analysis and return on investment.

In particular, there is a growing realisation that although a new IT system is unlikely to generate a 'big bang' increase in turnover or profits, the cumulative effect of minor improvements in fee earning capacity can still add up to a substantial benefit.

Allan Carton, of the Practical Solutions (0161 929 8355) consultancy, recently demonstrated this in a presentation he made to a firm considering installing a new residential conveyancing workflow management system. According to Carton's figures - and he suggests this is the minimum increase in productivity that can be expected, if the firm succeeded in enabling each of its team of 40 conveyancers to charge just an extra 5 minutes of their time each day at £45 per hour, this equates to a total of £34,500 in extra billable time each year.

The calculation Carton used was: 5 minutes x 0.75p per minute x 5 days per week x 46 working weeks pa x 40 staff = £34,500. Carton also reckons that while the average High Street firm fee earner clocks up about 1610 hours in the office during the course of each working year, the amount of chargeable time actually recorded is between just 1200 and 1300 hours.

■ Brian Blackwell has joined Practical Solutions as a senior technology consultant. Blackwell, who has been in the IT industry for 20 years, was most recently with Williams Lea and has worked on general IT, workflow and document management related projects for a number of top 100 firms.

www.inpractice.co.uk

FWBS moving into Scots market

FWBS, the developers of the OMS document and practice management system, have appointed CVG Computer Services in Aberdeen (01224 708080) as their Scottish market reseller. FWBS and CVG are now looking at ways of integrating OMS with ScotLAW, a version of Curat Lex's Sovereign Law accounts system which was specifically developed to meet the Law Society of Scotland's solicitors accounts rules.

■ The CVG deal relates only to Scotland. South of the border OMS is distributed exclusively in England & Wales by Pericom.

www.cvg.co.uk

Vrisko gets £350k cash infusion

Vrisko, the content aggregation and brokered search software company now attracting interest in the legal knowledge management arena, has secured a £350,000 capital investment from ValueLink Information Services in exchange for shares. The money will be used to expand sales and marketing operations.

New ASP case manager for smaller practices

Internet database specialist UKNet Select has launched a new ASP (application service provider) service offering sole practitioners and smaller firms a web based case management and extranet system that is hosted and managed on their behalf.

Called CM¹², the product allows law firms and their clients to access and interact on matters securely via standard web browser software. There is also a mobile phone module for lawyers and clients on the move. Security is in accordance with BS7799 best practice. The system can exchange data to and from existing WP systems for document management purposes and has all the usual workflow, contact database and reporting features expected from a modern case management system.

The CM¹² pricing structure is based on numbers of matters managed, with no other capital outlay required from subscribing firms. The minimum subscription is £499.50 pa, which covers up to 50 live matters on an unlimited transaction and client access basis. Discounts are available for higher matter volumes and all closed matters are held within the system free of charge.

The CM¹² product is based on UKNet Select's larger claims management system, which is now in its fourth year of use at various sites including Kennedys and Morgan Cole's insurance arm Fishburn Morgan Cole. UKNet Select also handle the IT side of managing professional indemnity claims for over 1500 law firms on behalf of PI insurance brokers Alexander Forbes Group.

UKNet Select can undertake any data conversion or practice management system integration work. For larger firms the company also offers a no obligation pilot in one department. For details contact technical director David Copper on 01708 736660.

www.uknet.uk.net

Keeping track of the bills

iManage and Whitehill Technologies have announced plans to integrate their respective systems so law firms will be able to convert billing records, such as invoices, into professional looking documents that can then be stored on an iManage document management system. In the past bills have not typically been stored in document management systems but instead been managed as loose data.

The integration of iManage with Whitehill's "document transformation technology" is intended to provide a simple process for firms to manage invoices after creation, while retaining their professional appearance, without the need for complex scripting or third party import tools. By bringing these documents into the iManage WorkSite DMS system, the new functionality enables firms to manage their billing records with the same efficiency, reliability and security as the rest of their business content, as well as providing the option of sharing invoice data with clients through extranet links.

■ Whitehill software is available in the UK both through Aura Consulting, now part of Tikit, and to users of Axxia systems.

News in brief

■ **GRINDEYS PICK AIM OUT OF FIVE** Staffordshire-based Grindeys, a member of the LawNet group of firms, has chosen AIM Professional to supply its new practice and case management system. The system will have 135 users and run across four offices. The firm reviewed offerings from incumbent supplier Sanderson, as well as Axxia, TFB and Pilgrim, before selecting AIM.

■ **FIFE COUNCIL INVESTS IN SOLCASE** Fife Council has selected Solicitec Scotland as its case management software supplier. The council has invested in a 60 user SolCase system to initially assist its legal services section in four business areas: actions for the recovery of rent arrears; actions for the recovery of council tax arrears; the sale of tenanted council houses and the council's licensing functions in terms of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

■ **SUPPORT STILL NOT CHILD'S PLAY** Class Publishing (020 7371 2119) has published a new version of its Child's Pay software for calculating child support payments under the 1991, 1995 and 2000 *Child Support Acts*. The bad news is despite the fact that under the 2000 Act, this month sees the introduction of a new scheme for support payments, the calculations remain as incomprehensible as ever. The good news is Class is offering a special 33% discount off the cost of a single user licence (£99.95 instead of £149.95) including a year's updates if you order the software by 30 April.

Looking for IT staff ?

If you are a law firm or supplier looking for IT staff, including positions in development, sales, know-how, support, management and training, you can post your vacancies free of charge to the Jobs Board on the Insider web site. Email to jobs@legaltechnology.com

■ **This week's top jobs:** Cobbetts in Manchester is looking for an experienced case management systems developer. And **Pilgrim Systems** is looking for a case implementation consultant to work on LawSoft projects. For details of both these vacancies, plus hyperlinks visit the Insider Jobs Board at www.legaltechnology.com

News in brief

■ LAWMAN HAS NEW OUTLOOK

Timeslice's flagship LawMan2000 system is now offering full integration between its fee earner workstation software and Microsoft Outlook. The new integration means users familiar with the Microsoft application can now also access and progress case management projects from within Outlook.

■ LDM NOW OFFERING 24/7 BUREAU

Following heavy investment in equipment, floor space and personnel at its London (020 7613 1160) and Manchester (0161 228 0170) offices, litigation support specialist LDM is now offering a 24 hour phone-in service for lawyers arriving in those cities to work on a case and needing documents to be scanned, coded or copied. Lawyers can phone from an office or hotel and have documents collected for processing within 30 minutes.

■ SMALLER FIRMS GOING DIGITAL

nFlow Software (01245 463377) who specialise in digital dictation workflow systems, report they are finding growing interest among smaller law firms wanting to switch from conventional analogue tape to digital dictation. The latest firm to move to nFlow's DictaFlow workflow software is Chelmsford practice Leonard Gray.

■ VIDESS IN FAST 50

Videss is the latest legal systems supplier to make it into this year's Deloitte & Touche Fast 50 awards for fast growing technology companies. Videss made it into the Northern region top 50 for the second year running.

■ RESSOFT TAKES GOLD

ResSoft has become one of only a handful of legal systems suppliers in the UK to secure accreditation as a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner for software development projects.

Keep up with the news

To keep up with the latest developments between issues of the Insider, subscribe to our free fortnightly ezine *Legal Technology News*. It is delivered directly to your desktop as a plain text email. To be added to the distribution list send a note of your email address to news@legaltechnology.com and include the word 'News' in the heading.

Low cost technology - Linux and other options

Our recent stories on Linux and other low cost alternatives to Microsoft technology continues to be a hot topic and our thanks to those readers who have contacted us with suggestions.

■ LINUX FIREWALLS

One interesting fact to emerge is many firms may be unaware they are already using Linux. For example any firm running the Equinet Netpilot internet firewall and web access control system, which is sold as an all-in-one-box 'appliance', is actually using a modified version of Red Hat Linux. A popular alternative to Netpilot is the Exo Server which is based on another 'open source' platform, namely BSD Unix.

■ MAKING PROGRESS WITH LINUX

Any firm running a product that has been developed around the Progress system can port it to run on Linux without any difficulty. Thompson Moore with its TMA-SiMS application is one of many Progress based system still in use in the UK.

■ SAVING ON SQL SERVER COSTS

Another suggestion made is that along with open source operating systems, firms can also save "thousands of pounds" by switching from Microsoft SQL Server based systems to the open source database MySQL. One legal market supplier, who for obvious reasons prefers to remain anonymous, says it moved from SQL Server to MySQL nine months ago and now has a database of over 2 million records relating to its customers. Despite being accessed by an average of 500 users a day the MySQL system "has not suffered one second of outage".

MySQL - the most stable current release is 3.23.49a - is available as a free download from the internet for internal use. Licence fees are payable if you intend to ship MySQL as an embedded database within a commercial application. Prices start at € 230 per user for 1-9 users but are subject to substantial volume discounts. The major drawback is MySQL is reportedly difficult to set up however cheap support contracts are available, along with various free utilities including ODBC drivers.

www.mysql.com

■ LINUX CHICKS DIG UNIX

Finally, if you are female and interested in open source operating systems, you might want to check out LinuxChix. This is a web site and mailing list server providing a range of technical resources and information, plus online programming courses, for the Linux and BSD communities. The site is specifically targeted at women. Why? Because its founder Deb Richardson, who set up LinuxChix three years ago, felt there was a need for a "low testosterone environment in which to share ideas" as "for women who are not inherently geeky, there was not enough motivation to get past the teenage boy, locker room mentality" of the mainstream Linux sites and discussion forums.

www.linuxchix.org

Cheap web sites for all ?

To-date the UK market for hassle-free legal web site development has been dominated by **ActiveLawyer**, with its in-a-box solution that makes updating a site as easy as editing a Word document and **Martindale-Hubbell**, whose all-in Lawyer HomePages consultancy service includes a placing on the LawyerLocator search engine and web traffic generator. But it looks as if both these services are now going to be given a run for their money.

Sift, the online communities developer best known in the legal market for its LawZone service, has announced plans to move into the law firms web site market as part of a new venture with **Stat Plus**, part of the **OyezStraker Group**. Sift has been operating a similar service in the accountants market - under the PracticeWeb name - for some time and has over 130 accountancy firms licensing the application, which allows them to both build a professional site and then keep it up-to-date. Stat Plus will now be taking the message out to the market through its sales network which has over 6000 law firms on its books.

The second new entrant is **WebSite IT** with an online self build web site system that is both easy to use and stunningly cheap. How cheap? For the basic service, which includes unlimited access to the self-build software, web hosting and a domain name, the rate is £5 a month.

Additional facilities are also available, including personalised 'yourfirmsname.co.uk' style domains for £9.99. And, for more adventurous practices wanting to dabble in e-commerce by selling legal services directly from their sites, there is a secure online payments system costing just £19.99 a month. It is also worth noting that not only is WebSiteIT cheap but you can take advantage of a no obligation two week free trial before you buy.

Here at the Insider we recently tested the software and were able to create a mini web site from scratch in under 20 minutes. Although the software is based on a series of design templates, users still have plenty of freedom as to how they use it, with the system supporting graphics, formatted text and tables - and none of it involving any exposure to HTML programming code.

www.websiteit.com

News in brief

■ ABC SELECTS ELITE - MAJOR WIN NUMBER 28

As predicted by the Insider in November 2000, Elite has won the order to supply Addleshaw Booth & Co with a new practice management system to replace its Axxia Arista installation. The ABC order brings Elite's total number of law firm sites in the *Legal Business UK Top 100* to 28.

■ CONSULTANCY MOVES INTO IMPLEMENTATION

Clearly a sign of the times but yet another IT consultancy, this time US based Hildebrandt International, is moving away from pure systems selection and advisory work and into BPR, training and systems implementation, both independently and in association with 'business partners'. The new division, called the Hildebrandt TechGroup, will be headed by Curt Canfield.

Legal technology events diary

■ **APRIL 23, LONDON.** Litigation Support in the City seminar with speakers from Allen & Overy and British Nuclear Fuels. Takes place at Grocers Hall, Princes Street EC2. Starts 9:15am. Organised by G3 Consulting, for details call Andrew Rees on 020 7787 2740.

■ **APRIL 24, LONDON.** Automated Legal Knowledge Management: How to Build a Better Case. ResSoft and Autonomy are hosting a complimentary lunch briefing at the Law Society. The session includes a user case study, a keynote by Derek Sturdy of Granite & Comfrey and a live Autonomy demo. For details call Robin Pitkin on 0207 421 4157 or email rpitkin@ressoft.co.uk

■ **APRIL 24, LONDON.** Records Management Forum. Focusing on how firms can transform records/archive departments into key elements within a knowledge management system. Speakers from LegalKEY Technologies and Dechert. The event is organised by Kramer Lee & Associates, for details call 01268 494500.

■ **APRIL 29-1 May, UK.** Writing Macros in Word 97/2000/XP. Three day intermediate level course organised by macros specialist Kutana, with further courses on 10-12 June and 29-31 July. For details call 01235 227434.
www.kutana.co.uk

■ **MAY 9-10, LOS ANGELES.** LegalTech at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel.
www.legaltechshow.com

■ **MAY 21, LONDON.** Employees, Email & the Internet. One day legal conference at the Bloomsbury Holiday Inn, 5 CPD points, fee from £515 + VAT. For more details call IRS on 020 7420 3519.

■ **MAY 29, DUBLIN.** The Impact of Technology on the Practice of Law. One day conference organised by the International Bar Association. For details call IBA on +44 (0)20 7629 1206. www.ibanet.org

■ **MAY 30, LONDON.** Digital dictation panel evening organised by BigHand and taking place at Ashurst Morris Crisp's office. To attend call Dan Speed on 0207 793 8264.

News in brief

■ LASER SHARP SEARCHES

Legalease, the publishers of the *Legal 500* series of directories, are now offering users to their web sites access to a very easy to use law firm specific search engine. Called the LaSeR - or Law Site Register - all you have to do is type in a firm's name, or even a part of it, and the search engine will pull up the law firms and accompanying URLs that most closely match the name keyed in.

www.legal500.com/index.php

■ ODYSSEY WINS REVAMP DEAL

Liverpool based solicitors Morecroft Urquhart has just gone live with a new look web site that was redesigned by Odyssey Interactive. The site was given a revamp to improve navigation and provide visitors with faster access to information. The firm now plans to work with Odyssey on the development of online services for its clients.

www.morecroft.co.uk

www.odyssey-i.com

■ ONSCREEN PROBATE CALCULATOR

London firm Sykes Anderson, which over the years has devised a number of novel online services for clients and prospects, has introduced a new probate fees calculator. This allows prospective clients to work out the fixed fees associated with dealing with an estate before they instruct the firm. Partner David Anderson says that because probate is an "emotive subject" one of the benefits of this more transparent approach is it avoids misunderstandings with clients over fees.

www.sykesanderson.com

■ NEW LEGAL NEWS LINKS PORTAL

LegalDay is a new portal that describes itself as offering "everyday news and links" for the UK legal community. While the links to resources contain little that has not been seen before, the news element is worth checking out as it contains headlines and links to every law related story currently doing the rounds. What is interesting about this is the stories have been selected from not just the national press but also all the main print and online legal news media, thereby providing a highly effective round-up that removes the need for users to individually sift through each title for material that interests them.

Access to the site is free of charge.

www.legalday.co.uk

Searching for savings with Searchflow

We have all heard the propaganda in favour of electronic conveyancing but is this change for its own sake or can it offer real benefits to law firms? The consultancy Practical Solutions has just conducted a study looking at the use of just one aspect of e-conveyancing - the NLIS Searchflow online local authority searches service - and concluded that such a system "genuinely has the potential to make a big difference".

After taking into account the different pay levels of everyone involved in a typical High Street conveyancing practice, from the office junior carrying out photocopying through to conveyancers and partners, plus an analysis of the average time taken handling each step of the process, Practical Solutions calculate that to complete three searches by conventional postage-and-paper methods, a firm can expect to spend between 65 and 76 minutes or the equivalent of £23-to-£26 in billable time.

This is in contrast with a cost of 15 minutes - or £4.75 - when using Searchflow. Practical Solutions suggest that if firms also integrate the Searchflow system with case management software, they can expect even greater benefits, with the time involved falling to 12 minutes (£3.67) or less.

Looked at in isolation these figures may not seem much but when projected across a month, by switching from conventional local authority searches to Searchflow, a firm handling just 25 conveyancing transactions a month can expect to save between 21 and 29 hours in total time - or between 250 and 350 hours during the course of a year.

Copies of the report, in a PDF file format, can be found on the Practical Solutions web site at www.inpractice.co.uk To register to use the NLIS Searchflow service visit www.searchflow.co.uk

■ Slough Borough Council has become the first local authority in the country to sign up to install its own NLIS system to offer solicitors and estate agencies direct online access to land search records. The project is receiving £1.1 million in funding from the Local Authority Modernisation Programme (LAMP)

Omtool supports Lotus Notes

Omtool (01932 334444) has launched a new version of its Genidocs secure email system that will now support the Lotus Notes and Domino platforms. Genidocs is already compatible with Novell GroupWise and Microsoft Outlook/Exchange.

The latest release of Genidocs (version 1.2) also handles the encryption and conversion of PDF/Zip attachments and supports a 'secure message relay' facility. This allows law firms to exchange secure messages to clients and related third parties without the recipients having to install a full version of the Genidocs system.

According to Omtool vice president Scott Dockendorff, another popular Genidocs facility is 'public key' management, which automates the recognition of signatures and removes much of the hassle associated with server to server routing.

Security - a technology or a complacency issue ?

Last week it was reported in the press that as part of a publicity stunt to promote a computer security exhibition, commuters travelling into London's Victoria Station were asked by market researchers to disclose their network login passwords. Only a third of those questioned refused to do so, despite the fact the information was being requested by complete strangers.

According to Paul Carratu, managing director of the security and investigations company Carratu International, such indiscretion is par for the course in far too many organisations. What concerns Carratu is while some organisations seem almost paranoid about the risks posed by external hackers or disaffected members of staff "the biggest threat to security is complacency".

For example Carratu was recently asked by a major London law firm to review its arrangements. The Carratu team quickly found that most staff were only too happy to disclose their passwords to an investigator who phoned up pretending to be from the firm's IT department. Rather more worryingly, Carratu also found that because the six VDU screens mounted in reception, giving access to the firm's intranet, used the systems manager's login details, an inquisitive visitor could access files that were clearly never intended for wider public consumption, including references to merger talks with another firm.

Carratu's verdict is he has yet to find a law firm that is more than 75% secure. And Carratu adds that if his people can penetrate security with such ease, how exposed are firms to serious attempts at commercial espionage by rival organisations?

According to Carratu, partners need to realise that because the rewards are so great, commercial law is no longer a game of cricket played by gentlemen. In the US there have already been reports of professional service organisations, both law firms and - viz Enron - accountants, resorting to dirty tricks and Paul Carratu predicts that within two to three years time the same behaviour will start to be seen on the UK legal scene.

Incidentally, you do not need to invest in password cracking software to break into a network. According to Carratu research the most frequently encountered user name is 'administrator' and the most widely used password is 'password'.

www.carratu.com

Security news in brief

■ LESTER ALDRIDGE HOLD THE KEY

South coast firm Lester Aldridge has chosen Hampshire based Keyfort (08707 273535) to supply a new firewall plus associated internet security facilities including a virtual private network.

www.keyfort.co.uk

■ SECURITY WORLD FIRST

Legal systems integrator Ramesys (0115 971 2000) has become the first company in the world to achieve the status of a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner for security solutions.

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Law firms get into debt - in a profitable way

Two major regional firms - Bevan Ashford in the West Country and Ward Hadaway in the North East - have just announced significant developments with their computerised debt recovery and credit management services.

Bevan Ashford, riding on the back of its recent appointment as a panel firm to Plymouth City Council, has launched its new bespoke Debt Recovery Service based on Solicitec's SolCase case management software. Similar systems are already in use with Bevan Ashford's bulk remortgaging and personal injury services and the firm now plans to give clients of the debt service online access to progress reports and other matter related information.

Meanwhile Ward Hadaway, which 12 months ago became the first firm in Europe to go live with RealLegal's Practice Manager case management software, says the system has proved so successful in debt collection and credit management work that it is now being introduced into other areas of practice including personal injury, clinical negligence and road traffic accident claims, as well as housing plot sales.

According to the firm's collection services manager Andrew Charlton, the system has enabled the firm to chase new markets which had not previously been cost effective. "Because of the high level of automation, chasing smaller debts such as parking tickets has now become worthwhile. Rather than being an extra cost for clients, it has put at their disposal a way of generating further finds that otherwise may have been closed to them or too expensive to consider recovering."

The firm says that within the first 12 months of using Practice Manager, the department's workload has increased by 54% and generated instructions to collect over £6.4 million. The system cost £120,000 to buy and implement.

■ Practice Manager was developed in the United States by PMTI and originally distributed in the UK by Syscorp. PMTI was subsequently acquired by Law.com and became part of that group's RealLegal applications division. Charlton is now a member of RealLegal's product development advisory board.

www.reallegal.com

New people moves at Pilgrim

Colin MacGregor has joined Pilgrim Systems as a senior project manager and will work primarily on projects for existing case management clients and new PMS sites. Robin Boyle has returned to the company as product strategy manager with responsibility for the future development of the LawSoft system.

Finally, another old Pilgrim hand Jim Currie, who was with the company prior to moving into law firm IT management, has formed an independent consultancy for Scottish firms. Called Legal IS (01259 720305), the consultancy has been appointed a Pilgrim 'channel partner' specialising in management information strategies and key performance indicators reporting.

www.legalinformationsystems.co.uk

SCL approves reforms

Last month's EGM of the Society for Computers & Law unanimously approved changes to the SCL's Memorandum and Articles of Association, thus opening the way to a major modernisation of its structure to cut bureaucracy and make it more responsive.

The EGM also saw the election of a new six man management board of directors who, in view of the SCL's charitable status, will also be trustees. The six are barrister Glen Davis, IT consultant Andrew Levison, Fox Williams partner Nigel Miller, Baker & McKenzie partner Harry Small (who as immediate past joint-chairman of SCL was one of the architects of the new structure), Masons partner Richard Stephens and John Yates, a solicitor and chief exec of the virtual law firm v-lex. Nigel Miller and John Yates were elected as the SCL's new joint chairmen.

LSSA reviewing criteria

The Legal Software Suppliers Association is reviewing its criteria for membership. LSSA chairman Alan Richardson told the Insider that the current rules were starting to show their age and in some aspects no longer reflected the needs of the modern market. Issues being considered include relations with suppliers of complementary best of breed products and the status of non-UK based systems vendors and suppliers of ASP services. One possibility, which LSSA members will have a chance to consider at their AGM in June, is the introduction of a new category of associate membership.

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