CS Group buys AIM for £5.3m

Earlier this month the AIM-listed Computer Software Group bought Hull-based legal systems supplier AIM for £5.3 million in cash. AIM's audited accounts to 30 April 2005 show a pre-tax loss from continuing operations of £107k and gross assets of £7.5 million. Since then AIM has disposed of another division and consequently pre-tax losses for the year to 30 April 2006 are expected to increase. However the CS Group says it is confident that "cost savings and synergies resulting from the acquisition will result in a significant increase in future profitability". Currently income from recurring support contracts account for approximately 51% of AIM's annual sales.

Following the acquisition Jim Chase is to continue as managing director of AIM's legal software business unit within the CS Group. All other AIM Group directors have resigned. Commenting on the deal, CS Group chief executive Vin Murria said she was "confident AIM, with its strong and stable client base, will steadily grow in sales and profits. It will provide a sound base from which CS Group can develop a significant position in the legal sector, in which we intend to become a leading supplier."

The broker's forecast for the CS Group in 2005/06 is a turnover of £24.7million rising to £28.5 million in 2007. Vin Murria said she saw the AIM acquisition as the first step in a consolidation of the legal systems market and anticipates further deals in the coming months. Insider sources suggest she is likely to finalise the acquisition of a well known electronic legal forms business within the next few weeks. In terms of longer term strategy, Murria said the CS Group "will never end-of-life a product" and envisages adding further products, already within the CS Group, to the AIM product range, including debt recovery, CRM, document management and business intelligence systems. The CS Group's chief operating officer, whose board-level duties include responsibility for AIM, is David England who previously headed up the operations of Solution 6 (now Aderant) in the UK.

• Ironically the last person to talk about consolidating the legal IT market was John Wilde, who headed AIM in the mid-1990s after a previous management buyout.

CPL expect £850k IT payback in year one

Europe's largest conveyancing operation Countrywide Property Lawyers is investing £850,000 in an upgrade of their Visualfiles case management and SOS practice management software. CPL, who originally went with a Visualfiles/SOS solution in 1997 but then flirted with and subsequently abandoned a bespoke project called Fusion, say they are confident the upgrade will pay for itself within the first year of implementation. CPL chairman Terry Marris says he expects the new systems to reduce typical transaction times from 12-13 weeks to less than 10; increase workload capacity from 10,000 to 30,000 active cases at any one time; and achieve a corresponding threefold increase in revenue generation, which currently stands at £22m with 10,000 cases.

Microsoft to join LSSA?

Latest reports indicate Microsoft UK has applied to join the Legal Software Suppliers Association, the UK legal IT industry trade organisation. Some LSSA members are already looking forward to the day when they will be able to sit around a table drinking tea, eating hobnob biscuits and chatting with Bill Gates.

News in brief

Perfect Defence now available in UK
The Spellex Corporation's Perfect Defence legal spell checking software is now available in a UK/English version, with prices starting at £43 for a single user. The dictionary is compatible with Word and Wordperfect and there is also a medical dictionary suitable for firms with a PI practice. Call +1 813 792 7000 for a free evaluation copy.
www.spellex.co.uk

Kutana launches printer manager
Specialist software developer Kutana (0870 220 2275) has launched a printer management system called Kupris that can control printer routing on a firm, office or department-wide basis. It was developed in conjunction with Boodle Hatfield and is used by Stevens & Bolton in Guildford.
www.kutana.co.uk

Lester Aldridge network with Neos
As an alternative to using a leased line to link its Bournemouth, Southampton and London offices, Lester Aldridge has opted for multiple VLANs (virtual local area networks) running across an ethernet connection provided by Neos Networks.
www.neosnetworks.co.uk

Axxia sites migrate to SQL Server
Hextalls and Davies Lavery have migrated from Axxia's legacy practice management system Arista, running on Informix to the new Artiion/MS SQL Server platform. Axxia's Doug McLachlan said the move shows users "like what they see" in terms of Axxia's technology route map.

Quote, unquote

"But can the system be integrated with my Apple iPod?" ...*a partner is unimpressed by a supplier's demonstration of its new BlackBerry implementation.*

BP planning legal management system

BP has announced details a data flow and information management system for its inhouse legal department. The project will involve the analysis of business processes and integration of workflow, e-billing, document management and information retrieval systems among its 750 legal staff spread over 50 locations. Group general counsel Peter Bevan said "BP Legal is creating a truly global matter and information management system to improve our efficiency and help us to more pro-actively manage our legal costs." Kevin Connell, previously head of IT at Masons but now information director for BP Legal, is one of the team involved in this project. Three suppliers will be involved in the project, they are: CT TyMetrix, which will provide its hosted matter management and e-billing software; Interwoven, which will provide its WorkSite document management software to handle the storage and retrieval of electronic documents, including email; and, Huron Consulting, who will provide business process and implementation support services.
www.cttymetrix.com
ww.huronconsultinggroup.com

Clifford Chance joins '4000 club' of InterAction users

Clifford Chance has extended its use of LexisNexis Interface Software's InterAction CRM system to include a global licence for 4000 users in 28 offices in 19 different countries. Prior to this latest order, the firm had just 750 InterAction users in its London and New York offices. Clifford Chance along with DLA Piper and Skadden Arps, who also have 4000 each users, are the three largest users of InterAction within the law firms' market.

Registered mail for BlackBerry

RPost UK (01625 820600) is now supporting registered email messages sent from BlackBerrys and other popular PDAs including the Palm Treo and Windows Mobile devices. The RPost system allows firms to confirm both when an email was sent and when it was received for between 21p and 44p per message. Once a firm is set up to run RPost, it can be used on a BlackBerry simply by typing (R) at the beginning of the subject line.
www.rpost.com

Pilgrim a 'no brainer' says Ronnie Fox

Pilgrim Systems has announced that two new high profile start-ups are implementing LawSoft as their practice and case management systems. The first order came from Manchester-based Lane-Smith & Shindler, one of the few firms in the region with a niche trusts, estate planning and wills practice. The firm was formed by Roger Lane-Smith, previously executive chairman and senior partner of DLA Piper Rudnick Group Cary, and Geoffrey Shindler, who was the head of Trusts & Estates department at Halliwells.

The other order came from Fox, the firm created by Fox Williams' founder and former senior partner Ronnie Fox. Fox said "it was a no brainer for my new firm to buy LawSoft. I'm a long time fan of Pilgrim (Fox Williams also uses LawSoft) and wanted to make sure Fox had the very best IT system available to help us with future growth".

Mills & Reeve go Mimecast

Mills & Reeve has switched from a managed service provider to Mimecast to handle email security. The firm will implement Mimecast's Smart Perimeter system to provide protection against all common email threats, as well as an 'always on' email continuity facility that can deliver messages via a web-mail service (as distinct from merely queue them) when an email server is down.
www.mimecast.com

Thorpe joins LexisNexis

Alison Thorpe (no relation to David Thorpe) has left the sales team of PMS supplier Aderant (she was the horse riding one in Aderant's recent ad campaign) to join the strategic marketing department at LexisNexis Butterworths as a 'client development solutions specialist'.

Vote for your favourite legal accounts software

The Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators has launched a Software Users Award and is inviting users to vote for their favourite legal accounts system. The closing date for voting is 31st July and the winner will be announced in September. Voting is via the ILCA website.
www.ilca.org.uk

News in brief

Videss swap out two competitors
After 20 years with AIM, Eastbourne-based Stephen Rimmer & Co have switched to Videss and will shortly be implementing a 60 user PMS with conveyancing, family and probate case applications. Over in Brentwood, Wortley Byers have dropped Axxia after 10 years and, in a £85k deal, are also moving to a Videss system.

SOS take three new orders
Solicitors Own Software (SOS) has sold its practice management system into three firms in a series of deals worth over £200k in total. The orders came from Whittinghams in Glamorgan, Solomon Taylor Shaw in north London who are also installing SOS file management, and Winchester-based Dutton Gregory who will run the system in conjunction with Visualfiles case management software.

Eclipse see 'Tesco law' effect
Eclipse Legal Systems say they are seeing more organisations investing in case management software to place themselves in a stronger position to compete in a post Clementi legal services market. Recent wins for Eclipse include orders from employment law specialists Bulfin & Co and start-up general practice Chase Law.

SIFA to verify clients with GB
SIFA (Solicitors For Independent Financial Advice) has signed an exclusive deal with the GB Group to meet the requirements of the JMLSG industry benchmark for the verification of customer identities.
www.gb.co.uk

Pace Professional signs 50th site
Scottish legal IT supplier Pace Professional has just secured the 50th order for its LawPro software. Pace is also working on a Microsoft .NET version of the system.
www.paceprosystems.com

People & Places

Criminal justice IT chief moves on up
John Suffolk, currently the director general of the government's criminal justice IT operations, has been promoted to the role of HM Government's new chief information officer, with responsibility for leading the work of the E-Government Unit at the Cabinet Office. At the time of going to press no successor had been appointed to his old criminal justice job.

Champagne Stuart meets Methuselah
Stuart Cowell, the IT manager of Davies Arnold Cooper, was the winner of a methuselah of champagne in a recent prize draw organised by Laserform. A methuselah is the equivalent of 8 bottles or 6 litres of champagne.

T-Mobile appoint legal specialist
T-Mobile has appointed Paul Spencer as its UK legal market communications specialist. Spencer, who has already been involved with Clifford Chance's T-Mobile + BlackBerry rollout, is keen for firms to learn about the T-Mobile network's business continuity capabilities.

EasyLink appoints Bonnar for legal push
EasyLink Services, the messaging and transaction management company that is widely used by the London banking and financial services sector, has appointed Terry Bonnar as its new sales director. Bonnar's brief includes heading EasyLink's push to sell its managed services into the UK legal services market
www.easylink.com

Buzzword corner: confusion pricing

Ever felt puzzled by the wide range of tariffs on offer for mobile phone contracts or the way IT suppliers all seem to have different ways of compiling their price quotations? Well that's because they don't want you to be able to make like-for-like comparisons. Economists have a name for this – it's called confusion pricing.

Digital dictation news in brief

Equine specialists with Voicepath/nFlow
Newmarket firm Whatley Lane, which has a department specialising in equine law, has opted for a digital dictation solution that integrates nFlow DDS software with the Voicepath (01926 821904) pay-as-you-go outsourced transcription service.

Three more Voice Technologies wins
Three more law firms – Drummond Miller and Campbell Smith in Scotland, plus London firm H Montlake & Co – have switched from analogue tape to digital dictation systems supplied by Voice Technologies (0141 847 5610).

Fladgate Fielder roll out nFlow DDS
Top 100 firm Fladgate Fielder has completed the rollout of nFlow's digital dictation system at its central London offices. The project included integrating the DDS with the firm's Aderant practice management and Interwoven document management systems.

Efficiency up by 25% at Eric Robinson Solicitors
Allison Hampshire, a partner with Eric Robinson Solicitors which has five offices in the Southampton region, says that since installing a BigHand digital dictation system one year ago "we have seen efficiency improve by over 25%, there has been less need for temps to cover absence and it has greatly improved understanding and collaboration between the offices. This has proved to be one of our best business decisions."

DDS added to paperless office mix
As part of a broader strategy to become a paperless office, housing and welfare benefits law specialists Flack & Co in Wandsworth have implemented a digital dictation workflow system from V7 (0845 434 9992). The firm, which already scans all incoming hardcopy, stores it on a document management system and runs case management software, sees DDS as completing the picture. According to the firm's founder William Flack "the V7 system has introduced a 40-to-60% improvement in productivity in the dictation to transcription process".

Grundig + Speechwrite alliance delivers more deals
The alliance between Grundig and reseller Speechwrite is continuing to take orders for digital dictation systems from small-to-mid-sized firms, with Speechwrite winning its 40th new site since the alliance was formed last summer. Recent orders include England Stickland Hampton in Birmingham, Brown & Pajak in Oxfordshire, Graham & Graham in St Austell, and Rowberry Morris in Gloucester.

LiST publish data exchange protocol

To address some of the issues arising from parties to litigation exchanging electronic disclosure documents and data, particularly between organisations using different software and business processes, LiST (the Litigation Support Technology Group) has published part 1 of its Data Exchange Protocol. This relates to electronic disclosure documents, while part 2 on electronic disclosure data will be published later this year. LiST say the protocol "represents significant co-operation and discussion between litigation support experts in the UK over the past two years and heralds a new era in the exchange of data between parties" by proposing a practical solution to an acknowledged problem. The protocol can be found on the LiST website, which also contains the draft Practice Direction for the Use of IT in Civil Proceedings that is currently being considered by the DCA. Anyone wanting to comment on the protocol should send them to **def@listgroup.org** by 29 September 2006.
www.listgroup.org

Litigation support news

Trilantic gets exclusive on de-dupe technology
Trilantic has become the exclusive UK and European provider of Equivio 'near duplication' technology. Equivio is used during discovery to sort through document collections (documents can be in nearly any format or file type) to identify near duplicates, so litigators can focus on reviewing unique documents rather than copies. Trilantic founder Nigel Murray says the rapid expansion of document collections, thanks to email, means it is not unusual to find that near duplicates now represent 20-to-50% of typical collections. As part of the Equivio launch, Trilantic is offering free trials of the system with sample data. For details phone 020 7042 1000.
www.trilantic.co.uk

Ex-Kroll IT manager joins Legal Inc
Parbat Hirani, previously the IT manager at Kroll Legal Technologies, has joined Legal Inc as head of IT services. Legal Inc managing director Lisa Burton said the appointment would "reinforce our ability to deliver the best solutions" in the provision of litigation management.
www.legalinc.co.uk

NEC show preview

At the time of going to press, about 150 companies and organisations have booked stand space at the Law 2006 event, which will take place in three weeks' time at the Birmingham NEC (Hall 10) on 14th & 15th June. The exhibitors include 20 plus legal IT suppliers, among them Access, Amicus Attorney, Cognito, DPS, EMIS, Laserform, Norwel, Perfect Software, Pericom, Saturn Legal and TFB, as well as digital dictation specialists Bighand, Grundig, Olympus and Stat Plus. We'll have a round-up of any new product launches in the June issue of the Insider.

The event also includes an extensive programme of CPD accredited seminars, including free sessions on website design mistakes, client confidentiality versus computer security and the impact of 'e-courts' on the litigation process. Admission to the exhibition and many of the CPD courses is free of charge. The doors open at 9:30am and close at 5:00pm on the Wednesday and 4:30pm on the Thursday. The 24/7 ticket hotline number is 01332 227698 and you can also order them via the web.
www.thesolicitorsgroup.co.uk

News in brief

A life on the ocean wave
Bournemouth start-up Taylors Solicitors, which is building a niche practice in the leisure side of maritime law, has selected Professional Technology (01634 815517) to supply its new accounts system.

Lexis helpdesk wins prize
LexisNexis Butterworths' use of the Infra Enterprise IT support services management system won the 'best business use of support technology' category at last month's Helpdesk Institute awards.
www.infra.co.uk

Building a better wiki or blog?

With a number of firms looking at blogs and wikis as a way to enhance their knowledge management projects, one issue to consider is where to find software that will support enterprise-wide operations, as distinct from the free stuff you find on the web. Two products we've had highly recommended are the Movable Type blog system from Six Apart, which costs from US$600 for a 25 user licence, and the Confluence enterprise wiki from Atlassian, which costs from US$1200 for a 25 user licence. Firms currently using Movable Type and Confluence include Allen & Overy.

www.sixapart.com/movabletype
www.atlassian.com/software/confluence

Publishing news

New home for Holmes' blog
Nick Holmes of Information for Lawyers (IFL) has moved his blog to a new site and rebranded it as Binary Law. The IFL Lawfinder facility has also been updated to include new sections on blogs and RSS type feeds. The Binary Law site uses blog technology from WordPress.

www.binarylaw.co.uk
www.infolaw.co.uk/lawfinder/
www.wordpress.org

S&M launch JCT contracts digital service
Sweet & Maxwell has launched the *JCT Contracts Digital Service* (previously known as *JCT Forms on Disk*) as a CD product with additional contracts downloadable from the web.

www.jctcontracts.com

The Insider Jobsboard

Looking for legal IT staff, including posts in management, sales, development, KM, support, marketing, accounts or training? The Insider Jobsboard has the best choice of legal IT jobs available in the UK and you can post your vacancies free of charge by emailing **jobs@legaltechnology.com**

Fresh on the radar

New CRM and lead management system boosts referrals
Chorley-based Wallwork & Co has become the first law firm to implement ProRefer, a new CRM-based referrals and lead management system for solicitors from Cubic IT (01433 623253). ProRefer is designed to help firms maximise the financial return on contacts made with existing and potential clients, as well as referrers of work, by providing a 24/7 online facility, allowing prospects to obtain quotes for work and supply instructions via the web, and to supply the firm with sufficient data to measure the effectiveness of its marketing activities.

After running ProRefer since October last year, Wallwork say the number of quotes they issue every month has more than doubled and that 85% of them are now converted into firm instructions. Commenting on the project, partner Simon Ainsworth said "ProRefer has proven to be extremely effective in growing our business. We know exactly what is happening with clients before they instruct us and we know exactly what is going on in the business. We monitor how much each referrer and marketing campaign generates in fees; we can see real-time how many new instructions we have taken; and if we lose a quote, we know why, so we can do something about it.

www.cubicit.co.uk

Peters & Voyce contemplating legal sector comeback
Rod Voyce and Mark Peters, the people behind the old Ace Infinity barristers and solicitors software business, may be planning a return to the legal sector. Since selling Ace to Mountain Software three years ago, the two have been running a company called Logical Planet (020 7485 9915), whose flagship product is BusyDesk. This is a CRM system that over the past few years has established a user base among small-to-mid-sized businesses and about 50 firms of accountants as an alternative to Microsoft CRM, Goldmine, Act, Maximiser and TeleLogic.

The latest release of BusyDesk – version 7.5 – also includes a case management side, as well as mailshot and campaign management facilities. And, with the restrictive covenants that followed the Mountain sale having now expired, Logical Planet is now considering launching the system into the legal market. Voyce says that "whilst the thought of entering a saturated market with a new product might appear foolhardy, I suspect there are still many solicitors who have not been able to afford, or even comprehend, case management and hence might welcome a user friendly system like BusyDesk."

www.logical-planet.com

Event to focus on HIPs and e-conveyancing

With the residential conveyancing about to face some of the biggest changes it has seen in years, the market is to get a new event that will bring together senior people from the property industry to share information and network. Called the National Conveyancing Congress, this year's launch event will take place at the Brit Oval in London on the 14th & 15th of November and focus on the countdown to the implementation of HIPs, as well as how the infrastructure being set in place for HIPs could shape the future of e-conveyancing. The event is supported by RICS, CML, AMI, CoPSO, AHIPP, CLC and the NAEA.

The event is being organised by CLT and according to programme director Simon Dieppe (who was previously responsible for establishing the Gleneagles Legal IT Forum on the legal calendar) "with only seven months between the National Conveyancing Congress and the scheduled implementation of HIPS, the 2006 event will provide market players with the opportunity to share experiences to date, review pilot schemes, debate proposals for improvements over the remaining months, and create last-minute distribution chain and content partnerships."

Dieppe describes the event as being designed for director level executives and leading practitioners from law firms, specialist conveyancers, surveyors, lenders, property search providers, HIP providers, estate agencies, insurance providers, IT solution providers, government agencies, local government, energy rating agencies and mortgage intermediaries. There will be an accompanying exhibition and promotional opportunities are available. For details contact Simon Dieppe on 0121 362 7536 or email **sdieppe@centlaw.co.uk**

Timesoft celebrate 30 years

Timesoft, the leading Benelux legal systems supplier, this year celebrates its 30th anniversary in business with the launch of its All-for-X solution. Operating in a Sharepoint and Outlook environment, All-for-X can provide a single overview of information drawn from document and practice management systems. Timesoft has also secured several PMS and DMS wins within the last few weeks including Tiberghien Advocaten in Brussels (Aderant PMS and Hummingbird DM), plus Dutch firms Holthuis, (Aderant – the firm already has a Timesoft implemented Hummingbird DMS), Van der Stap (Aderant) and Buren van Velzen Guelen (Aderant and Hummingbird). **www.timesoft.nl**

AIM Legal catch-up

Amid all the corporate changes at AIM Professional, the company has still been getting on with its day job of developing and selling legal systems. Recent deals includes: a win at Thomson Snell & Passmore – generally reckoned to be the oldest law firm in the country (it was founded in 1570) – which selected AIM Evolution InSight to replace its old Axxia practice management system; and an upgrade at Hayes & Storr in Norfolk from a 1995 vintage AIM system to InSight.

AIM has also released a new version (R2) of its InSight system, which first saw the light of day last September. The original version was effectively a rebranding of the Evolution PMS to reflect the fact it now incorporated reporting and business performance analysis tools, as well as improved contact and relationship management. R2 builds on this foundation by improving the case management processing within the system so managers have a clearer overview of the case loads being handled by their teams.

HIPs & Conveyancing

DPS launches quotes module
As part of its build up towards of HIPs and e-conveyancing, DPS Software has released a new TeamQuoter web-based quoting module for conveyancing work. The system, which can be run inhouse or hosted by DPS, can be attached to a firm's own website and/or supplied to a firm's work providers, such as estate agents, for use in conjunction with HIPs instructions. **www.dpssoftware.co.uk/webquote**
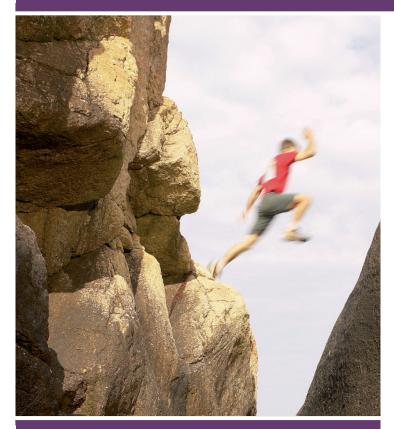
Easier2Move links up with SearchFlow
The online conveyancing service Easier2Move has selected SearchFlow as its preferred partner for providing the search content required for home information packs. SearchFlow has already conducted over 19,000 searches for Easier2Move's panel members. **www.easier2move.co.uk**

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David Gilroy of Chartered Developments
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> **Client Confidentiality Vs Computer Security**
Peter Uglow of Focus Forensics Telecommunications
14th June 11.30-12.30 - FREE

> **How Will The Introduction Of E-Courts Speed Up
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Sandra Potter of Potter, Farrelly & Associates and Vicky
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Product review: XDA has Windows too

In our quest to find if there is anything on the market better than the BlackBerry, this month we look at the O2 XDA Mini, which is also available from T-Mobile as the MDA Vario. We can't offer you any celebrity endorsements this time but instead of Paris Hilton we do have Professor Richard Susskind who says he "loves it" and takes it everywhere as an alternative to carrying a PDA and a phone.

The XDA does a have a full QWERTY slide out keyboard however it also has a touch-sensitive screen and stylus interface that we found surprisingly convenient to use. There is also a virtual phone keypad sufficiently sensitive that you can enter phone numbers directly without using the stylus. In terms of email access, you can have dial-up to an ISP, links to your own server or use a third-party 'push' system. On the device we tested (supplied by Handheld PCs 01628 644600) we had the Intellisync system which offers a very similar push service to BlackBerry. But, the big communications plus point with the XDA is its built in wireless facility, which can be used to link up to an office WLAN or the growing number of wi-fi hotspots now available. True, other devices have wireless but the XDA's is both very simple to set up and runs fast.

Of course the other big selling point with the XDA is that it runs Windows Mobile 5.0 and this is the crunch point. If you really need a mini-version of Microsoft Office in your pocket then without doubt the XDA is the device for you and, as previously reported, a number of firms are now taking this route. But if you only read Word files and spreadsheets – as distinct from edit or create them – then you may find that some of the intermediary steps involved in navigating the XDA/Microsoft interface with a stylus are a pain to contend with on a regular basis. The XDA is also about 20% heavier than a BlackBerry. ***Next month we will be looking at the Nokia Communicator 9300i***

Product review: Seneca – and now for something different

The Seneca CM system from Emis IT is one of a growing number of products from new faces that do not fall into the conventional legal accounts and/or case management pigeonholes. This is a pity because it means Seneca is at risk of being overlooked by firms who opt for a traditional system when they could be better off with Seneca.

The developers describe Seneca as "a one-stop contact, activity and file management" system, which just makes it sound like a glorified version of Microsoft Outlook. In fact a better analogy is the Microsoft Office suite as Seneca now contains just about everything anyone requires to run a modern legal practice. Currently this includes contact, case, practice, workflow and, document management (including redlining and version control), resource planning, legal accounts, web publishing to extranets, the ability to create more reports than you can shake a stick at, email, fax and scanner integration and even an integral digital dictation facility. Like Microsoft Office, you get the lot for a single all-in-one price starting at £1250 per seat.

Emis IT development director Chris Spencer says the best way to look at Seneca is as a giant Lego set providing firms with the building blocks to make it do whatever they want it to be. For example one firm is using it to manage volume claims for 'vibro white fingers' disease, whereas one of its major roles at a medical charity is to manage contacts and the organisation of an annual three day conference on clinical negligence. The target audience is what Spencer calls "aspirational firms" who already have a degree of IT competence, want to improve their business processes and feel that although they have outgrown traditional PMS and case software, do not want the hassle of best of breed solutions.

The USP here is Seneca's inherent flexibility, derived from an underlying design that breaks down the system – and legal work – into a series of building blocks based on files. This means it can be very easily adapted to meet the changing needs of legal practices and so give them the ability to effectively reinvent themselves and their working practices as and when they chose to move into new areas of legal work – but without simultaneously having to reinvest in a whole new technology infrastructure.

Overall verdict? Don't be put off by the fact the system seems to do everything, it really does. In the right hands – those aspirational firms that 'get it' in terms of what Seneca is all about – this is a great system and flexible enough to accommodate the changing needs of modern firms.

Insider poll: confused by HIPs ?

Last month we asked readers if they were confused by the developments surrounding HIPs and who should take the lead in educating the market? The good news is 60% said they were up to speed – but that still leaves 40% of you wondering what is going on in the face of the biggest change to residential conveyancing for decades. 40% of you said the Law Society should do more to educate the market, 30% said the onus was on the government and 30% said the software industry could do more.

In this month's readers' poll we follow up on a recent report which found that people working in IT now suffer one of the highest levels of stress of any vocational group. So do you find your job in IT stressful? And which factors contribute to your stress levels? The survey form is on the Insider website and all responses are anonymous.
www.legaltechnology.com

News in brief

Equitrac make it seven wins this year
Cost recovery specialist Equitrac has concluded deals with seven 'Insider top 250' UK law firms so far this year. They are Freeth Cartwright, Plexus Law and Langleys, plus Dundas & Wilson, ASB Law, Brodies and Putsman – the last four have not integrated Equitrac with their accounts systems. Equitrac, whose UK operations are now headed by Peter Straughan, has moved to new offices in London at 1 Liverpool Street, EC2M 7QD (020 7956 2747). We are looking at Equitrac's new Pro 5 release in the next issue.

SJ Berwin deploy Billback in new offices
Following the move to its new offices, SJ Berwin has deployed Billback systems to handle cost recovery from its copiers and scanners. The implementation includes the Billback Advantage software embedded on some 90 eCopy ScanStation OPs, while Billback's print tracking software will be deployed shortly.

Group it and go
TFB is offering users of its Partner for Windows the option of performing the majority of their bank reconciliation operations automatically thanks to an integration with Aurum Solutions' GroupIT system. Long standing TFB user Fraser Brown, which has been running the new system for two months, says it has already seen a "positive impact".

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PMS vendors target the BPM sector

For the last couple of years specialist workflow and business process management systems (BPM) suppliers, such as Metastorm with e-Works (now recently rebranded as Metastorm BPM) and FloSuite have been arguing that only their systems can provide the interface between the processes employed within the legal workplace and legal software applications. But, for how much longer?

Since the start of the year we have seen Axxia with DNA, SOS with Connect and Thomson Elite with 3E, announce new products that incorporate workflow process building tools within their core practice management systems. Aderant is also heading down this 'no need for 3rd party BPM systems' route but, rather than develop its own BPM engine, it is taking the different approach of basing its strategy on Microsoft's Windows Workflow Foundation technology (we'll be seeing more of this in the upcoming releases of Microsoft Office 12 and Sharepoint Server 2007). It is developments like these that have prompted Axxia managing director Stuart Holden to predict that the days of the stand-alone BPM system are numbered.

More of your fastest deals

Following last month's claim by Eclipse Legal Systems to have secured the fastest ever sale for a case management software sale – from demonstration to signed contracts in under 7 hours – we've had a couple of suppliers throw their hats into the ring claiming faster deals. Paul Morgan of Peapod Solutions says that in April one of his customers gave him the name of a partner at Crescent & Co in Finsbury Park who was looking for a new system... "on the morning of the 23rd, I called the partner and arranged to see him at 2:30pm the same day. At 4:30pm I walked away from their offices with a signed order for our case management and digital dictation systems."

And Tom Hervey of Acculaw recalls a sale that went from demo to contract – and on to delivery of the kit, system installation and collection of a bankers draft for payment in under 24 hours. There again this was in the early 1980s when the entire system ran on a BBC Micro with just 32k of RAM. Acculaw is now one of the leading suppliers of mortgage repossession systems but according to Hervey "the 1980s were more fun".

PAS pulls out of legal

The management of Perfect Access Speer (PAS), whose UK operation once looked like it might provide some competition for Tikit in the legal IT training market, has announced that, with effect from next Friday (2nd June), as a result of a "significant restructuring" PAS "will discontinue the delivery of services, including instructor-led training and consulting, to the legal industry". General manager Theresa Lundquist said "the decision to restructure was a difficult one" as PAS had been active in the legal market for nearly 20 years. The company's parent, Kaplan IT Learning, will continue to provide some of the PAS services.

Insider 250 now features library systems

The Insider's top 250 chart of the IT systems used by the largest firms in the UK and Ireland, has now been extended to include library management systems. The clear market leader in this sector is Bailey Solutions whose systems are now used by 55 firms. A number of firms also run Bailey software to support their knowledge management operations.
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