



Mountain enters the Scots legal IT market

Mountain Software, which already supplies systems for the solicitors, barristers and coroners markets in England & Wales, has extended its involvement in the UK legal sector with another strategic acquisition. The latest purchase is Bridge of Allan-based GB Systems, which is one of the largest suppliers of legal IT to Scottish law firms.

Because GB operates exclusively in the Scottish market, its activities are relatively unknown south of the Border. However, since it was formed in 1981 it has built up and retained a substantial user base of about 250 firms. To put this into context, there are 1250 firms in Scotland and 900 have two partners or less. The Judicial Factors department of the Law Society of Scotland also runs a specialist application that GB developed for them.

Commenting on the deal, Mountain's managing director Ian Knox said "We have been looking to expand into Scotland for some time and this represents the perfect opportunity for us to achieve this goal. The acquisition fits perfectly with Mountain as we share the same programming language and can continue to support and develop GB's LawMaster product." GB's founder and owner Graham Booth will also be staying on for the foreseeable future.

1500 law firms hit by email loop blitz

Last Thursday (2nd December) approximately 1500 law firms and other organisations in the UK were hit by an 'email loop' taking the form of thousands of copies of the same email message flooding their inboxes. Over a five day period, from Thursday morning to going to print this Tuesday, the Insider received over 7000 copies of the message. However we escaped lightly as one law firm received over 100,000 copies of the message during this same period.

The message was a copy of a marketing email DPS Software originally sent out in February this year to promote a seminar but according to its header information it was supposedly sent from <Administration@shulmans.co.uk> – an address belonging to Shulmans Solicitors in Leeds. In fact DPS and Shulmans were just innocent bystanders caught in the crossfire (Shulmans shut down their email server immediately the problem appeared) and, after investigating this incident with the internet service providers Easynet and Star, the Insider believes this is actually a case of a message being trapped in an accidental email loop.

After eliminating the obvious suspects – that it was caused by a virus or a deliberate or malicious spam – the probable cause was narrowed down to one or more of the recipients on the original DPS emailing list running a version of Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2003 containing a bug that, in Microsoft's own words, can cause "many unexpected email messages to appear in Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 SMTP queues waiting to be sent to external recipients... and may incorrectly resend certain messages."

The good news is the problem can be solved by downloading a patch from Microsoft's web site, where you will find a full set of instructions, at <http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=835734>

Mason Hayes moves to Elite

Mason Hayes & Curran, one of Ireland's largest and fastest growing firms – it now has 115 fee earners and recently opened an office in New York – has opted to replace its 10-year old Axxia software with a new practice management system from Thomson Elite. Mason Hayes has ordered the Elite financial and practice management system, along with the company's .NET based WebView fee earner desktop, Business Intelligence key performance information reporting and Apex CRM software. Pilgrim was the unsuccessful competitor for the contract. William Fry, another of Ireland's larger firms, has also moved to Elite in recent months.



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NEWS IN BRIEF**► BRODIES IMPLEMENT 24/7 DR**

Edinburgh commercial firm Brodies has implemented a remote working and disaster recovery facility, which includes 24/7 access to off-site back-up server, in conjunction with internet services specialist Lumison.

www.lumison.net

► TRACK YOUR MOVE EXPANDS

As part of its current expansion plans, Harrogate-based Fundamentum – the company behind the TrackYourMove conveyancing portal – has appointed Geoff Sweeting as sales director. The company has also moved to larger offices at Windsor House, Cornwall Road, Harrogate HG1 2PW. The 01423 505654 phone number remains the same. www.trackyourmove.com

► FRESHFIELDS ROLL OUT VERITY KM

Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer has selected a suite of Verity products to manage information and form the basis of an international know-how system. Freshfields say they chose Verity technology because it had good taxonomy building capabilities and was user-friendly, for example the Verity K2 search facility allows users to run multi-location and multi-lingual searches.

► NEW SCANNING BUREAU

London EC2-based Burlington Electronic Archives (call John Groves on 020 7033 9966) has launched a new volume document scanning service for firms wanting to digitise their paper archives. www.bea-ltd.com

► OLD BAILEY NOW WI-FI HOT SPOT

The Central Criminal Court (Old Bailey) has become the latest courts centre to become a wi-fi 'hot spot' and offer wireless internet access to barristers, solicitors and members of the public. The wireless broadband link has been supplied by BT Openzone. Access is via a voucher, costing from £6 for one hour to £40 for a 30 day voucher.

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New online service aims to trace beneficiaries

It is estimated that solicitors in this country have over £100 million in untraced legacies and unclaimed trusts on their files, typically where a matter has insufficient value to warrant employing a tracing agency or all reasonable efforts to make contact with beneficiaries have been exhausted. Not only is this bad news for beneficiaries but it also leaves law firms with a lot of unbillable work-in-progress and files that have to be regularly updated with the latest interest added.

To tackle this problem, Sheila Willis, who has worked as a legal accounts manager for many years, and the systems house Evolution Internet have created a new online service called Unclaimed Legacy. This is intended to develop into a web-based archive of unclaimed legacies but with the attraction to law firms that details on any legacies can be logged on the system free of charge. Instead, the service will be funded by members of the public, who will pay a nominal annual membership fee, and longer term plans also include selling banner advertising space.

Unless a firm specifically requests that additional information be released, all that visitors to the site will see are the names of the deceased and the beneficiaries. And, as a further feature to ensure solicitors practices are not bombarded with irrelevant claims, the system has been designed to include extensive filtering controls. www.unclaimedlegacy.com

Elite in exclusive BPM deal

Thomson Elite and Metastorm have signed an agreement that means Elite now has the exclusive right to sell the Metastorm e-Work BPM (business process management) system to its existing customer base, as well as offer it as an integrated solution to new customers. Elite will be offering e-Work as an integrated part of its practice management system to help automate such processes as conflict checking and records management. The agreement is worldwide and so will apply to users in the UK, Europe and APAC as well as North America.

Regional IT show moves to May

In what is likely to be a popular move, as it fits in more closely with most law firms' IT buying cycles, Cordial Events, the organiser of the Legal IT Exhibition, has switched the date of its biennial regional show from October to May. The next regional event is now scheduled to take place on 18 & 19 May 2005 at the New Century Hall in Manchester.

Cordial's announcement coincides with reports that the Legal Software Suppliers Association has put on ice plans to run its own Lexpo legal software show.

Cordial's flagship event Legal IT 2005 takes place at the Islington Business Design Centre on 9 & 10 February 2005.

Another start-up picks Axxia for IT platform

Fareham-based Now Legal, which was formed earlier this year to offer clients a commoditised property service, has become the latest start-up firm to select Axxia Systems as its IT supplier. The firm has already rolled out Axxia's Eion accounts, fee earner desktop and case management systems and plans to implement e-business tools in the New Year.

Commenting on the choice of Axxia, managing partner Andrew Barker said he'd "had previous positive experience of Axxia and was confident they could give us what any start-up needs... and would help address the usual business drivers, such as profitability, efficiency, risk management and cost control."

Barker added that Now Legal's plans to develop an innovative practice that would challenge traditional legal service delivery "is largely down to the fact that 'big firm' technology has been distilled by Axxia and is today available and accessible to small firms with big ideas."

Axxia sales director Bill Kirby said "It's always pleasing to see IT solutions being used for more than just keeping the lights on. Supporting new concepts, promoting value, that is when IT really makes a return."

Civica upgrades Egyptologists

Civica has just completed a major upgrade of the British Museum's email infrastructure, which has seen 800 workstations at the museum's London sites – in every department from Egyptology and conservation, to HR and catering, migrate from Novell Groupwise to Microsoft Exchange.

In a related development, following its acquisition of local government software systems specialist Radius Computer Services earlier this autumn – 220 of the 442 local authorities in the UK run Radius – Civica is now the reseller of the Imany ARMS debt collection application for the UK public sector. Axxia remains the ARMS reseller for the legal sector.

PortWise and GPM form new security partnership

PortWise, a vendor of SSL VPN and related authentication software for web and email applications, has formed a strategic partnership with legal security experts GPM to provide law firms with a cohesive approach to secure remote access, whether by staff or clients, to teleworking and extranet services.

To mark their launch into the legal market, the two companies are holding a law firm security open day, in conjunction with eCopy and Workshare at Canon's offices in London on 15th December. On a seasonal note, wine and mince pies will be served. For more details call Jim Davies of GPM on 020 7281 0123 or visit www.portwise.com and www.gpm.co.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

► **TIKIT WIN IMPLEMENTATION DEAL**
Wragge & Co has awarded Tikit the contract to implement its new Interwoven WorkSite 8 document management system. Wragges announced their decision to move from Hummingbird earlier this autumn and plan to have the new 1000 user DMS rolled out by March 2005.

► **1000 EXTRA USERS IN ONE YEAR**
Eclipse Legal Systems has sold its ProClaim case management system into a further 12 firms, bringing its total number of users to 4500 – an increase of 1000 in less than a year.

► **DLA GETS THE RHYTHMYX METHOD**
DLA has selected Percussion Software's Rhythmyx content management system to extend the scope and help devolve the management of the firm's iSIS intranet. One of the main benefits of the new system is instead of all updating having to go via the IT department, Rhythmyx will let non-technical staff in any of the firm's offices create and update content. Rhythmyx was selected in a competitive evaluation ahead of Interwoven, Fatwire and Documentum.

www.percussion.com

► **NEW BACKUP FOR LEES LLOYD**
Lees Lloyd Whitley has automated its data backup and recovery procedures by implementing the EVault InfoStage system. This is an online disk-to-disk system that uses the firm's WAN to centralise the backup from the servers in the firm's seven offices and stores them in an electronic vault in Birkenhead. The EVault system can also compress data volumes by up to 98%, depending on file type, to avoid network bandwidth issues. The firm worked with Redstor (0118 377 6500) to select a solution.
www.evault.com + www.redstor.co.uk

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Quill's Pudsey Bear picnic raises £2500

Quill Computer Systems raised over £2500 for the BBC's annual Children in Need charity appeal through a variety of fund raising events. However the highlight was three of Quill's directors – Tony Landes, Peter Dye and Andrew Sherwin – dressed as Pudsey Bear and travelling in a Mercedes convertible on a round trip between Quill's four offices in Colchester, Redcar, Liverpool and Manchester. Pictures can be found on the Quill web site at www.quill.co.uk

PEOPLE & PLACES

► HOLT STEPS DOWN FROM BCS

Earlier this week Nabarro Nathanson hosted a farewell party for Jeremy Holt, of Clark Holt, who has just stepped down after an 11 year stint as the secretary of the British Computer Society's Law Specialist Group. During this period Holt was also involved in the creation of the museum of computing in Swindon. www.museum-of-computing.org

► IKEN'S NEW HOME

Iken Business, the public sector case management systems supplier, has moved to new offices at Froomsgate House, Rupert Street, Bristol BS1 2QJ. The new phone number is 0845 450 9201. www.iken.biz

► NEW TECH HEAD AT SRC

Digital dictation systems vendor SRC has appointed James Araali-Kabyanga as head of technical operations, as part of a continuing programme of expansion and investment in the company's technical services group. Kabyanga was previously with the consultancy Quidnunc.

► DATACARE SOLUTIONS MOVE

Liverpool-based web and extranet services developer Datacare Solutions has relocated to Suite 18, Jubilee House, Altcar Road, Formby, Liverpool L37 8DL. The new phone number is 0870 757 8100.

www.datacaresolutions.com

► LINETIME MANAGER GAINS MSc

Nadia Murrell, the training & customer project manager at Linetime, has been awarded an MSc in information systems.

Crescendo introduce back end speech processing

Crescendo Systems (0870 770 1717) has announced plans to launch a new back end speech processing module, which it hopes will re-ignite interest in voice recognition technology among UK law firms.

The module, which is based on the Philips SpeechMagic system, will be an add-on to Crescendo's DigiScribe digital dictation software, operating automatically in the background to learn a particular author's voice characteristics. Significantly, whereas the earlier voice recognition systems were marketed as an alternative to using secretaries, the Crescendo module is only intended to boost secretarial transcription productivity.

Fee earners will continue dictating the way they are used to but when it comes to transcription, the secretary will have not only a sound file but also a machine generated transcription of the dictation. Crescendo, who plan to launch the system in the UK next spring, believe this has the potential to substantially increase productivity as in many instances secretaries will only need to edit a document rather transcribe it from scratch.

DDS NEWS IN BRIEF

► BOTT & CO REPORT 15% INCREASE IN OUTPUT

Cheshire-based personal injury specialist Bott & Co is reporting a 15% increase in secretarial output since the firm installed a BigHand digital dictation system in May this year.

► G2 SPEECH AND VIDESS ALLIANCE

Videss and G2 Speech have signed a cooperative agreement that will see G2's LegalSpeech digital dictation system being integrated with the Videss Legal Office integrated practice, case and document management system. Videss plan to launch the G2 integration at their April 2005 user group conference but before that will be piloting the system at Graham & Rosen in Hull and Harthills in Rotherham.

► BOND PEARCE SELECT NFLOW/TIKIT DDS

Following an extensive pilot earlier this autumn, Bond Pearce has begun rolling out the Nflow digital dictation system to 510 lawyers and secretaries in the firm's Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, Southampton and London offices. Tikit is handling the implementation of the project, which next year will include integrating Nflow with Bond Pearce's Interwoven document management system and provide access via Citrix as part of the firm's remote working project.

► OPSIS IN VOICEPATH OUTSOURCING ALLIANCE

Legal IT vendor Opsis (01780 764947) has teamed up with DDS supplier WinScribe and Voicepath to provide users of the Opsis case management system with a new facility that combines digital dictation with a document outsourcing service that can, if required, turn round documents within the hour.

Iken picks up its first Irish and more UK orders

Iken Business, one of the UK's best kept secrets in the local authority legal department case management, Lexcel and time recording systems market, has picked up its first Irish order from the Labour Relations Commission in Dublin. The contract for the 50+ user system, which goes live this month and is designed help the Commission meet the requirements of the Republic's Freedom of Information Act, was won by Iken in a formal European journal procurement tender process.

Other recent orders for the Iken case management system have been awarded by the Ynys Mon/Isle of Anglesey County, Dover District, Mid Devon District and Rugby Borough councils. Wycombe District Council's legal department has also placed an order for the Iken debt recovery workflow system.

Iken Business has moved to new offices at Froomsgate House, Rupert Street, Bristol BS1 2QJ. The new phone number is 0845 4509201 and the company will be holding its next user group meeting there on 20th January 2005. www.iken.biz

Freedom of Information Act prompts public sector orders

To comply with the Freedom of Information Act, which comes into force on the 1st January, public authorities have been placing last minute orders for systems to handle the Act's public access provisions.

Humberside Police has ordered Valid Information's SmartAccess browser-based FoI content management and search system. Portsmouth City Council is using Metastorm e-Work software to create a workflow for processing FoI access requests. And the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) has ordered Hummingbird Enterprise as part of a major, three year electronic document management project. Along with FoI compliance, the LFEPA project is intended to free up office space at the authority's Albert Embankment headquarters and provide an infrastructure to meet changes in fire safety legislation. Knowhow Consulting are advising LFEPA on this project.

www.knowhowconsulting.com

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

► **CORRS CHAMBERS IN HUMMINGBIRD UPGRADE**
Australian top 10 firm Corrs Chambers Westgarth has upgraded its 1000 seat Docs Open document management software to Hummingbird's new Enterprise DM system.

► **RUSSELL KENNEDY PICK ELITE**
Melbourne-based Russell Kennedy has replaced its old CLO software with a new Elite practice management system. The 75 fee earner firm is also taking Elite's Apex CRM system. Elite won the order in the face of a rival CMS/InterAction bid.

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Rival for Bar IT market gains users and upgrades

Formation Software (0116 225 2000), the Leicester-based developers of the InQuisita Law Chambers Management System for the English Bar, are reporting a steady stream of orders for the .NET-based system the company launched earlier this year. Nine sets of chambers have already gone live with InQuisita, including a 25 clerk/65 barrister installation at Fountain Court Chambers who switched to InQuisita from Meridian, and a further five sets (accounting for 65 clerks and 260 counsel) have placed orders for the system.

Formation has also released upgrades to its legal diary and billing applications. These include: support for conditional fee agreements as standard within the billing system; an enhanced configuration option giving chambers the ability to customise the look and feel of the InQuisita interface to better suit their own ways of working; and a migration tool that allows existing billing and diary information to be imported into InQuisita from the two leading legacy systems (Meridian and ACE – both now part of the Mountain Software group) with “minimal loss of information and virtually no downtime”. www.formsoft.com

Lawtel's new legislation calendar

Sweet & Maxwell's Lawtel service has launched a legislation calendar that synchronises directly with users' Microsoft Outlook systems to provide advance warning of future legislative developments. The service, free of charge to existing subscribers, will allow users to track the progress of Bills and statutory instruments and receive alerts of the exact dates on which sections of an Act come into force. The service is fully customisable so lawyers can track just those pieces of legislation that affect their particular area of legal practice.

And its goodbye to Windows NT

With the legal world rapidly heading into the Christmas/New Year holiday season (this is also the last issue of the Insider until January) this might not be a good time to remind readers that along with the Old Year, the Windows NT Server 4.0 system also dies at midnight on Friday 31st December.

In fact Microsoft end-of-lifed the 1996-vintage system at the end of last year but provided another 12 months of security update support throughout 2004. Users still in the process of upgrading from NT to Windows Server 2003 can obtain two further years of limited security update support (until December 2006) through a custom support agreement obtained from Microsoft's premier support or customer services solutions group however these agreements must be requested before 31st March 2005. Full details of Microsoft's support lifecycle policy can be found at <http://support.microsoft.com/lifecycle>

Christmas book choice – the beige PC era

A competition to find the oldest working PC in London was recently won by a 21-year old IBM PC XT (vintage 1983, Intel 8088 chip, 128k of RAM and the first machine in its class with a hard drive) that was still being used on a daily basis by a local government agency. To find out more about the early days of personal computing, when all PCs were beige, slow and totally incompatible, treat yourself to a copy of *Digital Retro*, a new book by Gordon Laing (Ilex Press, ISBN 1-904705-39-1, price £19.95, also available via mail order from www.ilex-press.com).

This is a fascinating, well illustrated, coffee-table book, albeit of an anorakoid flavour (so perhaps you should read it by the light of a lava lamp) that chronicles the pioneering days of the microcomputer industry by looking at the fates of 40 of the earliest machines – and the companies that built them – from the Altair 8800 in 1975 (the machine that helped launch Microsoft's first commercial product) through to the NeXT Cube in 1988, by way of 1977's Commodore PET, the original IBM PC (4.77MHz, 16k RAM) in 1981, the BBC Micro, the Apple Lisa and the Amstrad PCW in 1985, as well as all the long forgotten UK suppliers of that era, such as Acorn, Dragon, Grundy, Jupiter, Oric and Sinclair. Laing says many of these machines 'often appeared to have been knocked together in a backyard shed by an eccentric man from Cambridgeshire'. If only some of them had been that well built!

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