LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

Mountain meets CSG meets IRIS

Never mind a month being a long time in politics, it is a lifetime in the legal technology world, at least as far as the Computer Software Group (CS Group) is concerned. To recap on the story so far: last year the CS Group bought the legal systems suppliers AIM, Laserform and Videss. Earlier this year the AIM-listed company was involved in a £100m management buyout. And last month it bought the software licence compliance organisation FAST for £10.5 million. Now read on...

The month started with the CS Group buying another legal systems supplier – the Mountain Group – for an undisclosed sum. Along with being a major player in the small-to-mid-sized English solicitors IT market, Mountain has a presence in the Scottish legal market through its GB Systems business, it is the largest supplier of systems to coroners courts and, through its Meridian business, is also the 90% market leader in the barristers chambers market. Mountain directors Steve Kendrick and Ian Knox are remaining with the company.

One week later, while other legal systems vendors were still digesting the news about the Mountain deal, the CS Group itself was the subject of a merger and a recapitalisation deal worth £500m and has now become part of the IRIS Software Group. The broad details of the transaction are that the US investment group Hellman & Friedman (H&F) has acquired both businesses from HgCapital, which will remain a significant shareholder in the combined group. ***continued on page 2*** ⇨

Tikit and Elite ally as demand surges

To meet the growing demand for Elite financial and practice management systems, Tikit and Thomson Elite last week announced a joint partnership that will see Tikit consultants working as part of Thomson Elite's central implementation team, or within dedicated client project teams, to provide consulting and implementation services for the Elite Enterprise and 3E systems.

Tikit's finance & BPM group director Mike Bailey said "Tikit has been involved in a number of Elite implementations. We also have many common clients and are confident that sharing expertise will allow our organisations to deliver better services to these clients." (Tikit is also a partner of Metastorm in the UK legal market. As Metastorm is incorporated into the Elite Enterprise workflow product, Tikit's expertise will also be used in this area.)

Thomson Elite V-P International Jitendra Valera added "This partnership is the latest in a series of initiatives by Thomson Elite to build up its resources in order to meet a growing demand as clients expand their use of Elite products. In the past year we have doubled our staff numbers and increased our global network by opening new offices in France and Hong Kong, following a series of new client wins".

Inside this 12 page Insider...

Mountain, CSG & IRIS

➡ *continued from front page...* Lloyds TSB Development Capital (LDC) will exit from its longstanding investment in IRIS. (LDC, incidentally, was also the principal investor in last year's Bighand MBO). And H&F becomes the majority shareholder. Martin Leuw, the chief executive of IRIS, becomes the group chief executive. He will be joined on the board by Neal Roberts, the IRIS CFO who becomes the group CFO and Vin Murria, the CS Group chief executive, who now becomes chief M&A officer. The new group will trade under the IRIS brand name.

So what happens next? Previously the CS Group's activities seemed to have left the rest of the market transfixed like rabbits in a car's headlights however this time we're starting to hear mutterings that remaining independent could be an advantage as it provides a differentiator between them and the offerings of the CS Group Legal Division. First to put his head above the parapet was Simon Hill, the managing director of TFB "When we rejected approaches from the CSG Group in March 2006 we did so at the time as we remained unconvinced of their long term commitment to, and strategy for, the legal software market in the UK. The most recent announcement reinforces that view. TFB has always taken the view that the legal profession supports the approach of independent specialist legal IT suppliers.

"We remain convinced that only a specialist company, with a clear vision and strategy, can best deliver the exacting requirements our clients demand and we remain grateful to all of them for their continued support and loyalty. Some of the legal companies within the CS Group will have had 3 to 4 owners, all within a very short space of time, and it is difficult to understand their long term strategy for product development across the Group."

Outsourcing suddenly takes off

The last month has seen a flurry of activity in outsourcing deals by law firms. The first announcement came from Olswang, who have awarded Ultima Business Solutions an outsourcing contract, worth £3 million over three years, to manage their IT infrastructure including providing 24/7 monitoring and support. Ultima is taking on 14 staff, who are being transferred from Olswang's current managed service provider CCE. The firm's IT director Clive Knott said along with day-to-day support services "Ultima's expertise in handling Microsoft migrations was a factor in our decision to change providers" as it will assist with planned migrations to Vista, Sharepoint and Office 2007.
• Jo Shaw is Ultima's City sales manager, **joanna.shaw@ultimabusiness.com**

One week later Eversheds outsourced its UK Service Desk, desk-side support and datacentre hosting and management to Computacenter Services under a contract worth £27 million over five years. Computacenter will manage and host the firm's datacentre environments and provide 24/7 IT support services to 4000 users across Europe and Asia. As part of the deal 79 staff have transferred from Eversheds to Computacenter under TUPE regulations, the firm's IT director Malcolm Simms noting that Computacenter "will be able to provide our transferred people with far greater career development opportunities than we could inhouse."

An interesting aspect of the Eversheds' deal is the firm's management seems to have 'got it' as to why outsourcing makes sense from the broader business perspective, UK managing partner Bryan Hughes commenting "We are a law firm, not a specialist IT provider. This, coupled with the fact we had finite internal resources, meant we could never be at the cutting-edge of legal technology. Working with an external provider will give us access to far greater resource and technology, which will help transform our service offering and, we believe, give us a real differentiator in the legal marketplace."

• In other outsourcing news, Linklaters is due to announce details of a three year "multi-million pound" outsourcing deal with Savvis later this week. As soon as we have the news it will be posted on the Orange Rag blog.

AIM users to get built-in DMS

If Microsoft Sharepoint is now on the agenda of some law firms as their next document management system (*see story on page 5*) then, with impeccable timing, CS Group AIM has just disclosed details of its product roadmap for the Evolution Insight system which includes a Sharepoint DMS. Slated for release later this year, Insight R2 SP2 & 3 will introduce Sharepoint as an embedded document management system, providing a practice-wide repository for client, contact and matter information, that can be accessed from the Insight desktop, Microsoft Office and web/intranet portals. The system will also support free-text content searching, providing the potential for practice-wide knowledge management systems.

More deals on the way ?

Civica (remember Galaxy Legal) announced last week it had received an approach from a private equity fund. And, Elevation Partners, the investment vehicle for U2's Bono, is reported to be one of the favourites to buy the American Lawyer Media/Law.com/LegalTech events group.

ASB aspires to Clementi era

To take advantage of the new Clementi era, ASB Law has set up a parallel practice, called ASB Aspire LLP, to focus on volume, process-driven legal work, including personal injury and uninsured loss recovery, residential conveyancing and remortgaging. To support the business, ASB Aspire has selected Eclipse Proclaim accounts, case management and FileView online case tracking systems. Commenting on the deal, Aspire's managing director Sally Dunscombe said "This is a natural way forward. Services such as conveyancing, PI and loss recovery require supervision by lawyers and legal opinion at certain stages but the underlying process is essentially administrative."
• Dawn Advice, a rapidly expanding legal advice charity based in Newcastle, has selected the Eclipse Proclaim case management system to streamline its processes. The charity will initially roll out a 45-user system and Eclipse will help them tailor the software to their specific areas of work, which include debt, housing, employment and welfare issues. Dawn Advice based their selection process on suppliers listed in the Law Society's *Software Solutions Guide 2007*, picking Eclipse from a shortlist of three.

News in brief

DWF selects Elite 3E
The regional firm DWF, which merged with Ricksons in Preston earlier this year, has selected the Thomson Elite 3E as it new financial and practice management system. The firm, which previously ran Norwel and SOS PMS products, will also be using Elite Business Development (EBD) software to support its marketing and business development activities.
• Maurice Blackburn Cashman, which bought the Elite Enterprise system two years ago, has become the first Australian firm to commit to upgrading to Elite 3E.

Thorntons and Applebys go with the Flo
Scottish law firm Thorntons Law and the international offshore practice Appleby have both selected the FloSuite system as their workflow/BPM platform. Thorntons will initially use FloSuite to automate and manage its new client and matter inception processes. FloSuite will also be integrated with the firm's Elite PMS.
www.flosuite.com

Three new DPS sites
Three more organisations – Rickerbys in Cheltenham, Herrington & Carmichael in the South-East and offshore services group Capita's new Pro Legal spin off – have all ordered case management systems from DPS Software. Capita Pro Legal have also ordered a DPS accounts system and the Rickerbys' site will involve integrating DPS with the firm's Elite PMS.
• Herrington & Carmichael has installed an iPrism internet access management system from St Bernard Software.
www.stbernard.com

Seneca is the missing link
London-based genealogists and probate researchers Fraser & Fraser have selected Seneca software from EMIS IT as their new file, case and CRM management system.

News in brief

Wilsons pick CS Group case system
Private client specialists Wilsons has selected the CS Group Legal's Partnership Suite (previously Laserform) as its new conveyancing case management system. The firm said it picked CS Group from a short list of three, which also included specialist case management suppliers Easy Convey and Ochresoft/Icon.
• Pitmans in Reading is upgrading its CS Group AIM accounts software to a practice wide Evolution Insight system.

ISYS goes into Carey Olsen
Channel Islands-based Carey Olsen has implemented ISYS:web intranet search technology, which connects to the firm's Interwoven WorkSite product to provide a common interface for searching databases, file systems, websites and KM resources.

Traffic control at Harper Macleod
Harper Macleod has implemented Lightspeed Systems Europe's Total Traffic Control system to handle content filtering, prioritising traffic across its network, recording email activity and even averting the risks associated with plug and play devices such as USB memory sticks.
www.lseurope.com

Looking for IT training?
RBM Training (call Deborah Fisk – 01622 862862) is offering contract IT trainers and training consultancy to law firms for rollouts and regular application training.
www.rbmtraining.co.uk

Quote, unquote

"Oh really, in my part of the world (Essex) the Range Rover Vogue SE is the vehicle of choice for the local crack dealers." ...*a legal IT salesman is less than impressed when a manager from a competitor brags about his new company car.*

Open Text discover Microsoft – too late?

Open Text, the new owners of the Hummingbird DMS business, appear to have had a sudden Pauline conversion on the road to wherever they are going and are inviting UK users to a workshop in early August to discuss the development of a document management system "that leverages Microsoft Sharepoint technology". But is this all too little too late?

One City IT director told the Insider "You've got to laugh. What are they going to do, sell Microsoft licences with an Open Text logo on the front?" Another top 50 firm said they were in no hurry to migrate to a rival DMS for although Hummingbird was going nowhere, their implementation was at least stable. Instead, they plan not to renew their support contracts with Open Text, put the money saved towards developing a Sharepoint-based DMS in a couple of years' time – and in the meantime watch how other firms tackle creating a DMS on Sharepoint.

Latest events deliver the goods

Over the past month three major legal IT events took place and all received glowing reports from participants. Despite fears that Informa's involvement might bring in the dead hand of corporate sponsorship, this year's By Legal For Legal was the most successful outing for this event to-date, both on the social networking side (always good) and the round-table conference sessions. In particular Neil Cameron's discussion on whether the future is Microsoft with everything and Peter Owen's look at paperless offices, lawyer working practices and reduced carbon footprints provided plenty of food for thought.

We also heard good things about Legal Week's Strategic Technology Forum in Portugal, with Richard Susskind's 'in conversation with' session generating valuable insights into how larger firms are tackling such issues as business processes, outsourcing, client relationships and the billable hours culture. Finally, we had Law 2007 at the Birmingham NEC which was, without doubt, the busiest out-of-London event we have attended for many years. Its combination of seminar sessions and exhibition bringing in both the quantity and quality of delegates desired.
• Best show freebie: nFlow Software's tins of grow your own grass – that's green grass not wacky-baccy grass.

Bird & Bird launch next generation KM

Bird & Bird has launched a new know-how and know-who (experience locator) system for its lawyers. It retains some of the design features (and name) of the firm's original KM system Solutions Lab, and remains a bespoke system linked to the firm's Interwoven DMS, delivering content through a browser interface. However the system, which was designed inhouse, also incorporates new search and retrieval facilities based on the conceptSearching technology from Concept Searching (01438 213545).

The firm's head of knowledge management Catherine Flutsch, who led the project team in collaboration with the IT department, said "As far as we're aware, we are the first law firm to incorporate conceptSearching technology into a bespoke KM system. Our usage statistics show there has been a huge uptake by our lawyers." And added "As all the repositories, such as document management, were already in place, the whole project took less than a year from design to rollout."
www.conceptsearching.com

Call for HMLR to open up

In the wake of an agreement by Australian authorities to develop a common data standard for e-conveyancing, PISCES has called on the Land Registry to open up to a similar level of cooperation with the UK lending industry. Under the Australian deal, the Australian Lending Industry XML Initiative (LIXI) is to develop a common data standard for real estate conveyancing in partnership with the National Electronic Conveyancing Office. NECO is a cooperative venture between state government agencies, conveyancers, banks and mortgage processors to build a national e-conveyancing system by 2010. (LIXI works with both OASIS and NICTA, the international and Australian equivalents of PISCES.)

According to PISCES director general Roger de Boehmler "This is exactly what we want the Land Registry to do with us. The Australians are working on exactly the same things as we are here in the UK but they have the advantage of an eager government department. Despite regular approaches, the Land Registry is either not ready or its business plan does not require cooperation with PISCES. It has a statutory monopoly and, as a result, open data standards do not make a lot of sense to it."
• It has been estimated that the number of property transactions in the state of Victoria alone generate enough paper in one year to form a line 15 miles long.

Outsourcing news

Clifford Chance to save £30m
Clifford Chance reported that a combination of a £10m investment in IT systems and an upscaling of its Delhi-based Indian outsourcing operations (it will employ 100 staff by later this summer) would reduce the firm's costs by around £30m over the next four years. This is in addition to the £40m it has already saved over the past two years.

Co-sourcing is the way forward
This sounds as if it should appear in our buzzword corner but outsourcing and managed services specialists CCE are suggesting one approach law firms should consider is 'co-sourcing'. The concept is firms retain their inhouse resources but can draw on the services of specialist staff to help tackle specific projects or problems. Osborne Clarke has been using CCE for co-sourcing for a couple of years and, according to the firm's head of IT Nathan Hayes "Co-sourcing has saved the day on more than one occasion by providing immediate, expert back-up when we needed additional support. On one occasion, when we had Microsoft Exchange issues, CCE enabled us to resolve the issue before our lawyers were even aware there was a problem."
• CCE have produced a white paper on outsourcing – it can be downloaded from the Insider website's resources page.

• **Barristers chambers outsource IT**
Family chambers 29 Bedford Row has signed a three year agreement with Oncore IT (08450 541122) to outsource all the set's IT support, data backup, internet access and disaster recovery requirements for a fixed fee. The set, which runs Mountain Meridian as its chambers administration system, has also introduced a pre-paid engineering voucher scheme, which covers such items as out of hours support, which greatly simplifies the apportionment of charges to individual members of chambers.
www.oncoreit.com

Editorial: lost plots at the Land Registry ?

Question: is there any difference between a new style government agency and an old style nationalised industry with near monopolistic powers? Answer: not when its the Land Registry.

Harsh judgement? Not if you look at the Registry's 178 page consultation document *E-conveyancing Secondary Legislation Part 1*. Read the equally snappily titled *Annex A Partial Regulatory Impact Assessment*, in particular the scoping options, which start on page 112. There are five of these altogether, starting with the modest proposal of doing nothing and retaining the status quo but going on in options 5 to an all encompassing system that includes the electronic fund transfer of all monies associated with a conveyance (deposit, completion, SDLT and, presumably, estate agents and lawyers fees) and the simultaneous registration of the title deeds.

There may be some logic behind this but the Land Registry then goes on to propose the central service "will be designed, built and operated by Land Registry, supported by a strategic IT supplier... (the) Land Registry will develop its own channel access... (and) EFT will be provided by Land Registry with the help of an EFT service provider..." Hello? Reality check, isn't the Land Registry overlooking the fact British government has a terrible record when it comes to ambitious IT projects? Just how bad was disclosed by Joe Harley, the CIO of the Department of Work & Pensions, at a government IT conference in May, when he admitted that despite spending £14 billion a year on IT (the equivalent of building 7000 new primary schools) Whitehall estimates only 30% of government IT projects are successful.

...Charles Christian

Opinion: is now the time for outsourcing ?

You're a law firm IT director and outsourcing is back on the agenda. Businesses and government departments have been outsourcing *non-core* business activities for years. IT has been a major part of this and IT outsourcing and BPO (business process outsourcing) are billion dollar industries. The market is mature: many of the early adopters are now on their second or third time around and lessons have been learned – often the hard way.

Law firms have been slow to follow this trend, perhaps because of the nature of the partnership and close relationships with staff; maybe because the cost-drivers for business are not the same in legal; or maybe because the specific requirements in terms of technology and demanding levels of service are better served inhouse. Outsourcing is currently a hot topic in legal circles and now is precisely the right time to be considering it.

In the early days, many of the big IT outsourcing deals were agreed primarily with a view to cut costs. Base cases were drafted, comparisons done and negotiations focussed on getting the best deal possible (of course ensuring that acceptable service levels were guaranteed). The quality of the financial analysis depended on the person with the spreadsheets and whilst the big numbers presented to the board were often impressive and supported the view that 'you'd be mad not to', the devil, as always, was in the detail and it is no surprise that economic expectations failed to materialise. Some even looked to outsource IT just to get rid of their 'IT problem'. Most people now recognise that if you can't manage IT inhouse, you'll find it much harder to manage outsourced services.

The more mature buyers of outsourcing recognise it isn't all about cost savings. Whilst savings may be achieved through economies of scale or differences in labour cost, the supplier is in business to make money and is motivated to increase revenue from your account. Clients often find their outsourced services cost them more than anticipated and then it is all about what you get for your money. Real benefits can include access to a depth and breadth of technical expertise that cannot be found inhouse, cost-effective provision of out of hours services, guaranteed service levels and better planning of IT spend. ➡

⇨ Many of the early adopters of outsourcing failed to get it right because they outsourced for the wrong reasons. Law firms are well placed to pursue outsourcing for the right reasons and gain the benefits of scalability, out of hours and adhoc service, value added capability, and access to quality staff that make a difference to the firm.

The number of suppliers has grown, particularly at the SME level, and competition is fierce. All this means suppliers are likely to be more flexible and open in their approach, as well as more competitive in terms of service quality and price. In the early days it was larger organisations that sought to benefit from economies of scale and service guarantees. Now, there are opportunities for smaller firms to benefit from the broader access to service that can help them grow as the business requires.

Olswang first outsourced its IT four years ago and has just transferred its services to another supplier. Its initial reason for outsourcing was to achieve scalability to accommodate Olswang's growing demands. According to IT director Clive Knott "We are now rather experienced at outsourcing. We have outsourced for the right reasons and have good relationships with our suppliers, which is key. The staff that worked for us, continue to work for us, although one step removed, and that continuity of staff, coupled with the scalability and access to a much broader range of technical expertise, gives us what we need".

Olswang's IT outsourcing demonstrates a more advanced way of thinking to the old style outsourcing deal. For example, despite staff being transferred across to the supplier under TUPE, Olswang retain a significant amount of control over them and their rewards. Knott has also successfully negotiated a transparent basis for charging. Historically suppliers have been reluctant to agree to *cost plus* based charging but even this is an area suppliers are more willing to negotiate on today. Having a cost plus charging approach cuts out uncertainty and supports the win-win relationship.

The IT outsourcing market is now mature. Lessons have been learned by clients and suppliers and there is much more information available on how to outsource successfully. Suppliers are more understanding too – and have learned the hard way that they must deliver quality of service and value for money within the bounds of a win-win relationship with their client if they are to stay the course. Globalisation and the provision of cost effective ⇨

⇨ labour from offshore will enable the larger outsourced service providers to continue to offer a competitive service.

Eversheds announcement of its £27m outsourcing deal with Computacenter demonstrates that firms, both large and small, are starting to take IT outsourcing seriously. Now is a good time to look at outsourcing and to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise available to make sure it is undertaken properly.
...Susan Hope, Redman Hope Consulting
sue.hope@redmanhope.co.uk

News in brief

Michelmores rolling out AEP
Fast growing Exeter law firm Michelmores is implementing a secure remote access system – called Netilla Security Platform – from AEP Networks to support a growing demand for mobile working (including support for Microsoft Office and digital dictation) and provide business continuity, in the case of emergencies, via wireless broadband. The implementation is being handled by Community Internet.
www.aepnetworks.com

RPC select ICCM e-service desk
Reynolds Porter Chamberlain has selected the e-Service Desk system from ICCM to replace its current Touchpaper support and help desk management system.
• Metastorm last week launched a new e-Service 'pod' to make it easier for Metastorm BPM users to deploy.

TFB identity fraud solution
TFB has added a new identity fraud check application to the range of add-ons available for its Partner for Windows software. Called URU, the system cross references the data associated with identity documents, such as passports and drivers licences, to verify it actually belongs to the person presenting it.

People & Places

Trilantic moves
Lit support specialist Trilantic has moved to 6-8 Bonhill Street, London EC2A 4BX. The phone number is 020 7042 1000.

Law firm marketing conference
Professional Choice Consultancy is running a one day conference on law firm marketing and CRM in Manchester on 19th September. Speakers include Bill Kirby and Allan Carton. The price is £295 + VAT and for further details call MTWS on 01375 390968.

Barrett joins TimeKM
Anthony Barrett has joined TimeKM Europe as a sales executive with responsibility for selling the Pensera time capture system into the legal market.

Melville-Jones goes it alone
Wyn Melville-Jones, one of the pioneers of legal case management (his original conveyancing system was launched in 1984) has left Lawbase Legal Systems (now best known for probate software) and will be going it alone as a consultant.

Wrong number – they've moved
HR specialists Cezanne Software have moved and the new occupants of their old offices say stop calling their old phone number. Ring 020 7202 9300 instead.

The Orange Rag blog

Along with reporting breaking news in between issues of the Insider, our Orange Rag blog also carries longer feature articles we would otherwise not have space for in the Insider. This month's crop includes a story from Macfarlanes looking at a decision that casts doubt on the validity of the exclusion clauses widely used in computer software contracts.
www.theorangerag.com

Digital dictation news in brief

Field Fisher go with SRC Winscribe
Field Fisher Waterhouse has just announced the roll out of a Winscribe digital dictation workflow system (DDS) to 400 fee earners and secretaries. The implementation was handled by SRC who also supplied the firm with Philips SpeechMike hardware.

Attorneys see patent benefit of digital dictation
Trademark and patent attorneys seem to be the new market for DDS. SRC has just rolled out Winscribe at Eric Potter Clarkson LLP while Bighand now has five firms (Forresters, Mewburn Ellis LLP, Page White & Farrer, Reddie & Grose and Wynne-Jones, Laine & James LLP) using their digital dictation systems.

Vizards Tweedie outsource ethically to the UK
After it was agreed to merge Vizard Oldham and Tweedie & Prideaux, to create Vizards Tweedie, the firm began looking at ways to make the most efficient use of space at its new London offices. One decision made was that if you were using digital dictation, it made little difference whether the typist sat at the next desk or hundreds of miles away. However an initial project using an overseas service was dropped amid complaints about the quality of the transcriptions plus concerns by some lawyers about the ethics of sending work abroad. The firm is now using the Voicepath transcription service, which outsources work to UK-based secretaries. Voicepath is also integrated with the firm's Interwoven document management system.

Small firm thinks big
Irish law firm Frizelle O'Leary & Co has implemented Winscribe at its offices, despite the fact it will initially only be used by 4 fee earners and 5 part-time secretaries. The firm, which previously used analogue tape, said it opted for DDS because it offered greater flexibility and made it easier to manage workflows and prioritise actions. The system was implemented by Winscribe partner Docman.

Bighand3 upgrades and wins
Leeds-based Shulmans has upgraded from the Bighand DDS it has been running since 2004 to the supplier's new Bighand3 system. And, Machiels Advocaten in Heerlen in the Netherlands has recently switched from analogue tape to Bighand3. The new DDS software was implemented by Morningstar Systems. ➡

Digital dictation news in brief

nFlow announce Microsoft development strategy with v5
nFlow has released some details of its new Microsoft led development strategy, which will culminate with the launch of version 5 of nFlow's digital dictation software. According to Rob Lancashire "We constantly monitor market requirements and experience told us that there was a real need to develop a platform that would take digital dictation to the next level. We were also keen to develop a platform taking advantage of the latest Microsoft technologies including .NET, Internet Information Server (IIS) and SQL Server. With this in mind we took the decision to make a serious additional investment in R&D by contracting Microsoft as lead design consultants."

Bighand annual user conference in September
Bighand's annual user conference will take place on 27th September at Sopwell House near St Albans. The company expects about 150 delegates to attend and, along with sessions on Bighand's latest technologies and broader practice issues, there will be a mini exhibition featuring Philips, FWBS, Interwoven, LexisNexis Visualfiles, Voicepath and Eclipse. Bighand clients or partners can register by emailing **jo.beckwith@bighand.com**

Grundig consolidates Digta software portfolio
Grundig Business Systems has consolidated its Digta range of dictation software into two packages: the entry level DigtaSoft for small (max 10 user) networks; and DigtaSoft Pro for larger networks. The latter also includes support for thin client networks such as Citrix. Grundig has also launched a new DSS mover utility to simplify the downloading of dictation files from portable files.

Tikit in DocAuto deal

Tikit has concluded a deal to become the exclusive UK and European channel for DocAuto, the leading US developer of add-ons for the Interwoven DMS, including its flagship Workspace Manager product. UK firms already using DocAuto include Freshfields and Wragge & Co.
• Berwin Leighton Paisner has become the first firm to purchase DocAuto Workspace Manager through Tikit. The firm's development manager Mike Nolan said "We see real value in Workspace. It provides us with a solid technical foundation to support all aspects of folder management within Worksite."

But would anyone use a Blackberry for DD ?

Amid all the kerfuffle last month, as Bighand and nFlow battled it out over who had the better implementation for digital dictation on a Blackberry (expect a similar announcement from Winscribe in the near future), one question nobody asked is why would anyone want to dictate on a Blackberry? Particularly as portable recorders have had 25 years of interface enhancement go into their design whereas a lot of people still don't even use their Blackberrys as a phone.

Although there was a suspicion this would be just another box for vendors to tick in the procurement process, there seems to be a genuine requirement for it in some firms where desk-based (or tethered) dictation devices are standard and portable recorders are not widely available. By contrast, these firms do provide lawyers with Blackberrys and the in-built communications means files can be sent off for transcription as and when they are ready rather than waiting until the lawyer is physically next in the office and can transfer the files. Along with improving workflow – so secretaries receive transcription on an ongoing basis rather than suddenly being swamped with work – anecdotal evidence suggests lawyers are less prone to forgetting to take their Blackberrys with them – or losing them – than they are portable recorders.

• Still on the subject of DDS and Blackberrys, here at the Insider we're hearing rumours that Philips and Olympus could soon be launching wireless and/or Bluetooth enabled recorders. The idea would be to dictate onto the device and then either to sync it with a desktop system once you are back in the office *or* to transfer the file to the Blackberry in your pocket or briefcase and then forward it on to the office for transcription.

News in brief

See DNA on the road
Axxia is embarking on a UK roadshow visiting London, Edinburgh, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Glasgow during July, September and October, to provide one to one demonstrations of its DNA system. For more details or to book a place call Heidi Cranfield on 0118 960 2626.

Dorset and Sefton go with TCM
Dorset County Council Legal Department and Sefton MBC have started to implement Timebase Case Management systems from Tricostar Systems (01992 442800). The TCM software uses 100% browser technology, so there is no need to load an application onto the client PC. It also provides 2-way integration with Outlook, Notes and Groupwise.

Insider featured jobs

Professional Services Consultant/Engineer
Search. KM and e-discovery specialist Recommind is recruiting for a professional services consultant/engineer (ideally based in London/Home Counties) with experience of implementing enterprise software within the legal environment. Send CVs to **simon.price@recommind.com** and visit **www.recommind.com**

Account Exec, IT Marketing Consultancy
New, dynamic IT marketing consultancy seeks an Account Executive to support and manage growing client base. Using all aspects of the marketing mix and undertaking general administrative tasks, the ideal candidate has 2 years' experience and is degree qualified. Send CVs to **info@puretechmarketing.com**

Further details on these and other jobs can be found on the Insider jobsboard.
www.legaltechnology.com

DocsCorp to go head to head with Workshare

Last week Workshare announced the launch of version 5 of its redlining, metadata and document production suite. However while the suite may contain some interesting new features (including support for Microsoft Office 2007 and Vista and a new secure PDF creation facility) will anyone want to buy it?

Leaving aside the fact most law firms will not be upgrading to the latest Microsoft software for a couple of years, the biggest grumble we hear about Workshare is its licensing policy, with many firms who want the Deltaview redlining application unhappy that it is currently only available bundled within a larger suite. One supplier claiming to have a viable alternative is PDF specialists DocsCorp, which earlier this month launched its new compareDocs application. Like Workshare it provides Word-to-Word comparison but it also supports PDF-to-PDF, Word-to-PDF plus pretty much Word-to-anything and PDF-to-anything comparisons. And, if you are concerned about embarrassing metadata lurking in your Word files, DocsCorp is also working with metadata utility specialists Payne Consulting. DocsCorp products can be integrated with document management systems such as Interwoven and compareDocs will run on Windows 2000 and above.
www.docscorp.com

Now it's a 27H consultancy

Last month we reported that Tim Spriggs and David Gallagher were working with Alpha Zero. They still are but to give themselves scope to offer a broader range of consultancy services (including advice on PMS selection) and complementary products they have now set up their own company called 27H. Among the companies Spriggs and Gallagher have referral, distribution, service and consultancy partnerships with are infrastructure experts Venture 1, portal specialists Handshake Software, billing systems company Whitehill Technologies and Alpha Zero. "Our philosophy," says Spriggs, "is if we can't provide the services a law firm needs, we know a man who does". 27H is primarily targeting mid-tier firms. For more details email **info@27h.co.uk**
• The name 27H comes from an old bootstrap command Spriggs and Gallagher used to encounter when they were working on DataGeneral systems in their Miles 33 days.

HIPs & e-conveyancing news

HIPs may be on their last legs after the latest government U-turn (and rumour is they will be finally buried later this summer) but in the meantime Searchflow has published the results of a recent survey it conducted, which shows the decision to shelve the 1st June launch was a smart move as so many solicitors were ill-prepared for HIPs.

According to Searchflow's findings...
• 70% of firms have restricted themselves to signing up with one HIP provider but if supply or delivery problems were to arise there appear to be no contingency plans;
• Over 50% of conveyancers and solicitors have yet to establish any form of partnership with estate agents;
• Less than half of all respondents have started any kind of HIP-related communication with their clients and over 80% are not advertising HIP services on their websites.

The only good news is 45% plan to add non-mandatory searches (coal, environmental etc, where relevant) in their HIPs as a matter of course and 66% plan to add further, non-mandatory searches in the interests of diligence.

In other related news...

National Conveyancing Congress in September
Central Law Training is holding its second annual National Conveyancing Congress in September – the date is Thursday 13th and the location is the International Conference Centre in Birmingham city centre (not the NEC). Delegate prices are from £295 + VAT and the programme covers all aspects of the property market, including e-conveyancing and a session on alternative business models for making a profit from conveyancing, the latter is chaired by Richard Barnett of Barnetts.
www.nationalconveyancingcongress.com

HIP Manager on a budget
Solicitor Neil Jopson, who has been active in the legal IT market for a number of years with low cost applications for smaller firms, has launched a new document production and case management system called HIP Manager. This is for solicitors who want to create HIPs packages without having to rely on the services of what Jopson describes as "so-called (and unqualified) HIP providers". The system handles the creation of the compulsory and optional documents, plus associated workflows. The price is £375 per fee earner however users must have Microsoft Access loaded on their PCs. For details call 01280 823511.

Insider subscriptions

Ashurst go with Tikit and '3Cs' approach

Ashurst has awarded Tikit the contract to instal LexisNexis Interaction CRM and Interwoven Worksite (swapping out Hummingbird) DM systems. Applications manager Orlando Milford said while "undertaking a simultaneous implementation of CRM and DM might seem daunting," they felt Tikit's new '3Cs' consulting framework would address the bigger picture. '3Cs' stands for culture, content (data) and capability. According to Tikit consultant Christopher Young this means adopting a "holistic" approach "rather than simply trying to fit a problem to a technology solution". Milford adds "Whilst CRM and DM are doing different things, they're touching the same parts of the business, so it's crucial solutions fit together culturally, functionally and through their content."

Diary date clashes

Considering how few events take place in the legal IT calendar, you'd think organisers could avoid dates clashes but no, we have two to report: The Solicitors Group has shifted the date of its autumn Law London Olympia event from 16th-to-18th October to the 1st & 2nd of that month. This now clashes with the Scottish Law Society's Nothing but the Net conference in Edinburgh although it is more of a problem for exhibitors than delegates. And, ALM has advanced the dates of next year's LegalTech New York by one week to 5th-to-7th February 2008, so it now clashes with the Legal IT show in London on the 6th & 7th.
www.almevents.com

Two Terrys do charity

News of more fundraising for good causes: Terry Frost of Solicitors Case Management Systems has just taken part in a charity bike ride, which raised over £2000 for the NSPCC and Collaborative Law – the latter provides non-confrontational advice in matrimonial disputes. And, Terry Elwell of LegalDocs – yes, him with the long flowing cavalier-like locks – is hoping to raise money for a wheelchair-bound friend through a sponsored hair-cut scheme. Each call made to 0904 253 1000 will raise just over £1 for the cause and then, for every £1000 raised, Terry will have an inch cut from his hair. He reckons it will take about £15,000 to turn him into a skinhead.
www.terryslocs.com

10 years ago today...

The June 1997 Insider carried the results of a survey, conducted by the Lawgroup network, which found that 55% of firms still used DOS-based wordprocessing, with Wordperfect 5.1 the most popular package. CMS Data, the company behind the CMS Open PMS, said the decision by sales VP Tom Platt to join Elite wouldn't hurt them. CMS was subsequently bought and sold three times before coming to rest as Aderant. Geoff Morris sold his Dart Legal Systems business to TCO, who subsequently shut it down. Videss, now part of the CS/IRIS group, launched its NT based Legal Office suite. And, that month's SOLEX event at the Barbican saw the first UK suppliers (Axxia and Linetime) adopt the more casual polo shirt plus chinos dress code introduced the previous year by US vendors Carpe Diem.

Gossip central

The managing director of which legal software supplier is currently swapping his apartment at Disneyworld in Florida for an apartment on The Strip in Las Vegas?

Legal Technology Insider