



FWBS buy Pericom's legal division

FWBS, the developers of the OMS and Matter Centre file and case management software, have acquired Pericom PLC's legal systems division for a combination of cash and shares. The price has not been disclosed. FWBS sales & marketing director Mark Craddock said the deal "means FWBS, as authors of the software, now own the channel so we are not only directly responsible for all product sales and support services but also have closer working relations with our customers."

The deal saw about 10 Pericom staff, including former legal division head David Amies, transfer to FWBS. Pericom will continue its long-standing relationship with FWBS in the legal market as a provider of hardware and infrastructure services to their joint customers. Pericom founder and chairman Ron Cragg has also become a shareholder in FWBS.

The Pericom legal acquisition does not affect the existing FWBS relationship with Aderant at the larger firms end of the market and Craddock said the company is still in discussions with Dave Webber, the developer of the Paragon and Indigo practice management systems previously sold by Pericom.

Two new events make their mark

June saw two new events make their debut on the legal technology scene – and on their first showings both have the potential to take on longer established rivals. The first, chronologically, was *Legal Week's* Technology Forum that took place in Portugal. Allen & Overy CIO Dave Burwell, who chaired the forum and also sat on the programme advisory panel, said the objective was not to replicate Gleneagles but to create an event that involved "the top people" from larger international law firms and provide a genuine opportunity for dialogue on strategy. So, instead of death-by-PowerPoint presentations with legions of suppliers lurking in attendance, the programme was given over to brief keynotes followed by in-depth panel discussions and multi-stream interactive focus sessions.

Burwell said although he'd grown increasingly sceptical of the value of conferences, he felt the *Legal Week* event did deliver a positive contribution. Dates for the next outing have still to be fixed but Burwell said that to avoid the stale and repetitious programmes of conferences, he hoped it would be made a biennial event. We liked the honesty of the programme – describing the mid-session coffee breaks as BlackBerry breaks. And, as another delegate pointed out, it was nice to play a round of golf in the sun, rather than the dank celtic twilight of Gleneagles in October.

Next up was the Solicitors Group with its Law 2006 conference, exhibition and training event at the Birmingham NEC. ...continued on page 9

Now Price quits Aderant

Long-time Aderant/Solution 6/CMS salesman Simon Price is leaving the company at the end of this month and moving to the US-German knowledge management systems company Recommind, which wants to expand its presence in the UK legal market. Recommind's flagship UK site for its Mindserver Legal product is Lewis Silkin. Price, who in January won the Supplier Personality of the Year award at the *Legal Technology Awards*, is the second key member (Alison Thorpe moved to LexisNexis Butterworths last month to head up specialist sales) of the sales team to leave Aderant in recent weeks.

Out of the Box at Wiggin LLP

Read the full story at www.thomsonelitenews.com

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Contact: Alison Sharp
International Marketing Manager
Thomson Elite
Tel: +44 (0) 207 369 7360
Email: elite.enquiries@thomson.com

News in brief

Top 100 firm takes Debttime

Top 100 firm Flint Bishop & Barnett in Derby has ordered Linetime's Debttime SQL debt recovery software – the firm runs an Elite PMS. Other organisations to have ordered Debttime in recent weeks include Forbes in Blackburn, HFO Services in Wimbledon, 1st Credit in Reigate and North East Derbyshire County Council.

DealBuilder wins at A&O and Lovells

DealBuilder (0207 490 0914) is seeing its document assembly and automation software being implemented Lovells, Allen & Overy and Shearman & Sterling. The company is also making headway into the corporate market with recent wins at Reuters and USB. The DealBuilder system also went live at Microsoft last year and is now being used to help create end user licence agreements in 35 languages in the build-up to the Windows Vista launch.

InterResolve installs Proclaim

Independent claims resolution specialists InterResolve is going live with a bespoke case management system designed for it by Eclipse Legal Systems. InterResolve will use the system to process high volume claims as part of its IR:BICS bodily injury claims scheme. Other recent wins for Eclipse include Newcastle-based Robert Muckle LLP, who are implementing Proclaim for residential conveyancing work and Liverpool criminal specialists James Benson & Co.

Elite announce Image Connect

Thomson Elite will release its new .NET image scanning, storage and retrieval system – Elite Image Connect – by the end of July. The system is aimed at firms seeking to become more paperless.

Quote, unquote

"I want one, I want one, I want one. Is that a sufficient business case?" ...a manager at a magic circle firm argues why his department should have its own wiki.

Records management on the agenda

The frequently overlooked subject of records management seems to be taking a higher place on the agendas of law firms and corporates alike. The law firm Manches, which runs an Aderant PMS and Interwoven DMS, has just announced plans to rollout Hummingbird's LegalKey records management system. The firm says that following its merger at the end of last year with Marshall Ross & Prevezer, it recognised the need to formalise and regulate the management and tracking of all client records, both physical and digital. The initial rollout will focus on physical files, particularly deeds and wills, but the system will also be used to track and manage assets such as IT hardware and backup tapes.

Meanwhile Aderant has announced the formation of a strategic relationship with MDY, the developers of the FileSurf records management system – and LegalKey's main rival in the legal market. Aderant will market FileSurf as Expert Records Manager. Ten days after Aderant made its announcement, CA (Computer Associates) announced it had acquired the entire MDY Group for an undisclosed sum. As part of the deal, all of MDY's staff will move to CA, with founder Galina Datskosky becoming the senior vice president of one of CA's divisions.

IALS win BIALL honour

Paul Norman of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS) won the academic legal information professional of the year category at this year's BIALL LexisNexis awards. The awards ceremony, which took place last weekend at the BIALL (British & Irish Association of Law Librarians) annual conference in Brighton, also saw Marilyn Siddons-Smith of Hill Dickinson LLP win in the legal information professional (large law firm) category.

In the best use of technology in a library project category, BIALL's own website took the honours, with editor Brian Thomas and website provider Penny Bailey singled out for praise for creating a virtual reference library "to the benefit of all in the legal information community".

Vista set for Q1 2007 release ?

At a recent conference in Japan, Steve Ballmer of Microsoft said the new Windows Vista operating system was "on track for shipping early next year – early January, late January, February". Under its previous name of Longhorn, Vista was originally due for release in late 2002.

Easy Convey calls off RemoteLaw wedding

Back in March we reported on the mounting problems facing the proposed nuptials between UK conveyancing case management systems supplier Easy Convey and RemoteLaw Online Systems of Canada after RemoteLaw itself became the subject of a takeover bid. Under the original deal, RemoteLaw was to buy 49% of Easy Convey for £3.26 million in cash, in a series of tranches, with an option to acquire the remaining 51%. However when it became apparent the deal was not working as well as both sides had hoped, founder and managing director Dominic Cullis bought back his shares and Easy Convey (01483 419025) reverted to being a totally independent company.

Cullis said that along with his obvious disappointment at not becoming a millionaire, the most regrettable aspect of the RemoteLaw experience was the amount of time wasted dealing with the regulatory red tape associated with becoming part of a quoted company in North America. But, he added, there had been some positive developments, including an exclusive relationship with OneMove. This is a RemoteLaw subsidiary currently creating a national panel of service providers (everything from estate agents to removal companies) who can help in the home moving process. Among OneMove's offerings (their IT systems use Easy Convey's CASA software) will be the loan of BlackBerrys to customers to ensure they are always in touch. Cullis said that despite recently shedding some of its salesforce (taken on as part of the abortive RemoteLaw expansion plans) April and May were the two best trading months in Easy Convey's six year history.

I'm no lemming says Durant

Commenting on the recent decision by Lewis Silkin to pick LexisNexis Interface Software's InterAction system for its new CRM (client relationship management) platform, the firm's IT director Jan Durant said "We've never been a firm to take the lemming approach and simply buy what everyone else is buying. However InterAction's industry specific functionality and integration characteristics make it superior to all other CRM offerings we reviewed." The firm will integrate InterAction with Microsoft Outlook, Axxia's practice management system, Hummingbird's DM5 document management system and other Microsoft Office applications. **For more CRM news see page 9.**

News in brief

Videss adds news and IT security to web

Videss has given its website a revamp to include a news flash facility on its home page. This will include reports on new software releases, IT security, virus alerts and, for the next few weeks, the World Cup. Videss was named new partner of the year at the recent awards organised by IT security and anti-virus specialists Sophos. The latest Videss win is at Harlaw, the largest and longest established law firm in Wetherby. The firm has signed a £100k deal to implement a Videss case and practice management system.

www.videss.co.uk

Rapid authoring for e-learning

TutorPro (01223 871870) has introduced a new capture utility that can speed up the authoring and modifying of e-learning content. The utility can simultaneously capture graphics, toolbar simulations and tool tips, create interactive events and generate the training script and user feedback automatically. In addition to the capture utility, TutorPro has also released an HTML facility that allows the trainer to print out supporting documentation.

www.tutorpro.com

Transam team up with Morningstar

London-based systems integrator Transam has formed a strategic partnership with Morningstar Systems of Amsterdam, that will see Morningstar provide Interwoven and InterAction implementation services and skills in the UK. Morningstar has already rolled out Interwoven at seven of the 10 largest Dutch law firms.

New frontier for Simpson & Marwick

Simpson & Marwick has used Citrix specialists Frontier Technology (0845 603 6552) to help connect its Aberdeen, Dundee and Glasgow offices to the firm's central hub in Edinburgh.

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People & Places

Barry Hilton dies

We're sad to report the death of Barry Hilton, one of the founders and later Honorary President of the Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators, at the relatively young age of 71. Barry had the unenviable reputation of being one of the few people who really understood the Solicitors Accounts Rules. Commenting on his achievements, Andrew Holroyd, Deputy Vice President of the Law Society, said "Without Barry the ILCA could not have achieved the level of professionalism in accounts departments that it has, within countless law firms around the country."

Running with the Flow

A team of three runners from digital dictation developer nFlow completed the 5k Race for Business charity run in uncomfortable conditions at the start of June. The run, organised by Essex solicitors Wollastons, saw 450 teams running on a hot evening to raise money for the Helen Rollason Heal Cancer Charity. The nFlow team achieved a respectable 158th position, with Jane Ashley, Keith Sarti and Tony Moxham all putting in good times, despite admitting that they were not the fittest bunch.

New account exec at Aderant

Stefan Dutczyn has joined the EMEA sales team at PMS supplier Aderant as an account executive. Dutczyn, who has worked in new business sales within the legal IT market for 5 years, was previously with Pilgrim Systems and before that at Axxia.

E-learning company moves

E-learning specialists Intellego Systems have moved to 1 Orlando House, High Street, Teddington, Middx TW11 8LZ. The new switchboard number is 0870 428 1250 and its legal customer base now includes Howard Kennedy, Mills & Reeve Berwin Leighton Paisner, Lovells, Norton Rose, Hugh James and Hammonds.
www.intellego-systems.com

Digital dictation news

You choose Tuesdays

New research by outsourced transcription specialists Voicepath has found that Tuesdays are the busiest day of the week, with the company receiving one third of its total weekly workload that day. By comparison on Mondays Voicepath only receive about 17% of the week's dictation for transcription. Voicepath general manager Richard Bate suggests the explanation is Mondays are spent finishing off the previous week's tasks and it is not until the following day that work gets underway on new projects.

Voice Technologies move into speech recognition

Voice Technologies (0141 847 5610) has launched Voice Messenger, a new digital dictation application that has built-in speech recognition capabilities. Voice Messenger is a web-based system that can cope with multiple sites and can be integrated with case management software.

Grundig now supporting Crescendo and Citrix

Grundig Business Systems is continuing its campaign to re-establish itself as one of the major suppliers of digital dictation technology in the UK legal market. Its latest alliance is with Crescendo Systems, the number 4 DDS software supplier in the market. Grundig has also announced support for Citrix, so users running thin client networks can work with Grundig hardware and applications. *See also featured jobs on page 6.*

LOASys goes live at two sites

The LOASys system, which combines digital dictation and network-based background speech recognition from XoVox Communications with the LegalDocs document assembly and email management software, has gone live at Kingsley Smith in Kent and Grower Freeman in London. A number of other firms are trialling the system. For details of how to apply for an onsite evaluation of what LegalDocs founder Terry Elwell describes as "the first system in the world to take digitally dictated text and turn it into a fully formatted, populated and managed document in six mouse clicks" call 020 7501 8516 or email sales@loasys.co.uk

Needham & James claiming more billable hours with DDS

Following the rollout of the BigHand digital dictation system to 120 users across four offices of Needham & James in the Midlands, the firm is reporting both an increase in the number of chargeable hours being recorded and a "dramatic reduction" in document turnaround times. IT manager Paul Ella described the BigHand installation as "the easiest IT project I've been involved in for over 20 years". The firm is running BigHand over a Citrix platform.

HIPs & conveyancing news

Opposition to HIPs growing ?

The last month has seen increasing vocal objections to the whole HIPs concept. The opposition Tory party are talking about abolishing HIPs when (if) they are returned to power; 97 MPs have already signed an early day motion criticising HIPs; and a 10 minute rule bill, to amend the Housing Act 2004 and make HIPs voluntary rather than mandatory, gets its second reading in the House of Commons on 20th October. To find out more about the growing anti-HIPs campaign visit the SPLINTA website.

www.splintacampaign.co.uk

SDLT claims market lead – but it's a small market

Archie Courage of ConveyProControl estimates that thanks to direct sales and alliances with a growing number of case management software suppliers, his company's SDLT.co.uk system now handles 64% of the e-submissions now being made to HMRC's online service. That's the good news, the bad news – as Courage admits – is the government has still got a long way to go if it is to meet its target of 1.7 million submissions handled electronically by 2008. Latest figures suggest that of the 2 million (8000 a day) conveyances processed each year, only 5% (or 320 a day) of SDLT forms are submitted electronically.

www.sdlft.co.uk

MDA buy xit2 for £10 million

MacDonald Dettwiler & Associates has made its third purchase in the European conveyancing market in as many months by buying xit2 for £10 million in cash and a further performance-based payment of up to £2.5m. xit2's portal is used by most of the UK's mortgage lenders to panel out valuation instructions to surveyors. The deal expands on MDA's move into the HIPs market and follows the earlier acquisitions of PropertyFlow, operators of the NLIS channel SearchFlow, and Rochford Brady, who run the LawLink property information service in Ireland.

Northgate gets energy efficiency accreditation

Northgate Information Solutions (01442 232424) has received accreditation for its Maxim 5 SAPCalc software, which is used to measure home energy performance. From next year sellers will be required to provide energy performance certificates (based on Maxim-type data) as part of section H of the home information packs.

www.northgate-is.com

LFS launches Hipsworld.com

Law Firm Services (01327 322922) has launched Hipsworld, a new facility intended to help local property professionals to continue working together without the need for an external HIPs provider. LFS sales director Richard Mathias says Hipsworld, which runs on FWBS case management software, "aims to support, assist and complement existing local relationships (between law firms and estate agents, not compete with them". LFS software is already used by estate agents to place more than 6000 instructions with law firms each month.

www.hipsworld.com

Virtual Firm virtually ready

OchreSoft (01793 836730), the company behind the Icon conveyancing case management system, is now previewing its VirtualFirm concept. This initiative is designed for small-to-mid sized firms who are worried by HIPs and the bigger volume conveyancers but lack the budgets and IT skills to compete direct. The idea behind VirtualFirm is to provide the Icon technology as a web-based managed service but combined with business development strategies. VirtualFirm will commence operations on 3rd July.

www.virtualfirm.org

All you want to know about e-signatures

Stephen Mason's *e-Signature Law Journal* has changed its name to the *Digital Evidence Journal*. For details email information@pariocommunications.co.uk

'How will HIPs affect you' seminar

Ontraq is holding a breakfast seminar in Harlow on 12th July looking at the impact of HIPs on residential conveyancers. Speakers will focus on the release of the final HIPs regulations, paying particular attention to the home condition report (HCR) and its suitability to mortgage lenders. The seminar is free but places are limited so email legalcheck@ontraq.com



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Litigation support

Trilantic tie up the loose tapes

Trilantic (020 7042 1000) and magnetic tape specialists eMag Solutions have formed a partnership and are working together on projects where it is necessary to identify and review data on tape, as well as hard drives and paper. eMag technical director Mike Davies said "the past six months, since the changes to CPR, have seen a dramatic rise in the number of requests we receive for data from tape to be presented in support of litigation".

LIT Group bring InterLegis to Europe

In an exclusive partnership deal, LIT Group UK (0870 421 4091) has obtained the rights to bring the InterLegis system to the UK and EU. InterLegis is a secure, web based Attenex-like application that combines a conceptual review capability with advanced searching of both electronic data and paper/imaged documents within a single database.

Insider featured jobs

Consulting with Interwoven

Interwoven is looking for a Regional Consulting Manager based out of their offices in central London. The RCM will work closely with the sales organisation on licence opportunities and with our partners to ensure successful services delivery. Candidates should apply via email to donna.combe@interwoven.com

Sales Account Manager, Grundig

Grundig is looking for a sales account manager to generate business from new partners and customers and from their expanding user base. Candidates must have the ability to liaise, negotiate and close sales in a consultative manner. Candidates should email CVs to Wolfgang Wydra at wytora@geneva-muc.com

Full details of these and other jobs in legal IT can be found on the Insider Jobsboard. www.legaltechnology.com

Days not numbered says BPM vendor

In our last issue (187) we carried a report that a number of suppliers were incorporating workflow tools within their practice management systems and arguing there would soon be no need for third-party BPM (business process management) software. Not surprisingly Russell Wood of BPM developer Flosuite describes this as "marketing hype".

According to Wood, "Practice management and other vendors have provided integrated BPM solutions for many years. This is not new. Traditionally their users interact with process elements via predefined menus and forms to carry out data entry and configuration tasks. Over time these have been refined using 'rules engines' and what FloSuite calls 'application based workflow' to speed up process execution. These enhancements can improve core process flows but are generally ineffective when support is required for new processes or for actions where users need to step outside core PMS processes.

"Operating systems suppliers have similarly extended their support for process automation with enhanced development tools, such as Microsoft's BizTalk Server, Visual Studio, InfoPath and now Windows Workflow Foundation. These tools assist software houses and law firms with large development resources to build bespoke code for individual process solutions. However they do little to eliminate the risk, development effort, delays and ongoing technical resource issues that accompany bespoke projects and the use of multiple development tools.

"As a Microsoft Gold Partner and software solution developer, where appropriate, we at FloSuite also make full use of Microsoft's latest toolsets. But these tools form part of what is still a technically complex development environment. Most of the larger firms realise this is the reality and make the decision not to take on the responsibilities of trying to be a software company.

"Various PMS vendors are now using Microsoft and other tools to reposition their products' pre-built BPM capabilities. This is a reasonable strategy for them to take and there may be advantages to be gained. But underneath the initial marketing hype, you will find this is once again just application based workflow with the same limitations as previous versions. We believe that what firms really require is a single, easy-to-use environment that has been designed for business analysts to rapidly deploy and manage numerous independent process solutions without a reliance on one particular back-end system."

Asia-Pacific news in brief

Diary date for September summit

The Asia Pacific Lawtech Summit 06 will take place at the Sanctuary Cove Hyatt Regency (Queensland, Australia) on 7 & 8 September. The event, which is being organised by Chilli Marketing, is intended to provide a forum and networking opportunity for IT directors working in law firms, as well as corporate and government inhouse legal departments. The event will be chaired by Martin Telfer of Baker & McKenzie and includes presentations by Richard Susskind, Chrissy Burns of Blake Dawson Waldron and Gretta Rusanow of Curve Consulting.

www.chillimarketing.com.au

Law firms offer best opportunities for librarians

The Auckland KM consultancy Know Where has published the results of a survey into the salaries and remuneration of legal library and information managers in New Zealand. The findings include the fact that there is no correlation between an organisation's size and the salaries it pays, and that librarians working in law firms tend to earn more than their counterparts working in the corporate sector. For details about the report email recruit@knowwhere.co.nz

Australian bank moves into online legal services

The Commonwealth Bank has launched an incorporated legal practice – called eCommLegal – offering a range of legal documents online. In Western Australia, eCommLegal also provides residential conveyancing and estate planning services. Clients have 24/7 access to transaction details and documents via a personal home page and the bank says that 'unlike many other lawyers we don't charge for phone, fax or photocopying expenses'.

Keeping on top of developments down-under

For a useful blog on developments in Australian law firm management and technology check out Sinch website run by Simon Lewis in Canterbury, New South Wales.

www.sinch.com.au

Maori boutique firm says 'Kiaora' to TFB

Wellington boutique firm Arai CLS, which specialises in providing corporate and commercial legal advice to the Maori sector, including tribal authorities, has purchased a Partner for Windows practice management system from TFB New Zealand. 'Kiaora' is Maori for 'hello'.

www.tfbnz.co.nz

Aderant has cracking Q1 in APAC

Aderant reports having made an excellent start to the year in the Asia-Pacific market with wins during the first quarter of 2006 in both Australia and Singapore. Hunt & Hunt became the 17th firm within the Australian Top 25 to select Aderant Expert as their new practice management system – the firm's legacy PMS was Law 3000. In Singapore, Rajah & Tann has selected Aderant to supply its new PMS – the firm previously ran CLO. In addition to these PMS orders, top 10 Australian firm Phillips Fox has ordered Aderant's Expert Matter Center front office software (this is based on the FWBS product) to serve as a case management system in a new start-up practice group at the firm's Perth offices.

Visualfiles consultant moves down under

One of Visualfiles' top implementation consultants in the UK – Andy Broadhurst – has relocated to Sydney to join the expanding implementation team at Visualfiles Australia.

BigHand partners with AlphaWest

The Australasian IT services company and best of breed systems integrator Alphawest has been appointed the preferred supplier for BigHand's digital dictation software in Australia. Alphawest business solutions general manager Stephen Wood said the company already had "strong interest from our customers to improve document creation processes using BigHand."

www.alphawest.com.au

AAR go with WinScribe

Allens Arthur Robinson, one of largest firms in the APAC region, is moving from analogue tape to digital dictation. Lawyers in the Sydney and Brisbane offices are already using WinScribe's DDS software as part of a planned practice-wide rollout. WinScribe Australia's managing director Andrew Holden described the deal as "an important opportunity for us, they don't come much bigger than AAR".

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Blackberry resources

In our recent trawl through some of the PDAs pitching themselves as alternatives to the BlackBerry, the key differentiator has been whether or not you need access to Microsoft Office applications. However thanks to a growing number of third party applications coming onto the market, it is now possible to have your BlackBerry and still eat your Microsoft cake. If you just want to be able to view incoming email file attachments in their native format (Word, PDF etc) then the RepliGo system from Cerience should meet your needs. If you actually want to create new Microsoft Office files (Word, Excel and even PowerPoint) or edit existing ones, then have a look at the eOffice range from Dynoplex. Prices start at US\$60.00 for a Word only application to US\$200.00 for the Professional edition. Both RepliGo and eOffice are available on a free trial basis.

For IT managers who like challenges – or to run their departments from the beach – check out the Idokorro site which sells a number of utilities that let you manage networks (including Active Directory, Exchange, SQL and Citrix) from a PDA, BlackBerry or smartphone. Google has also launched a free version of its Google Maps route finder system for BlackBerrys and PDAs but unfortunately it currently only covers parts of Continental Europe. A full range of BlackBerry and PDA utilities, including time tracking and RSS news feed clients, can be found at online stores such as Handango and PDAtopSoft.

www.cerience.com

www.dynoplex.com

www.idokorro.com

www.handango.com

www.pdatopsoft.com

www.google.com/glm

Buzzword corner: ringxiety

The distress you feel when you hear a mobile phone with the same ringtone as your's, scramble to answer the call and then discover it is not your phone ringing.

Product review: AlphaLaw Uno - it's all part of the process

The business of running a law firm is rapidly changing and, with HIPs, e-conveyancing, Clementi and Carter around the corner, we can expect the rate of change to accelerate over the next few years. Unfortunately, a lot of legal software has not kept pace with suppliers still producing 'traditional' accounts and case management systems. One honourable exception is AlphaLaw which late last year launched its new Uno case management system.

This is an interesting system because it ticks a lot of boxes and meets a lot of different needs. It marks the start of AlphaLaw's strategy to enhance its core Vantage system, for small to mid-sized High Street firms, and, it marks AlphaLAW's entry into the Microsoft .NET era. However what makes Uno stand out from the crowd is its approach to case management. Traditional case management systems (at least from the point of view of High Street firms who cannot afford the luxury of best-of-breed BPM software) have been relatively inflexible, designed to handle high volume work in one particular way but requiring firms to invest substantial additional time and money to achieve more customised solutions. By contrast, Uno adopts what AlphaLaw describe as a 'business rules driven' approach, so although the system can be supplied with built-in workflows and documents, these are not fixed and can all be modified – or fresh applications created from scratch – with minimum effort.

This may sound like under-the-bonnet stuff that probably causes most lawyers' eyes to glaze over but there is an important business message, namely: as long as firms understand the business processes they intend to automate, they can develop their own workflows – and develop them without having to understand computer programming or call in outside consultants. What this means in practice is if the process changes or, by way of an increasingly common scenario, a big client or volume instructor wants steps to be added or amended to meet their requirements, a firm with Uno will be able to react immediately to comply with new specifications. AlphaLaw make play of the fact the system allows firms to replicate how they really work but Uno means they can also deliver legal processes that replicate what their clients really want.

Overall verdict? We've always felt AlphaLaw is one of those suppliers that gets unfairly lumped in with all the rest of the High Street vendors – despite the fact they consistently produce innovative, feature-rich systems at highly competitive prices. Uno should help put a stretch of clear blue water between them and their competitors.

Two new events

Continued from front page... Although this was always pitched as a more general legal services event – as distinct from an IT exhibition – there were enough legal technology exhibitors present to make the journey well worthwhile. Digital dictation suppliers were out in force but probably the biggest vendor category were suppliers of HIPs and conveyancing-related services and software – which was appropriate as these kind of products are going to be the main thing the High Street sector buys over the next 12 months.

Although attendance on the afternoon of the second day was hit by the England world cup soccer game, in the words of one IT supplier: “the organisers achieved what nobody else has managed to do for a long time – putting on a well attended event outside London”. (Several salesmen also said they liked meeting the girls from the Birmingham Spearmint Rhino club, who were handing out free membership cards but we’ll gloss over that.) Next year the Solicitors Group turn their sights to London – with Law London 2007 taking place at Olympia in March. If they can build on the success of the NEC show, it will provide the Islington Legal IT event with some real competition.

CRM news in brief

Brown gone from Pivotal

Although Daniel Brown, who at one time looked like the only salesman who could give InterAction a run for its money, has now left Pivotal, the company is about to kick off a marketing campaign in conjunction with resellers Phoenix Business Solutions, who secured Pivotal’s most recent legal market CRM win at Field Fisher Waterhouse.

Robin Simon sign up for CRM + IP telephony

Robin Simon LLP has become the first customer to sign up for a new CRM plus VoIP solution provided by 3Sixty Systems (0870 710 7188) and InTechnology. www.3sixtysystems.com

Microsoft CRM – it’s not that bad

We’re starting to hear good things about Microsoft’s own CRM offering – the latest version is Dynamics CRM 3.00. According to one UK legal software supplier now using it, if you arm yourself with a copy of the new book *Working with Microsoft Dynamics CRM* (Microsoft Press – from £19.00 on Amazon) you can start customising the application relatively quickly and without having to call in specialist consultants. Dynamics CRM is available both as a web client and fully integrated with Microsoft Outlook.

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Hummingbird bid best possible outcome ?

When it was first announced late last month that the board of Hummingbird were recommending shareholders accept a US\$465 million cash takeover bid by the Silicon Valley investment group Symphony Technology (the shareholder meeting is scheduled for later in July), the initial reaction was that this was not enough money and that the company should have put itself more openly on the block for offers. Since then sentiments have shifted with the recognition that not only would openly shopping for buyers create uncertainty, which would be bad for the company and its users, but also the reality of the market is this is probably the best offer Hummingbird could expect.

Hummingbird EMEA vice president Tony Heywood told the Insider that going the private equity route with Symphony was "the best possible outcome" as it would free Hummingbird from the constraints of being a public company. He said the reality of life in a quoted software company today was that increasingly resources had to be diverted away from product development in order to meet quarterly reporting targets. (In the UK, Misys has cited similar reasons for seeking a delisting.) According to Heywood, Symphony wanted to not only maintain the integrity of the Hummingbird group but also to expand into the content and document management market. "These people are serious," he added. "Some of our competitors are currently having fun at our expense but when the deal goes through, they'll be wishing they had been on the receiving end of the Symphony bid."

- Hummingbird's UK legal team has been given a "shift of focus" with Andy Eden promoted to strategic global account director, Chris Giles now works exclusively on LegalKey records management, and Lisa Ingleby and Ben Mitchell have been joined by newly recruited account manager Matt Watkins, previously with Shoosmiths.

Fastest ever legal IT sale ?

We've ended our quest to find the fastest ever legal tech sale as we don't think anyone will beat Laserform's performance at the 2005 Legal IT exhibition. There, a deal – going from presentation, to contractual negotiations and on to signed order (for a £30k accounts system) – was concluded on the company's stand in 1 hour, 50 minutes.

10 years ago today...

Ten years ago saw the launch of the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA), complete with a code of conduct and a unified voice for negotiating with the English Law Society. Quorum became the latest US litigation support bureau to pull out of the UK after the market failed to live up to their expectations. At an IT conference, a senior corporate counsel for Cable & Wireless warned that law firms who lacked email facilities might no longer receive instructions from C&W. And at the June 1996 Barbican SOLEX exhibition, Microsoft Windows NT emerged as the flavour of the month technology, with Berwin Leighton announcing it was installing a network of 400 Pentium 133mhz PCs running Windows NT Workstation 3.5.

Global warming ahoy

A story in a recent edition of *The Times* reported that houses in the Saffron Walden area of rural Essex now produce more greenhouse gas than cities like Reading. Could this in anyway be connected to the fact Saffron Walden is the home of IT consultant and über gadget enthusiast Neil Cameron ?

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Publisher & Editor: Charles Christian
Tel: 01986 788666 – Fax: 01986 788808
Email: news@legaltechnology.com

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