

CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS BUYERS GUIDE - JULY 2004

by Charles Christian•

In a market where time is money, case management software is one technology that gives law firms the potential to increase turnover and - more importantly - to improve their profit margins by working smarter rather than harder.

At its most basic level, case management automates the common elements of handling a particular class of work - such as residential conveyancing - by a combination of multiple option 'decision trees', workflows and document templates. These typically work along the lines of 'if after 14 days you have not received a reply, send out Reminder Letter A, if you have received a response, send out Acknowledgement Letter B' and can progress a matter from initial instructions through until completion.

The beauty of this approach is not only does it allow a firm to handle a higher volume of work without increasing its headcount - because generating correspondence becomes a simpler matter of clicking on computer menu options rather than dictating a letter and waiting for it to be transcribed - but it also permits routine work to be delegated to more junior staff, thereby freeing qualified fee earners to concentrate on higher billing jobs. In other words, case management is an ideal solution for any firm with a high volume, relatively low margin workload - such as residential conveyancing, debt recovery and personal injury claims - where matters need to be processed as cost efficiently as possible.

Although there is nothing novel about the concept of case management technology - some solicitors practices have been using it in this country since the late 1970s - over the years there has been a shift in views as to how they should be implemented to gain the maximum benefit.

For example, the old view was that a system must exactly mirror the way a firm had always handled a particular class of work, whereas it is now appreciated that unless the firm is prepared to change some its own internal processes (such as moving to standard templates rather than allowing fee earners to create their own individual documents) it will never enjoy the full benefits of automation. There is also a wider acceptance that instead of striving to create the perfect case management system that can handle every eventuality, it is better to opt for the 80:20 rule and have a system that can 80 percent of the job now and leave the remaining 20 percent - all those exceptions and one-offs that crop up from time to time - to be handled manually by fee earners.

On the other hand, it is now also recognised that along with the more traditional benefits of case management software (increased productivity, lower-per-matter overheads, faster turn around times) there are also other benefits, such as the ability to implement quality assurance (including Lexcel) and service delivery standards customised to meet the exact needs of individual 'institutional' clients, such as the Legal Services Commission, insurance

companies and mortgage lenders, who are imposing increasingly strict compliance, matter handling procedures and reporting requirements on their panel and franchise firms.

In addition, it is worth noting that a good case management system (which will inevitably include some form of failsafe key dates diary and reminder reporting facility - so you never overlook an important deadline or appointment because a fee earner is ill or on holiday) also provides the foundations for a risk management system. In fact just saving the excess on one professional indemnity insurance claim on a single residential conveyancing deal could more than pay for the implementation of case management in many firms.

One final point to note is most modern case management software can also offer some form 'web enablement' facility - such as online case tracking - thereby providing more ambitious firms with the foundations for an eventual move into e-commerce and online legal services.

The market: As the survey indicates, there are a huge number of suppliers selling case management systems in this market, covering almost all areas of legal work. To simplify matters this feature is focussing on three of the most widely used, high volume/low margin areas: debt recovery, residential conveyancing and personal injury claims. However many suppliers of conveyancing software also offer remortgaging systems and, similarly, personal injury vendors frequently also offer systems for handling road traffic and uninsured loss recovery claims.

Integration: Most suppliers claim to offer broadly comparable features in their systems but do watch out for the issue of accounts integration. For example some case management systems will only work if the firm also runs that supplier's accounts and practice management software - in other words they are integrated systems - whereas other products will happily operate on a stand-alone basis. To add further confusion, most stand-alone case management systems can also offer accounts integration as an optional extra.

Pricing: Because some systems have been developed for larger firms, where the software will be used by teams or departments running into dozens of fee earners, they require substantially beefier databases to support their operations than systems designed for small firms with just a handful of users. Unfortunately this does mean their 'entry level' pricing for a complete system (particularly if the cost of an accounts systems also has to be factored in) may seem disproportionately higher however their subsequent 'per seat' user pricing may actually be cheaper than some smaller systems that cannot offer the same economies of scale. The cost of the hardware must be added to all prices and do also factor in installation, implementation, training and ongoing support costs.

The Suppliers: The following list includes the main suppliers of case management systems who sell and are currently actively marketing packaged solutions catering for the needs of the broader High Street sector. The list does not include suppliers of workflow/BPM (business process management) systems, which typically require an inhouse IT resource to help the

firm implement the software, nor suppliers who asked to be omitted from the list.

Supplier AIM Professional Systems
Product Evolution Case Manager
Phone 01482 326971
URL <http://www.aimlegal.com>

Supplier Axxia Systems
Product Case Manager
Phone 01189 602627
URL <http://www.axxia.com>

Supplier Carydan
Product Carydan
Phone 08701 696696
URL <http://www.carydan.co.uk>

Supplier Civica Systems
Product Galaxy Legal
Phone 0121 359 4861
URL <http://www.civica.co.uk>

Supplier Cognito Software
Product Case Manager
Phone 01279 821400
URL <http://www.cognitosoftware.co.uk>

Supplier ConveyanceLink
Product ConveyanceLink
Phone 0845 166 2629
URL <http://www.conveyancelink.com>

Supplier DPS Software
Product DPS Case Manager
Phone 020 8804 1022
URL <http://www.dpssoftware.co.uk>

Supplier EasyConvey
Product CASA
Phone 01483 419025
URL <http://www.easyconvey.com>

Supplier Eclipse Legal Systems
Product ProClaim
Phone 01274 704100
URL <http://www.eclipselegal.co.uk>

Supplier Edgebyte Computers
Product Lawbyte
Phone 01253 291100
URL <http://www.edgebyte.com>

Supplier Gavel & Gown
Product Amicus Attorney
Phone 01780 480764
URL <http://www.amicusattorney.co.uk>

Supplier JCS Computing Solutions
Product CasMan
Phone 0121 543 6996
URL <http://www.jcs.co.uk>

Supplier Laserform
Product LFM Partnership Suite
Phone 01925 750020
URL <http://www.laserform.co.uk>

Supplier Linetime
Product Liberate
Phone 0113 250 0020
URL <http://www.lifetime.co.uk>

Supplier MSS
Product AlphaLaw Esprit + Vantage
Phone 01252 371121
URL <http://www.alphalaw.com>

Supplier Mountain Software
Product Mountain
Phone 01476 573718
URL <http://www.mountainsoftware.co.uk>

Supplier Norwel Computer Services
Product Case Management
Phone 0161 945 3511
URL <http://www.norwel.co.uk>

Supplier Opsis Solutions
Product Opsis
Phone 01780 764947
URL <http://www.opsisltd.co.uk>

Supplier Peapod Solutions
Product OfficeCase
Phone 0870 380 1122
URL <http://www.peapod-legal.co.uk>

Supplier Pericom Legal Services
Product Pericom OMS
Phone 01908 265533
URL <http://www.pericom.co.uk>

Supplier Pilgrim Systems
Product IntelliCentre
Phone 0131 555 9700
URL <http://www.pilgrimsystems.com>

Supplier Pracctice
Product Osprey.TM
Phone 0870 443 6300
URL <http://www.osprey.tm>

Supplier Professional Technology UK
Product Seriatim Master Class
Phone 01634 815517
URL <http://www.ptuk.co.uk>

Supplier Select Legal
Product LawFusion
Phone 01482 644334
URL <http://www.selectlegal.co.uk>

Supplier Solicitec Legal Solutions - see Visuafiles

Supplier Solicitors Case Management Systems
Product SC@MS Files
Phone 01747 855865
URL <http://www.scams-law.com>

Supplier TFB
Product Partner for Windows
Phone 01489 609010
URL <http://www.tfbplc.co.uk>

Supplier Videss
Product Legal Office
Phone 01274 851577
URL <http://www.videss.co.uk>

Supplier Visualfiles Legal Solutions
Product SolCase/Visualfiles
Phone 0113 226 2000
URL <http://www.visualfiles.com>

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- **Charles Christian is the editor of the *Legal Technology Insider* newsletter**



Supplier	Years selling case management	Smallest site (by users)	Debt Recovery	Conveyancing	Personal Injury
AIM Professional	30+	3	√	√	√
Axxia Systems	10+	4	√	√	√
Carydan	3	6	√	√	√
Civica Systems	15+	10	√	√	√
Cognito Software	4	5	√	√	√
ConveyanceLink	3	2		√	
DPS Software	18	1		√	√
EasyConvey	6	1		√	
Eclipse Legal Systems	15	2	√	√	√
Edgebyte Computer	14	1		√	√
Gavel & Gown	6	1		√	√
JCS Computing	4	1		√	√
Laserform	6	2		√	√
Linetime	21	4	√	√	√
MSS	11	1	√	√	√
Mountain Software	12	2		√	√
Norwel	12	12	√	√	√
Opsis Solutions	20	1		√	√
Peapod Solutions	10	1	√	√	√
Pericom	6	2	√	√	√

Pilgrim Systems	8	3	√	√	√
Pracctice	9	1	√	√	√
Professional Technology	8	1		√	
Select Legal	7	2	√	√	√
Solicitors Case Man Systems	2	1	√	√	√
TFB	20+	5	√	√	√
Videss	27	5	√	√	√
Visualfiles	19	3	√	√	√