

Editorial News

Information Revolution

Communications company Mitel Telecom has issued a report *The MediaVision Report*, which is the first of a series examining the effects of the information revolution on business and lifestyle. The report claims that communications and information management technology are now developing at such a rapid rate that, over the next ten years, there will be some of the most profound changes in business ever witnessed.

The report states that within the next 20 years, thanks to automatic interpreting telephony, the ability to dial any country and hold a telephone conversation free from the barrier of language is likely to become a reality and within the next few years such technology will be used for simple tasks such as international airline and hotel reservations.

In many sectors of business, such as financial services and retailing, new companies will use their ability to access and manage information to challenge established market leaders, using the Internet, telephone and e-mail as alternative communications channels with customers.

The report says that typical of the new technologies which are revolutionising client-based businesses such as law, accountancy and management consultancy are the new generation of computer telephony products, which integrate advanced telephony, communications and computing into a single system. Integration of communications and information systems enables simultaneous access to client files, e-mail, voice-mail, fax and central computer files, as well as telephone calls, regardless of whether the user is in the office, at home or on the move.

Time management and efficiency are, according to Mitel, already being improved dramatically through systems which seek out and present the user with information without having to be asked. A lawyer or accountant can, for example, be presented automatically with the relevant client file on screen as soon as the telephone begins to ring, and the call and file can subsequently be passed together in one electronic package to another person or group of people, along with any relevant faxes, e-mail messages, voice mail messages or additional information.

The report also predicts that, within ten years, advances in communications and information management technology will result in between 2.5 million and 4 million people in the UK choosing to work from home or local telecentres rather than a central office. This would more than double the current number already doing that.

Ninety per cent of the necessary technology apparently already exists for this predicted revolution in business, and technology will become increasingly user-friendly!

Copies of this report are available from Rachel Watts at Mitel on 01753 816347.

Conference on Knowledge Management

Knowledge Management - the collection of processes that govern the creation, dissemination and utilisation of knowledge to fulfil organisational objectives - and the legal implications for companies and their employees will be discussed at a conference and exhibition to be held in London at the Royal Horticultural Halls & Conference Centre from 2-3 April.

The two day event centres around the growing importance of knowledge management as both a strategic and practical business tool. It is estimated that companies plan to increase their spending on this area by 70% in the next three years.

The conference will include a paper by Ben Goodger of Willoughby & Partners, a specialist in the area of legal protection of information. His talk will summarise the general law relating to the protection of confidential information and trade secrets. He will also provide an overview of the restrictions which may be legally placed on the use of such information by employees, and the extent to which they may be protected after they have left employment.

There will also be a discussion on the dangers of the use and mis-use of e-mail, including a review of certain recent cases and a look at the legal implications of allowing employees to access the Internet.

For further information please contact Learned Information Europe Ltd, Tel: 01865 388000.

The Dangers in Job Advertisements

Law firm, Davies Arnold Cooper has carried out an independent audit on national newspapers which shows that in any one week 150 companies may be breaking the law by placing potentially discriminatory job adverts in the papers.

Job adverts which specify sex, marital status, physical attributes and even areas in which applicants live could potentially all be against the law and soon those that specify an age limitation may also fall foul of the law.

Andrew Leitherland, employment law specialist at Davies Arnold Cooper says that most companies are aware of the legal implications of discrimination in the work place, but, as the audit shows, they are still unclear as to what terminology is illegal in recruitment advertising. Companies should monitor their job advertisements carefully to check that they are not discriminatory in order to avoid possible law suits.