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Microsoft targets UK legal business with launch of customised CRM systems

Thursday 26 April 2007

SOFTWARE: law firms warned it is time to 'wake up' to technological developments

Software giant Microsoft is set to make a big push for legal business by backing customer relationship management (CRM) systems tailored for UK law firms, the *Gazette* can reveal.

This week sees the launch of a Microsoft CRM package called CRM4Legal, adjusted for law firms by technology firm Client Profiles. It is not the first CRM system for law firms to be based on Microsoft software, but 'it's the first that's being publicised', according to a Microsoft spokeswoman.

CRM4Legal works behind an Outlook window to let lawyers and staff use a system that connects the benefits of marketing to a law firm's usually deep knowledge of its clients.

Tony Fisher, senior partner at Essex-based Fisher Jones Greenwood and panel member on the *Law Society's Software Solutions Guide*, said the move means that law firms need to wake up to how corporate legal business will become.

'A Microsoft product that specifically targets CRM for the legal market illustrates comprehensively that law firms really do have to start taking this area seriously,' he said. 'Competitive pressures on the horizon make it essential that we all get closer to our clients to maximise opportunity to generate new work. The legal software market needs to take careful note.'

Many law firms are likely to make use of such broad-brush, known-brand CRM software, agreed legal IT consultant Bill Kirby. There are still alternatives to Microsoft, he said, but if Microsoft stays behind the technology push, CRM will become a staple part of most law firms' systems needs.

There are two versions of CRM4Legal – one for Microsoft's Small Business Server for firms with 5 to 75 users, and one designed for larger practices.

Rupert White

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