

First Edition



Busy Keyhouse stand at Lawtech 2003

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Welcome to our Newsletter

As we re-organise at Keyhouse, we are also beginning some new ventures....

Justin Phelan,
Managing Director



As most of you will know, the last four years or so has been a period of hectic growth here at Keyhouse. We have been pushed to the pins of our collars just to keep up with demand, while ensuring ongoing product development and quality service. This has not left much time for anything else! We have spent much of the last year re-organising our internal structures and operations to create a more solid organisation. Arising from this, we are planning some new activities, this newsletter among them. We will also be actively marketing ourselves – for the first time ever – and you will notice a few other new initiatives that we hope will be of benefit to you.

So, this is the first Keyhouse Newsletter. Our intention is to make it a regular feature, assuming you find it interesting. I would welcome your feedback about it. We will use it to keep you informed of new developments, our plans and any news items we think will be of interest.

Every issue, we will publish a main article, dealing with an important aspect of Information Technology (IT) for solicitors in Ireland. I would welcome suggestions. We will also include short informative articles covering relevant issues. We hope to include some articles from guest contributors.

In this issue, the main article concerns IT Strategy for law firms. The growing importance of this is becoming obvious to us here in Keyhouse, where we are dealing with about 200 practices. While virtually all firms of all sizes have computers in use for a variety of purposes, there seems to be only a slow recognition that Information Technology is one of your most important resources – think what you would do if you didn't have your computer systems in the morning! Yet, many firms are putting little effort into either managing this vital resource or planning its use for now and the future, in any co-ordinated, strategic way. If it's not broken, nobody's to fix it!

Dangerous myths and expectations abound about IT. The marketing hype has been telling us for years that all that is required is to spend your money and push a button and all your problems will be solved – your office will become organised, you will become more profitable and efficient, deliver better service to your clients and have lots more time on the golf course or the boat!

The reality is that this increasingly complex technical area is uncharted territory for most lawyers and dangers lurk for the unsuspecting amateur trying to make ever more multi-disciplined computer systems deliver the anticipated results. There be dragons! Read on.

Lastly, I have already referred to our spectacular growth over the last four years. There have been several factors behind this. One of the most influential has been the strong recommendations of Keyhouse given by you, our clients. I cannot overstate the importance of this to us. Thank you.

Justin Phelan (justin@keyhouse.ie)

News....News....News....News

Busy first quarter for Keyhouse

The first 3 months of 2003 have been very active for Keyhouse. Not only is the *LawOffice* suite attracting more law firms to Keyhouse but the network division has also attracted new clients.

New Keyhouse clients like, *Lennon & Heather* and *Donal T. Ryan & Co.* are now using Keyhouse as their primary IT supplier for both hardware and software.



We would like to welcome our new clients to **Keyhouse** and look forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship.

SAM3.4 Accounts Release

The new version of Keyhouse's market leading solicitors' accounts and financial management software is being released in March 2003. All of the SAM3.3 clients will be receiving a CD in the post or DX system in the next few weeks. It incorporates many new features and improvements that were fed back to us by our clients in the last 18 months.

Beta (test) versions of the software were sent to some clients earlier in the year and the responses have been extremely positive.

Many new labour-saving features, such as "Quick Postings Menu", "Transfer for Costs" candidates, have been incorporated and these modifications and additions have proven to be a great success. There is also more extensive reporting for performance and financial management analysis.

Many of these new features are a direct result of feed back from you and Keyhouse will continue to improve the software by working in partnership.

Keyhouse Case Management and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLRCC)

An example of IT delivering results.

In June 2002 DLRCC began to implement Keyhouse Case Management for their very busy Legal department.



They were starting from a position where all their files were stored in Microsoft Word only.

News....News....News....News

By September 2002 the Council had successfully implemented a pilot caseplan for some of their conveyancing work. By January 2003 DLRCC had implemented Keyhouse Case Management for the whole Legal department. The system is now used for all their conveyancing, litigation and general work.

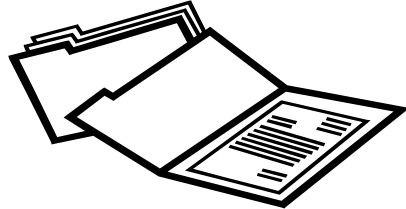
Working closely with the Keyhouse project management team, they implemented an agreed straight-forward plan. As a result it has taken DLRCC less than 6 months to fully implement Case Management in this busy legal department, now using the software to manage the Council's work on a daily basis.

LAWTECH Exhibition

It is that time of year again when the annual computer exhibition for solicitors (LAWTECH) was held in Blackhall Place. Brian Sweeney and Stephen Keogh were the Keyhouse representatives. Over the years several Keyhouse clients have been asked to give lectures about their experiences with IT. This year Neil Butler of Neil J. Butler & Co. gave a talk on "Document Scanning and Imaging". Last year it was the turn of John Shaw of J.A. Shaw & Co. whose talk was about Case Management. The responses of those who attend the lectures have been very positive and it gives solicitors a chance to hear how

these law firms manage their IT. The exhibition also gives suppliers like Keyhouse the opportunity to meet existing clients and demonstrate their products to other law firms.

Case Instruction Pads promotion



As a means of introducing some law firms to Case Management Keyhouse has devised a paper based case management system for conveyancing. This is an easy to use case instruction pad. The front of the sheet outlines the questions that need to be asked and the reverse shows a caseplan for a sale and a purchase. This allows you to record steps against the file. It also allows you to record an estimate of costs.

These have proved so popular that we have been asked to produce one for litigation.

In the meantime we will be sending our clients this promotional pack over the next few weeks. If you are interested in getting your hands on a copy just email us at sales@keyhouse.ie or phone 01 2040020.

IT Strategy – Next Generation for Lawyers

So, here is the chief executive of a company selling IT to solicitors telling us that it is very important for lawyers to have an IT strategy. Well, he would, wouldn't he? Indeed. It is obviously prudent to bring your healthy scepticism to this article, and I welcome it. Consider however, that I have seen hundreds of successes – and failures – in the use of IT in law firms, and have been able to identify at least some of the common causes of each. It might therefore be also *imprudent* to dismiss this article on the grounds of vested interest. In fact, from where I sit, our interests are surprisingly parallel. I am interested in *successful* IT in law firms. Presumably, so are you.

If you already have a well thought out IT strategy for your firm, under regular review, well done. You are not my intended audience for this piece. I intend to set out, over the next few newsletters, the basic components of successful strategy making for law firms – from small to large. For this issue, I will try to illustrate why a strategy is important at all.

In all this grandiose talk of strategies, what's the bottom line? Over more than 20 years that I have been working with law firms, those who have succeeded in their IT efforts are those who have had a strategy or plan of some kind. Those who failed, haven't. It's that simple. In the past, when the

issues were quite straightforward – it doesn't take a genius to work out the benefits of word processing for solicitors - sometimes the strategies were simple and even unconscious, but in all successful cases, the IT issue was approached in a structured manner, with definite objectives.

What is success? What is failure? To illustrate, take two simple (and simplistic) fictional cases from the nineteen-eighties. Two small firms (solicitor and secretary), with no computers, decide to install a standalone PC with word processing and printer for the secretary. Both scenarios below are typical of what I have encountered in the past.

Firm A are very busy and don't have a lot of time to waste so they go to their local computer supplier and ask for the best price system. They install a PC with an inkjet printer and "WordRite" word processing software. Their secretary has already done 3 evening classes in word processing, so, as she is bright, she won't need any training. After all, it's only a glorified typewriter isn't it? Total cost: IR£2,800. Time taken to installation: 1 hour.

Firm B are also very busy, but are worried about the implications of the new technology. The solicitor and secretary discuss it. They talk to two other firms who have already

IT Strategy for Law firms (continued)

done this and learn some of the pitfalls. They contact the Law Society to see if they have any recommendations. They learn of suppliers who specialise in law firms and ask some of them to make proposals. In this way, they build up a picture of possibilities and standards. They know what to expect and can decide what their requirements are. Eventually, they purchase a system with a PC, a laser printer and "WordPerfect 5.1" word processing. Their secretary is sent for 2 half days training. Total cost (including training): IR£3,800. Time taken to installation (excluding training): 8 hours.

Six months later, each firm is asked by third firm for advice and their opinion, with both solicitor and secretary asked to comment. Here is what they might say:

Firm A – solicitor: "One of the best things I ever did. I can now get documents changed without having to get them re-typed! Makes everything much faster and better. One thing to watch for though, the first printer we got wasn't fast enough so we had to get another one after a short while. Cost an extra IR£800. Generally though, a great success"

Firm A – secretary: "The computer is working fine but I know from my course that we could be doing much more than just typing. I also get asked by some other firms whether we can read WordPerfect

documents and I simply don't know."

Firm B – solicitor: "We are quite pleased with the computer. We have had to put some effort into organising our precedent documents but it was well worth it. I am now able to produce much more in a given time. We have standards set up for our documents so everything looks better too. A great boon is that some of the barristers we use also use WordPerfect, as do most other law firms, so we are able to send and receive draft documents on diskette. We can add a second PC at any time which can share the documents and precedents on our existing one."

Firm B – secretary: "It has been great. The training was good and I have set up all our standard documents – so I can produce far more documents with less effort. The computer company have been great too. I've had to call them for help once or twice with some of the more advanced stuff."

While both firms express themselves as very happy, are they both successes in terms of return on investment?

This is a very simplified scenario. Think what the effect might be if both firms had, say, 10 fee earners and were trying to manage today's multitude of IT issues and facilities. The distinction between success and failure of strategy would be far more apparent then.

The Clipboard

New Keyhouse team members

Two new team members have recently joined Keyhouse, Helen Bester and Kathy Kennedy, bringing the number of personnel up to 18.

Kathy will be working with Ann and Michael in the SAM3 support team while Helen will be involved with the case management support team. Helen will also be involved training clients in the Microsoft Office products.

Keyhouse MiniCase CD

As a promotion to introduce Case Management to more firms Keyhouse has released *MiniCase*. This slimmed down version of the full Case Management system is designed to get a single user up and running in less than **1 hour**. In 12 easy steps and with limited PC skills, you can install the software and go live immediately. If you are interested contact us at sales@keyhouse.ie or 01-2040020.

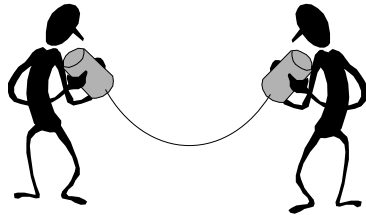
Client Survey

In September 2000 a survey was conducted with 100 Keyhouse clients to find out what they actually thought of our service. We received a very positive response with a score of 4.3 out of a maximum of 5.

Over the next 6 months we will be conducting a similar survey to see how Keyhouse is progressing. We shall keep you informed.

Thin Client.

Believe it or not the term "Thin Client" is to do with internet technology and not how we categorise some of our clients. This technology is used to allow your clients access their case management information through the internet or dial-up. There will be more about this development in future newsletters.



Viruses

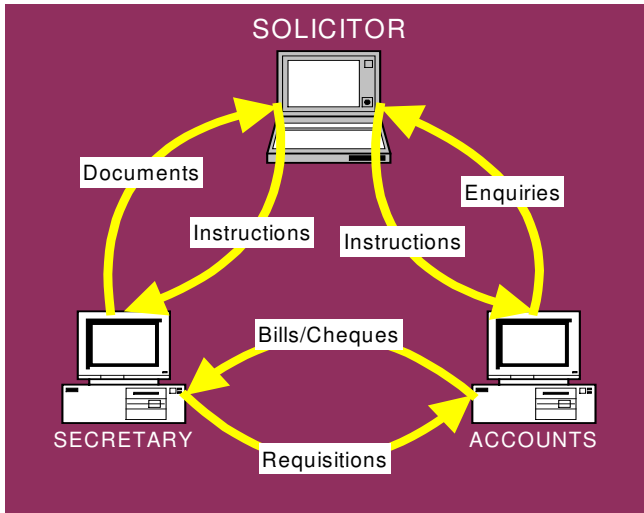
Be on your guard as there are now more viruses than ever. If you are concerned about your current antivirus software package contact your supplier as soon as possible. Some of these viruses are extremely destructive. It pays to review your antivirus system regularly.

An Easy Life

We all strive for an easier life, especially when it comes to computers. This can be achieved by doing the basics right. It's not rocket science but it does require patience and management. So take a little time-out every now and then and review articles in our newsletters. Hopefully they will help give you an insight when it comes to managing your IT.

At your service...

The **Keyhouse LawOffice**. A comprehensive, reliable, straightforward software suite that helps you deliver results. It is designed to facilitate all the management and administration aspects of a case - be it money, time sheets, documents, emails, faxes, cheques, diaries, billing.



- Accounts (SAM3.4)
- Bill Drafting
- Cheque Requisitions
- Time Recording
- File Manager (physical file tracking, deeds, wills etc)
- Case Management (includes Case Plans and Precedents)

Your Information Technology (IT) infrastructure is critical to the success of the continuing operation of your Practice Management system. At Keyhouse we have a network division which provide all the hardware, network and communications resources for your firm.

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