

Software

on a shoestring

January 2005

Survey of Solicitors' Accounts and Case Management Software for a £1000 or less



Solicitors' Accounts and Case Management Software >£1000

When the Insider conducted a survey of legal IT expenditure a couple of years ago, it found that the average law firm's annual expenditure on technology (covering everything including staff salaries and maintenance charges) was 5.5% of turnover. This ranged from nearer 7.5% in top 100 firms – and yes there is one 'magic circle' firm that has recently spent £35 million on a new accounts and practice management system – to 3.5% for smaller High Street firms. However for small practitioners, the average expenditure was between 2-to-3%. The purpose of this guide is therefore to identify all those suppliers of truly low-cost systems – which we define as costing £1000 or less – that small practitioners should be able to afford.

Naturally, just as there is no such thing as a free lunch, so there is no such thing as a straightforward price for legal software. Our £1000 price tag relates to the capital cost of an entry level, single-user version of the software application however on top of this you must add the cost of your hardware plus the cost of the annual support & maintenance contract (typically between 15 and 50% of the software license cost) plus the cost of training plus the cost of set-up/installation. An added complication is some suppliers make training and support a mandatory requirement whereas with others it is entirely optional. And, some software is so simple to install you can do it

When it comes to computer software, the plight of the small practitioner always reminds me of the old saying about Justice being like the doors to the Ritz – open to everyone providing they have the money. Thus there is certainly no shortage of good quality legal software available out there, providing you can afford it – unfortunately the pressures and precariousness of modern legal practice mean most small practitioners just cannot afford it.

yourself whereas others will require some specialist skills. Wherever possible, we have identified these hidden extras.

What else should you know about legal technology? For the purposes of this survey we are focussing solely upon accounts/practice management and case management software – the basic distinction being accounts software is a system to help you count the beans, whereas case management should help you earn more beans. Which you opt for will very much depend upon the needs of your individual practice. If admin is overwhelming you then consider investing in an accounts package whereas if you are hoping to build

up a niche practice specialising similar-type volume work, such as road accident claims, then case management should take a higher priority.

Apart from the name, is there any real difference between accounts and practice management software? Generally accounts software is a cheap and cheerful package that will look after your ledgers and ensure your books balance, whereas with a practice management system (or PMS) you will pay extra for reporting facilities that give you a clearer picture of how your practice is performing as a business. If you are a start-up with real ambitions to grow your practice, then you should

consider a PMS at the outset rather than go for a cheaper option you soon outgrow.

Finally, do be aware that there are other options available out there. There are a lot of small practitioners who have been able to manage their accounts and client records perfectly adequately by using the tools provided within the Microsoft Office suite, including the Excel spreadsheet and the Access database applications. There are other firms who instead of buying dedicated legal software applications, make do with general purpose accounts software such as Sage. And, there are a growing number who instead of investing in their own inhouse accounts systems, outsource this activity to a bureau service such as Acorn or Quill PinPoint (see survey) where there is also a potential to make savings on staffing costs. For example, if you are just starting out or you have difficulty finding suitable legal cashiers in your part of the country, going the bureau route is an option you should seriously consider.

Supplier Details

This is the first time since the spring of 1999 that a survey has been conducted of this end of the legal systems market and although a lot of suppliers have since fallen away or else switched their focus to larger firms, we nevertheless still identified a substantial number of suppliers with what we thought were suitable products and then bombarded them



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with requests and reminders to participate in this survey.

A total of 12 accounts packages, two accounts bureaux services, six case management systems and one e-conveyancing portal eventually qualified. However it is worth noting that many suppliers now also bundle some form of general purpose case management 'lite'/file & matter management system in with their accounts software, while others can offer more comprehensive case management systems but at prices coming in above our £1000 ceiling. All these are identified in the survey. And if some familiar supplier names are missing it is either because they specifically declined to be involved or else showed no interest in participating.

Three items of late news: Anya Systems, who produce legal software for criminal practitioners, are investigating the viability of launching a low cost system for small practitioners during the course of 2005. TFB, through their new

subsidiary Legal Desktop, have now entered the market with a single user version of the main TFB Partner for Windows system. Peapod Solutions has bundled its accounts and case management software together as The Legal Office and offering it at a £500 off discount price to small practitioners. And Neil Jopson's Computer Solutions business, which produces the Count IT accounts package, is no longer actively selling into this market and hence has not been included in this survey. At the time of writing Jopson is hoping to find a purchaser for the business. All prices are correct as of October 2004 (E&OE) but please add VAT at 17.5% to all prices.

Charles Christian



www.legaltechnology.co.uk

ACCOUNTS & PRACTICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Supplier

Phone

URL

Minimum hardware spec

Accounts software

Entry level price

Annual maintenance

Time recording

LSC/civil legal aid billing

CDS/criminal billing

Acorn Legal

0870 116 0870

www.acornlegal.co.uk

Windows 95 or higher + internet access

Acorn Legal Accounts & Payroll Bureau

£250 + from £400 per month for bureau services

n/a

optional extra

optional extra

optional extra



Supplier

Phone

URL

Minimum hardware spec

Accounts software

Entry level price

Annual maintenance

Time recording

LSC/civil legal aid billing

CDS/criminal billing

Case Management

Gavel & Gown

01905 798096

www.pclaw.co.uk

Windows 95 or higher

PCLaw

£990

£500

included

optional extra

optional extra

General file management included with new PCLaw Version 7 accounts + see separate entry

Supplier

Phone

URL

Minimum hardware spec

Accounts software

Entry level price

Annual maintenance

Time recording

LSC/civil legal aid billing

CDS/criminal billing

Case Management

Griersons

07778 121599

www.griersons.com

Windows 95 or higher

ITALX + Griersons Office Manager

£1000

£500

included

included

included

General file management included with accounts



Supplier

Phone

URL

Minimum hardware spec

Accounts software

Entry level price

Annual maintenance

Time recording

LSC/civil legal aid billing

CDS/criminal billing

Irwin Associates

0870 747 2514

www.virgoaccounts.co.uk

DOS/Windows 95 or higher

Virgo Accounts

£199

£220

included

included

included

Supplier

Phone

URL

Minimum hardware spec

Accounts software

Entry level price

Annual maintenance

Time recording

LSC/civil legal aid billing

CDS/criminal billing

Case Management

IT Accounting

01984 624644

www.cashier2k.co.uk

Windows 98 or higher

Cashier 2003

£395

£150 (optional)

included

optional extra

optional extra

General file management included with accounts

Supplier
Phone
URL
Minimum hardware spec
Accounts software
Entry level price
Annual maintenance
Time recording
LSC/civil legal aid billing
CDS/criminal billing
Case Management

Legal Desktop (part of TFB group)

01489 609000

www.legaldesktop.co.uk

Windows 98 SE or higher, XP recommended
 Partner for Windows - Small Practice Edition
 £950 (includes training and set-up)
 £300 from year two
 included
 optional extra
 optional extra
 see separate entry on page 7.†

Legal Desktop Ltd
 from



Supplier
Phone
URL
Minimum hardware spec
Accounts software
Entry level price
Annual maintenance
Time recording
LSC/civil legal aid billing
CDS/criminal billing
Case Management

MSS

01252 371121

www.alphalaw.com

Windows 2000 or higher
 AlphaLAW-esprit
 £995
 £443
 included
 included
 included
 AlphaLAW-Vantage, prices from £3000.



Supplier
Phone
URL
Minimum hardware spec
Accounts software
Entry level price
Annual maintenance
Time recording
LSC/civil legal aid billing
CDS/criminal billing
Case Management

OP SIS Practice Management Solu

01780 764947

www.opsisltd.co.uk

Windows 98 SE or higher
 Millennium Solo
 £965 + training (strongly recommended)
 £480 from year two
 included
 optional extra
 optional extra
 OP SIS SPS, prices from £2300.
 Pace Professional Systems
 08000 837651
www.paceprosystems.com
 Windows 98 or higher
 PacePro
 £1000
 20% of licence cost
 included
 optional extra
 optional extra
 General file management included with accounts

OP SIS Practice
 Management
 Solutions

Supplier
Phone
URL
Minimum hardware spec
Accounts software
Entry level price
Annual maintenance
Time recording
LSC/civil legal aid billing
CDS/criminal billing
Case Management

Supplier
Phone
URL
Minimum hardware spec
Accounts software
Entry level price
Annual maintenance
Time recording
LSC/civil legal aid billing
CDS/criminal billing
Case Management

Peapod Solutions

0870 380 1122

www.psl-legal.co.uk

Windows 98 SE or higher, 128Mb recommended
 StrongBox
 £995 (training extra)
 £300 from year two
 included
 included with OFFICECase application - see separate entry
 included with OFFICECase application - see separate entry
 see separate entry on page 7.*



Peapod Solutions Limited

Supplier
Phone
URL
Minimum hardware spec
Accounts software
Entry level price
Annual maintenance
Time recording
LSC/civil legal aid billing
CDS/criminal billing
Case Management

Perfect Software

01656 720071

www.perfectsoftware.co.uk

Windows 95 or higher
 Perfect Books
 £975
 £200 from year two
 optional extra
 optional extra
 optional extra
 see separate entry



Supplier	Professional Technology (UK)
Phone	01634 815517
URL	www.ptuk.co.uk
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 2000 or higher
Accounts software	Quaestor
Entry level price	£420 pa (pricing based on max 500 live matters)
Annual maintenance	included
Time recording	optional extra
LSC/civil legal aid billing	optional extra
CDS/criminal billing	optional extra
Case Management	see separate entry

Supplier	Quill Computer Systems	pinpointaccounting
Phone	0161 236 2910	
URL	www.quill.co.uk	
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 98 or higher + Internet Explorer 6 + internet access	
Accounts software	PinPoint Accounting Bureau	
Entry level price	£200 per month for first 6 months then from £367.50 per month for bureau services	
Annual maintenance	n/a	
Time recording	included	
LSC/civil legal aid billing	included	
CDS/criminal billing	included	
Case Management	Quillennium Case Flow, prices from in excess of £1000.	

Supplier	Solicitors Case Management Systems (SC@MS)	
Phone	01747 855865	
URL	www.scams-law.com	
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 95 or higher	
Accounts software	SC@MS Reports	
Entry level price	£900	
Annual maintenance	first year included in price	
Time recording	optional extra	
LSC/civil legal aid billing	optional extra	
CDS/criminal billing	optional extra	
Case Management	SC@MS Files, includes time recording, price from £1350.	



CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Supplier	Gavel & Gown
Phone	01905 798097
URL	www.amicusattorney.co.uk
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 95 or higher
Case management software	Amicus Attorney
Entry level price	£449
Annual maintenance	£500 (for up to 5 users)
Residential conveyancing	available
Debt recovery	available
Probate	available
General file management	available

Supplier	Legal Desktop+ (part of TFB group)
Phone	01489 609000
URL	www.legaldesktop.co.uk
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 98 SE or higher, XP recommended
Case management software	Partner for Windows - Small Practice Edition
Entry level price	£950 (includes training and set-up)
Annual maintenance	£300 from year two
Residential conveyancing	available
Personal injury claims	available
Probate	available
Matrimonial & family	available
Criminal work	available
General file management	included as part of standard package

Legal Desktop Ltd
from



Supplier	LegalDocs UK
Phone	020 7501 8516
URL	www.legaldocs.uk.com
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 98 + Word 97 or WordPerfect 9
Case management software	LegalDocs
Entry level price	£500 (includes training and set-up)
Annual maintenance	£100 (optional)
Residential conveyancing	available
Debt recovery	available
Personal injury claims	available
Probate	available
Matrimonial & family	available
Criminal work	available
General file management	available

LEGALDOCS UK LIMITED

Supplier	Peapod Solutions*
Phone	0870 380 1122
URL	www.psl-legal.co.uk
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 98 SE or higher, 128Mb recommended
Case management software	OFFICECase
Entry level price	£995 (training extra)
Annual maintenance	£150 from year two
Residential conveyancing	available
Debt recovery	available
Personal injury claims	available
Probate	available
Matrimonial & family	available
Criminal work	available
General file management	available



Peapod Solutions Limited

Supplier	Perfect Software
Phone	01656 720071
URL	www.perfectsoftware.co.uk
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 95 or higher
Case management software	Law Case Systems
Entry level price	£975 + VAT
Annual maintenance	£200 pa from year 2
Residential conveyancing	available
Matrimonial & family	under development
Criminal work	available
Immigration	under development
Supplier	Professional Technology (UK)
Phone	01634 815517
URL	www.ptuk.co.uk
Minimum hardware spec	Windows 2000 or higher
Case management software	Seriatim Master Class
Entry level price	Pay as you go based on £2.50 per matter, min £
Annual maintenance	included
Residential conveyancing	available
Debt recovery	available
Probate	available
Criminal work	available
General file management	available



Supplier	TrackYour Move
Phone	01423 505654
URL	www.trackyourmove.com
Minimum hardware spec	Windows running Internet Explorer 5.5 or higher + internet access - service delivered on hosted ASP basis
Case management software	TrackYourMove e-conveyancing portal
Entry level price	Pay as you go based on £2.50 per matter, no set-up charges
Annual maintenance	included

† **Legal Desktop** there is a £200 discount (£1700 instead of £1900) if case and accounts are purchased at the same time

* **Peapod** are running a special offer for small practitioners with case and accounts bundled together as The Legal Office for an all in price (including two case management worktypes) for £1490