

CS Group say strategy paying dividends

Less than eight months after the Computer Software Group began its acquisitions in the UK legal IT sector, with the purchase of AIM, Laserform and Videss, the group is reporting that its new professional solutions division has already established itself as the leading provider of case and practice management systems for the midtier legal market. The group has also expanded its customer base to a further 83 law firms – 52 of the deals were for electronic forms; 3 were for managed services and 28 were for case and/or practice management systems. These include Sharman Law in Bedfordshire who are replacing their Axxia system with an AIM Evolution Insight case and PMS. Other new customers include McMillan Williams, Cyril Morris Arkwright and Leeds City Council.

The AIM-listed CS Group has published its interim results for the six months to 31st August 2006. These show turnover up 77% to £19.4 million (2005 - £11.0 m), operating profit up 85% to £4.1 million (2005 - £2.2m). £5.2 million of the turnover came from new acquisitions and 80% from recurring revenues from support fees, licences and services sold into the existing customer base.

Holden says R&D is the key

According to Axxia's managing director Stuart Holden, a key differentiator between many of the "cottage industries" currently supplying the UK legal software market and Axxia is the amount of money companies are prepared to spend on research and development projects. For the past three years Axxia has spent an average of 15% of its annual turnover on R&D – which is not only substantially more than most commercial organisations (4.5%) but also compares favourably with IT industry giants, such as Microsoft which last year spent 16% of R&D.

"When it comes the UK market's traditional stronghold, the provision of integrated systems, I think we at Axxia have now put some very significant distance between us and our competitors and presented new options for law firms. People may argue that in absolute terms we cannot compete with global enterprise vendors but at this higher level I believe it's more about intellectual than financial capital. In our DNA system we have crafted a product that goes well beyond conventional PMS and time and billing solutions. We may have outspent some competitors but we've also had to out-think others," said Holden.

Holden added that as this year's consolidation of the market had long been expected, it was "not surprising that the focus for many home-grown suppliers has been on exit strategy rather than product strategy".

Cryoserver back from the dead

Given that cryogenics is all about bringing the dead back to life, it is rather appropriate that the Cryoserver email archiving system has just managed to pull off the same trick. As reported last time, Cryoserver UK has gone into liquidation however the IPR to the software was owned by a separate company and this has now licensed the sales, marketing and support rights to Forensic & Compliance Systems Ltd (FCS – 020 8382 3600). FCS will now be responsible, globally, for all customer-facing activities relating to Cryoserver and last week held a briefing for legal users at Taylor Wessing's offices in London. FCS is also building up a new channel partners network.

www.forensiccs.com – and note the double 'cc' in the URL.

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Contact: Alison Sharp International Marketing Manager Tel: +44 (0) 207 369 7360

News in brief

Tikit partner with Corebridge

Tikit has announced a partnership with Corebridge, the developers of vendor independent integrated communications software. The deal will see the two companies working on projects to provide seamless convergence between CRM, DMS and billing systems and law firm's telephony infrastructures. Corebridge already has a partnership with TFB, which remains unchanged by the Tikit deal as TFB and Tikit target different customers.

MTI to target legal sector

MTI, one of the UK's leading suppliers of network storage and data management systems (including SAN and NAS) has appointed Jamie Hall (most recently with DDS supplier Crescendo) as an account manager with a brief to develop MTI's business in the legal sector. Initially MTI will target the City and then move nationwide. Hall, who can be contacted on 01483 520218, is also interested in talking to legal IT suppliers whose customers are looking for storage and DR solutions. MTI are suppliers of EMC and VMware systems.

www.uk.mti.com

Nelsons pick Conscious Dashboard

Nelsons, in the East Midlands, is the latest firm to deploy the Intranet Dashboard software application sold in the UK by Conscious Solutions (0117 903 1129).

www.intranetdashboard.com

Kidd Rapinet pick Linetime for debt

Kidd Rapinent has selected Linetime's DebtimeSQL software for its debt recovery unit. Other recent orders taken by Linetime include Percy Hughes & Roberts in Birkenhead, Burr Sugden in Keighley and Grange Wintringham in Grimsby, who have upgraded to Linetime Liberate from Linetime's old Practice II system.

Plan-Net helps fend off the internet threats

IT systems house Plan-Net (020 7353 4313) has helped Wedlake Bell implement a new perimeter firewall and content security system based around the WebMarshall and MailMarshall filtering tools, running on Microsoft ISA servers. The firm's head of IT Linda Webster said that although Wedlakes already had a solid firewall, there were concerns about its resilience and that it could constitute a 'single point of failure' in the event of a technology failure.

Plan-Net may be a new name to many but it has in fact been around since 1990 – although it has only recently upped its PR profile. Other recent legal market projects include helping Herbert Smith with the rollout of 850 new Blackberrys and providing 'co-sourced' support services to augment the firm's existing helpdesk support team. www.plan-net.co.uk

DMS news in brief

Collyer Bristow selects Interwoven DMS

Tikit has won the contract to supply and implement a 150 user Interwoven Worksite document management system at Collyer Bristow, which currently does not have a DMS.

Harvey Ingram pick Open Text DMS

Harvey Ingram LLP has selected an Open Text Livelink eDOCS document management system – the product is the rebranded Hummingbird DM6 product. This is also a greenfield site for DMS software.

Dacey joins Phoenix Business Solutions

Keith Dacey, previously the UK product manager for Open Text Legalkey, has joined Phoenix Business Solutions to head the newly formed Phoenix BPM team, which will be working on matter inception, risk analysis and records management projects. Tony Manning, also previously with Open Text, has also joined the Phoenix BPM team.

Open Text sets out DMS product roadmap

Open Text has given its legal CIO advisory board a briefing on its product roadmap for the recently acquired Hummingbird DMS business. You can find a copy of the presentation (as a PowerPoint file) on the Insider website. www.legaltechnology.com/casestudies/ProductRoadmap.ppt

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Small firms reveal their fears

Legal conferences and training group Central Law Training has published the results of a survey it conducted in October looking at the fears of small to medium sized High Street firms (defined as between 4 and 12 partners – there are about 1800 of them in the UK) in the light of the proposed changes to legal aid and legal services. You can download a PDF of the full report off the web (see URL at the foot of this item) however here is a summary of the main IT-related findings:

Although by far the biggest (57%) threat to traditional law firms was perceived as the arrival of new Tesco-law type alternative legal service providers, 9% of firms responding to the CLT survey identified having insufficient spending power to keep pace with the competition's technology as a threat and 7% pointed to 'demographic evolution' and the eclipse of an older generation of clients who preferred personal contact by internet savvy clients who buy legal services on the basis of convenience and price.

Interestingly, when asked how they should respond to the various threats they faced, 18% said 'invest in more IT to reduce back-office costs and increase connectivity with clients'. But then 12% also said keeping pace with and understanding the latest IT developments was the biggest business management challenge they faced and 22% admitted their current financial management methods were so poor they could not even identify how profitable or otherwise different practice areas were. Finally, 80% said the assistance and advice they received from the English Law Society on longer-term business planning issues was 'inadequate'.

www.clt.co.uk/sites/clt/graphics/rjwc126-survey-results.pdf

New marketeers for legal IT

This month saw the launch of PureTech Marketing, a new consultancy focussing on the legal IT industry. Founders Sally Bellwood and Laura Gulliver were both previously in senior marketing roles at, respectively, Open Text and Metastorm, and before that Tikit and ResSoft. Companies already signed up as clients include the CS Group's legal division, Metastorm and ICCM. PureTech will be attending the upcoming LegalTech NY and Legal IT London events. www.puretechmarketing.com

News in brief

Reuters Legal select OMS from FWBS

FWBS has won a contract to implement its OMS Matter Centre system for the inhouse lawyers working within the General Counsel's Office at Reuters. Reuters will use OMS to replace a Lotus Notes-based bespoke matter management system.

Timebase 10 launched by Tricostar

Tricostar (01992 442800) has launched version 10 of its Timebase time recording system. Although Timebase is already widely used by legal departments in the public sector, Tricostar's Jeff Lawler says the new version contains features that should make it equally attractive to solicitors working in private practice.

Exeter firm invests in Digita tax software

Michelmores in Exeter has invested in a new trust tax system developed by Digita (01395 270273). Michelmore's trusts and probate team is headed by senior partner Will Michelmore, a former chairman of the West of England branch of the Society of Trust & Estate practitioners (STEP).

Vital statistics

According to David Paradi, co-author of Prentice Hall's Guide to PowerPoint, there are approximately 30 million PowerPoint presentations given each day around the world. Paradi reckons that in terms of time wasted on over-long, mind-numbingly dull presentations, this costs the commercial world at least \$252 million a day. Check out Paradi's website for suggestions on how to make slideware presentations less dire. Alternatively, if all you are going to do is read out the content of your slides, why not email them to your audience and save them even having to attend your meeting or conference? www.thinkoutsidetheslide.com

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People & Places

"Disillusioned" Mayson quits NLS

Professor Stephen Mayson, one of the founders of the MBA in legal practice course at Nottingham Law School, has resigned his post and has taken up a fresh role as the first director of the new Legal Services Policy Institute. The Institute, which will focus on the post Clementi era of legal practice is being established within the College of Law. Mayson also becomes a professor of strategy at the College. Mayson said one of the reasons for moving was his "increasing frustration and disillusionment" with Nottingham Law School, which has also recently seen its dean, Michael Gunn, depart. At the time of writing it is unclear whether NLS will continue with the MBA course.

Whale swims away from SRC

Richard Whale, the long-time head of marketing at digital dictation specialists SRC has left the company.

Linetime adds to its sales team

Justin Edwards, who for the past 5 years was a member of the legal systems sales team at Pericom, has joined the Linetime sales team. He will be covering the Midlands region. Other new Linetime appointments are Kelly Mullaney in support and Janice Cowman in training.

Practice manager joins SOS

Solicitors Own Software has appointed Barbara Parker, a fellow of the Institute of Legal Accounts Managers, as senior applications specialist. She joins SOS from Bristol law firm Sisman Nichols where she was practice manager for six years.

Green moves to Brabners

Ricksons' head of IT Allan Green has left to take up the new post of IT Director at Brabners Chaffe Street, which has offices in Liverpool, Manchester and Preston.

Digital dictation news in brief

BigHand widen their hold on the top 250

BigHand has extended its dominance on the top 250 market (see also back page) by rolling out its BigHand3 digital dictation workflow software at a further 10 firms: Bermans, Chadwick Lawrence, Coffin Mew & Clover, Edwards Duthie, Flint Bishop & Barnett, Forbes, Hays & Kilner, Raleys, Warner Goodman & Streat and the Smith Partnership.

Porter Dodson sees DDS payback within 3 weeks

Jill Wiseman, the IT manager at Porter Dodson, says the recent implementation of a nFlow DDS was one of the firm's smoothest and most successful IT projects to-date as it yielded "drastic productivity improvements". These include reducing – in just three weeks – an 8 day typing backlog in the family law department to a point where there is now capacity to take on extra work from other teams. The firm now plans to integrate nFlow with its Axxia practice management system.

Winscribe launches 360 degrees integration

Winscribe has launched a new 360 Degrees application designed to provide a closer link, including tracking progress, between law firm internal digital dictation systems and external transcription outsourcing. We've a feeling of *deja vu* here as in February this year Voicepath and nFlow launched what appears to be a very similar concept that also offers "seamless 360 degrees integration" between outsourcing services and digital dictation systems.

Dutch firm rollout DDS

Top 25 Dutch law firm Van Benthem & Keulen Advocaten has completed the rollout out of a BigHand3 DDS. The project was handled by Morningstar Systems who, as part of the implementation process, had to consult the firm's employee council or 'Ondernemingsraad'.

'Pimp' your slide-switch with Grundig

Grundig has launched a range of accessories for its digital dictation recorders. These include a 128Mb MMC card that can store 20 hours of recording, new carry cases, shorter and retractable USB cables for data transfer, new plug in microphones – including a T-shaped omni directional model for conferences and meetings, and a new earphone that allows an author to playback and listen to recordings in private.

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MONITOR results in real-time with executive and timekeeper dashboards

IT salaries: little change but wide variation

Graham Gill Legal Recruitment has published its annual survey of salaries for IT staff working in London law firms. Wendy Phillips, who heads the agency's legal IT division (020 7421 2815), says that while there has been little overall increase in salaries during the past 12 months, rates for some positions can vary substantially, depending upon the size of the firm, the number of IT staff and the job's responsibilities. For example, while the average salary for an IT director in a large firm is now just over £108k, reported salaries actually range from a low of £60k to a high of £205k, which would make the partners in many smaller firms envious. For heads of IT with a team of 4+ the average is £68k, with a low of £40k and high of £110k; and for IT managers with a team of 3 or less, the average is £53k, with a low of £40k and a high of £75k.

And, this wide variation is not just restricted to the most senior posts: project manager salaries range from £80k to £35k with an average of £46k, for development managers the range is £100k to £39k with an average of £58k, for IT training managers the range is £66k to £30k with an average of £43k, for support managers £68k to £30k with an average of £47k, and for network/infrastructure managers £75k to £35k with an average of £50k. Further down the pecking order IT trainers can expect to earn between £42k and £20k with an average of £34k, while 1st line support analysts may be lucky enough to earn £33k – the average is £26k – or as little as £15k! There is a PDF of the survey results on the Insider website www.legaltechnology.com/casestudies/SalarySurvey06.pdf

International news

Crown Law wins ALPMA award

Crown Law in Queensland won the business improvement award at the Australian Legal Practice Management Association's recent legal management summit for its use of Visualfiles case and matter management software.

Permanent Court of Arbitration selects Open Text

The Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague has selected Open Text to supply a new electronic file system. The implementation will be handled by Dutch legal IT specialists Timesoft.

HIPs & conveyancing

Dickinson Dees in HIPs trial first

Dickinson Dees, which developed its own HIPs service – called OwnersHIP (one of the more memorable HIPs-related puns we've encountered to-date) – has been involved in the first successful property transaction using a home information pack, as part of the current government-backed trial of HIPs in six areas of the UK. The OwnersHIP service uses search facilities from SearchFlow.

Property Search partners with Quest

The Property Search Network, an independent group of 59 personal search organisations, has partnered with technology provider Quest Associates to use Quest's online HIPs tools. Paying on a pay-as-you-go pricing structure, PSN members will be able offer their clients the Quest facility to produce a finished pack, including mandatory energy performance certificate and, if required, a home condition report. Subject to regulatory approval, Quest last month agreed to a takeover bid from MacDonald Dettwiler Associates (MDA), the parents of the SearchFlow group.

www.propertysearchnetwork.co.uk www.questuk.com

Mobile phone conveyancing updates

Conveyancing Solicitors Ltd has launched a new online case tracking system that, along with allowing clients the now widespread option of viewing the progress of a conveyance via a PC, can also deliver information via a mobile phone. The twist is this is not via an SMS text message but via the phone's own browser using the new .mobi standard for non-PC web access. Solicitors can register for the service free of charge on the LegalFile site and it then costs £5 per transaction to use. www.legalfile.com

www.conveyancing.mobi



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Lit support news

Sellers Legal's BriefCase on the road

Sellers Legal Services (020 7405 4512) is now marketing its BriefCase real-time transcription system in conjunction with its LegalEyes case preparation and evidence management software. Seller's founder Sydney Abrahams says the latest developments in the software take it to a point where it is both functionally richer and easier to use than its main competitor LiveNote. The management team at Sellers has also been joined by Peter Cahill, who is probably best known for his days with the Oyez Straker/Solicitors Law group. www.sellers.co.uk

Thomson buys LiveNote

The Thomson Corporation, the owners of the Sweet & Maxwell, WestLaw and Elite businesses among others, have expanded their involvement in the legal software market with the acquisition of LiveNote Technologies, the developers of the real time court transcription and evidence management system. The LiveNote system was developed by Graham Smith, who spun the business off from his Smith Bernal court reporting service. Smith remains with the business as a consultant.

Oce acquires CaseData

Oce has acquired the US e-discovery and litigation support bureau CaseData. According to industry analysts Socha-Gelbmann, the US e-discovery market is now growing at 40% a year.

The Insider Jobsboard

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Fresh on the radar

Enabling firms to examine web content

Enable Information Services (0800 949 6828) has launched a web content examination and reporting system called WebCutter that seeks to address three main management and security issues. These are: compliance to ensure new content on intranets and websites maintain corporate standards and policies on information disclosure; tracking – to receive early alerts of content changes within the public domain, particularly information published by competitors; and leakage – to ensure confidential information (such as M&A and litigation activities) do not inadvertently enter the public domain.

WebCutter is provided as a hosted service, based around a multi-server, multi-location architecture for resilience, and uses an intelligent robot to scan web-content, while ignoring pages that have not changed since the last visit. Enable is now looking for law firms to field test the service. If you are interested contact Gary Levy (yes, the same one who used to be with Text Systems many years ago) on 07725 222370 or check out the website.

www.webcutter.co.uk

Keyhouse provides an Irish alternative

Keyhouse Computing of County Wicklow in Ireland (+353 $(0)1\ 204\ 0020)$ is not a new company – it has actually been around since 1983 – but one that has never shown up on our radar screen before. What Keyhouse offers is a locally developed range of practice management software - called the LawOffice suite - for the Irish legal market. The product portfolio at the moment includes the SAM accounts system, document and case management software (including applications for residential and commercial conveyancing, litigation, debt recovery, probate, family and criminal work), and digital dictation.

Currently over 250 firms use Keyhouse Systems, recent wins including McInerney & Co and John O'Lee & Co, while Arthur O'Hagan and Ensor O'Connor have recently upgraded their case management systems to include digital dictation. The Keyhouse customer base ranges from sole practitioners to 100+ user firms and inhouse legal departments, such as the ACC Bank. Keyhouse can also handle data conversion from legacy systems – it recently migrated Ronan Daly Jermyn from an Axxia system.

www.keyhouse.ie



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Insider poll: buzzword bingo

Last month we asked readers whether you had heard of some of the latest IT buzzwords doing the rounds – and if you understood what the jargon meant. Podcasting was the most popular with a 100% recognition rate and 83% claiming to understand it. Next was KPI (key performance indicators) which 73% had heard of – and of these 67% felt they understood. Matter centricity scored 70% but only 57% of these said they understood it. Then came virtualisation, which 27% of you had never heard of – and only 50% of those who had heard of it understood. In last place was ERP (enterprise resource planning), which 33% had never heard of and 53% who had heard of it, did not understand. Looks like the marketing departments of some IT suppliers need to go back to the drawing board.

For our next poll we are asking law firms whether their IT budgets for 2007 are going up, down or staying the same. The survey form can be found on the Insider website. www.legaltechnology.com

News in brief

Capform attracts 8000 users in first year

Capsoft UK's free electronic forms service – Capform – has attracted over 8000 registered users since it was launched this time last year. The service currently holds a library of over 1200 UK government forms, with law firms among the most regular downloaders.

www.capform.co.uk

TFB to offer SDLT returns

Users of TFB's Partner for Windows software can now submit their SDLT returns online to the Inland Revenue thanks to an alliance with SDLT.co.uk, who are now the largest 3rd party submitter of Stamp Duty Land Tax forms.

SoftDesign partners with the CDT Group

SoftDesign Services (020 8293 3123) is now providing customers of the CDT Group with a single point of contact for helpdesk support, integration and training services.

Blog on for news

For the latest legal IT stories visit the Insider's blog – The Orange Rag. You can also subscribe to it via an RSS feed. www.theorangerag.com

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Insider 250 winners and losers

The Insider has completed another audit of its top 250 chart of which IT systems the largest law firms in the UK and Ireland are using. Compared with November 2005, this is the current state of play...

Accounts & PMS

No real or only marginal changes at the top. Last year Thomson Elite had 62 sites and this year they still have 62. Similarly, Axxia has slipped from 49 to 48 sites, and Aderant increased from 29 to 30. So has the PMS market stagnated? There are more signs of life among the mid-tier firms, with both the CS Group and SOS now having 23 sites apiece. But this still leaves 17 other PMS suppliers scrabbling for the remainder of the market.

Document Management Systems

This remains a two horse race. Last year Hummingbird had 35 sites and Interwoven 65, this year Hummingbird (now Open Text) has 37 and Interwoven 72 sites. While Interwoven continues to regularly win competitive swapouts at old Hummingbird sites, both suppliers are also selling into greenfield firms that previously did not have dedicated DM software.

Digital dictation systems

Another year goes by and this is still the only really active area of the market. Last year BigHand was the clear market leader with 69 law firm sites, while Winscribe had just 37. This year both have extended their positions. BigHand now has 87 sites against Winscribe's 60, with Winscribe reseller SRC accounting for 44 of these. The only other vendor in the field is Nflow with 14 sites in the 250 but they do have a larger share of the mid-tier market.

Case & workflow management

Although LexisNexis Visualfiles (with 63 sites, marginally up on last year) remains the market leader, the most significant development here is the growth in the number of multi-vendor sites, with firms increasingly selecting specialist packages, particularly for applications such as debt recovery and probate work, in addition to their core case and workflow/BPM systems.

For the latest Insider top 250 chart visit the Insider website. www.legaltechnology.com

Cool running

Catherine Birkett of CS Group Laserform completed her run in last month's New York marathon in 4 hours 10 minutes – the time saw her come in just under halfway down the 37,000 strong field. Birkett is not the only runner in the legal IT world – Mark Garnish, the business development director at TFB, has completed the Great North Run and Auckland Harbour (yes, the one in New Zealand) half marathons this year.

Merry Lexmas baby

US attorney Lawrence Savell, the man behind the Lawtunes record label – we mentioned his CD of carols for lawyers last year – has released another album. This one's called *Merry Lexmas* and contains 15 tracks, including *We're all just Elves* – any assistant solicitor in a large firm will immediately sympathise with its sentiments, *Down the Halls of Nussbaum Hanley*, a parody of *Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly* and *Livin' Life in Six Minutes*, which is actually quite sad. www.lawtunes.com

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