



Welcome to the winter edition of our newsletter for 2006. WOW - One year has passed so quickly! The light balmy evenings are now a distant memory and we are now back to dark mornings and afternoons; with a chill in the air and Christmas celebrations just around the corner we are all getting ready for 2007 and the new Home Information Packs.

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Home Information Packs

If your practice handles any residential conveyancing work then you are no doubt aware the government intends to introduce compulsory Home Information Packs (HIPs) from June 2007 onwards. In essence, these packs, produced for the vendor of a property, are meant to simplify the conveyancing process by preparing a number of necessary steps before the conveyancing process begins thus saving time and duplicated effort.



Unfortunately, as with many government projects, the details of the scheme are not yet fixed which is going to make life difficult for any of you who are trying to pre-empt this legislation and prepare yourselves

“Home Information Packs (HIPs) from June 2007 onwards.”

for its implementation. We know, roughly, what will be in the pack although this is subject to change without notice. However, we have no idea of the final format of many of the documents that need to be included and even the simple home use and home contents forms are only in draft format because the government refuses to use the perfectly serviceable Law Society forms because it will have to pay a royalty!

What we do know at present is that a number of things need to be completed before the property is even marketed; some others need to be completed before the first prospective purchaser wants to have a look and still others need to be sorted out if the property is leasehold or, even worse, common-hold. In the main most of these steps would be completed under the normal rigour of a conveyancing transaction but the main difference is that they all now need to be done upfront and at the cost of the vendor.



HIP providers are being setup to produce these packs for vendors and you will be able to use these companies to produce packs for your clients (see <http://www.hipassociation.co.uk/> for a list of providers).

However, the vendor is allowed to build the pack themselves and this opens an opportunity for solicitor's practices nationwide to provide packs or at least the majority of the pack for the vendor. The main sticking point will be, inevitably, cost. The government estimates that the pack is likely to cost somewhere between £300 and £400 for the compulsory HIP without the Home Condition Report (survey). With the HCR it will be £650 to £800 for an average property.

The Energy Performance Report (compulsory) is likely to cost £150 to £200 to produce and many vendors are going to balk at this fee. Of course, the vast majority of vendors will be selling one property in order to purchase another so the overall cost of the transaction will be little different from now (with the exception of the cost of the energy performance report) with what they lose on the sale being recouped on the purchase. It will be down to good marketing to ensure that the vendors realise this.

What is the point of a Home Information Pack?



With the elimination of the Home Condition Report, the HIP's expensive formalities picture has been shaded down to a shadow. The Consumer body Which? Has branded it a half-HIP, claiming the government has shown "its house is made of straw" and that the outcome on June 1 2007 will be "a useless, expensive waste of time".

If the government changes path again (note that HCRs are not obsolete but will be an expectant as a preferred expansion to a HIP) what will you need to do and at what price tag, when selling your home in the simplified HIP era?

One element in particular that could be a genuine benefit for both buyer and seller is the legal report. According to Mark Chilton of Purely Mortgages, many sales hit a stumbling block when there is confusion about title rights, such as planning or ownership (right of way across property or a nearby new development plan, for instance). "The inclusion of this type of search in the HIP at relatively little cost will help allay these potential pitfalls from the start," Chilton said.

Will the house buying process be speeded up?



Qualified conveyancing solicitors dispute HIPs will have only an insignificant outcome on the velocity of a matter which is governed almost entirely by the most complicated of factors, human nature.

Buyers will always be on the lookout for more information at the same time as the funds are sorted out. The current procedure, separate from searches, provides further information than will be the bare minimum required in a HIP, yet human corruption and the marketplace situation will still create delay and distortion.

Rest assured that should you wish to produce these packs for your clients, Professional Technology is working hard on providing the support tools that you will need. Our Seriatim Master Class case management system is ideal for the job and we are working on case plans and precedent documents to make producing HIPs a snip. As we have said, it is difficult to finalise anything at the moment with the composition and contents of the packs in a state of flux but there is nothing in the packs that cannot be at least controlled through our case management system. We will keep you up to date on developments as they happen.



A Life on the Ocean Wave - Taylors Solicitors

Newly established general practice and Marine specialists Taylors Solicitors of Bournemouth have selected Professional Technology's Quaestor for Windows back-office system for their accounting and time recording functions.

As well as providing legal services for company commercial, debt collection, employment, landlord and tenant, personal injury, property and wills, Taylors are one of the few marine specialists in the UK providing legal advice to the commercial and leisure sectors of the marine industry. With seventeen years experience at sea and over five years as a marine lawyer Brian Taylor understands the legal, practical and international problems experienced by mariners.

Brian Taylor, formerly of Lester Aldridge, selected Quaestor for Windows for its ease of use and its unique pricing which makes it affordable to smaller practices whilst providing all of the features available to much larger concerns.

Quaestor for Windows will be used within the practice to provide back-office functions and to form the basis of a practice wide client and matter database. It is the practice's intention to implement Professional Technology's Seriatim Master Class case management system in the future which will utilise the same databases to extend the functionality of the system and to provide case management and document production for all departments.

A Word from Wendy!

DOS 'V' Quaestor for Windows

Even though most of you now upgraded there are still a few that have not yet done so - you know who you are! As you will know we can no longer support the old DOS version of Quaestor as we cannot get support from our providers such as Microsoft. You will not be able to obtain updates and fixes to either your programs or your data so it is imperative that you now upgrade to Quaestor for Windows.



If you have not yet upgraded and are still using the DOS version of Quaestor Accounts you now will be charged for "Hotline Support" at the rate of £3.50 per unit excluding VAT (a unit is normally one minute depending upon when you call). Clients that have upgraded to Quaestor for Windows will be charged at the normal rate of £1.75 excluding VAT. As you can see if you upgrade the "Hotline Support" rate remains the same.

"If you have not yet upgraded – Hotline Support will be charged at £3.50 per unit!"

If you have any questions or would like to "upgrade" to Quaestor for Windows please do not hesitate to contact me either by telephoning the office on 01634 - 815517 or by email at wendy@ptuk.co.uk.

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask you for a little of your time and feedback on how you find using the new upgraded version of Quaestor for Windows. I have enclosed a separate questionnaire for you to answer

and return to us and any comments would be gratefully received. This feedback will help us to improve our programs and services to you.



KISS Me Quick

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that our support desk is the first port of call for any technical difficulties that you may encounter. The number is [01795 594515](tel:01795594515).

The team at KISS (Keep It Simple Software) are very experienced and can deal with most of your technical problems directly. Your call to the support desk will be logged and tracked on their sophisticated computer system to make sure you get a timely response.

If the support desk is unable to resolve your problem directly they will escalate it to our engineers here at Rochester. The final resolution will normally come back to you by way of the support desk once again.

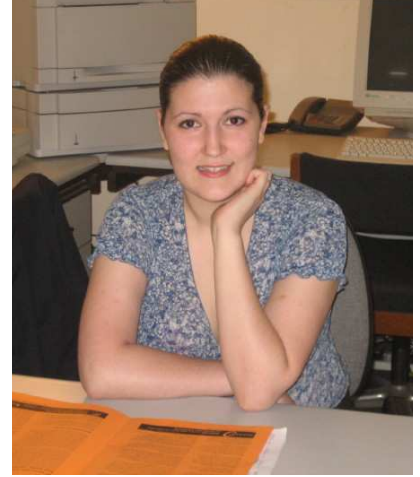
Whilst we can make no guarantees of problem resolution it is not often that KISS will not be able to give you the answer you are looking for!

CONGRATULATIONS!

Back in November, 2005, Elizabeth Richford Joined Professional Technology to take on the role of Receptionist whilst working towards an NVQ level II in Business Administration under the supervision of JHP Training.

Elizabeth's NVQ was verified on the 18th May, 2006 and we are pleased to announce that she passed with flying colours.

Elizabeth has now joined Professional Technology on a permanent basis. We would like to take this opportunity to officially introduce Elizabeth to you all and to welcome her to Professional Technology.





Grahame Stowe Bateson is one of the North of England's leading private client firms. With 14 partners, 40 lawyers and 60 support staff operating out of headquarters in the centre of Leeds and five offices around the city, they are undoubtedly a major force

not only in the local area but nationwide.

The practice has been using Professional Technology's Quaestor for Windows back-office system since 2005 and the older DOS version of the program before that from 1994. This year they began implementation of our Seriatim Master Class case management system for their conveyancing departments across all offices. As with all projects of this scale, there is a great deal of work involved and Grahame Stowe Bateson's partners Arthur Bateson and Gary Bullock

oversaw the project aided admirably by Janet Lorkins the practice manager and Sally Tuffnell, Mr Bateson's personal assistant.

*“Branch offices
are linked via
LAN-to-LAN
Virtual Private
Networks!”*

Whilst still in its bedding in period, the practice has put over 1,000 matters through the system so far and hopes to process all conveyancing matters using the program from now on.

The case management system is integrated with the practice's Quaestor for Windows back-office system and runs from a central data store based on Microsoft's SQL Server at their Leeds office. Branch offices are linked via LAN-to-LAN Virtual Private Networks to the Leeds office for on-line and real-time access to both systems.

As well as providing a structured framework for the conveyancing departments Seriatim Master Class produces all of the necessary documentation, forms, etc. and tracks each case as it progresses through the conveyancing process. This gives the staff “at the coalface” a unified and simple method of getting out documentation and ensures that proper procedures and disciplines are always followed which, in turn, provides the firm's clients with enhanced client care and the knowledge that their case is being handled efficiently and properly.

Next on the horizon is publication of case status on the practice's web site. Initially this will be for the firm's agents but ultimately the partners want to provide on-line access for their clients to see the progress of their case.



Christmas Closing Times

Please note that we will be closed from:

1:00pm Friday 22nd December 2006

and will re-open on

9:00am Tuesday 2nd January 2007

Should your system require an operation/validation code while the office is closed you can bypass the code to continue working by doing the following:-

Quaestor for Windows/Case Management Users

When asked for the code click on OK, this will present a message that says the code is invalid and asks if you would like to retry, click NO. This will enable you to continue working.

Quaestor for Dos Users

When asked for a system validation code please enter 10 numerical zeros (0000000000). This will enable you to continue working.

If you would like more information on any of the topics covered in this Newsletter then please contact us at the address to the right.

Professional Technology (UK) Ltd

375 High Street
Rochester
Kent, ME1 1DA

DX: 6508
Rochester

Phone:
01634 815517

Fax:
01634 829032

E-mail:
sales@ptuk.co.uk