

BEST PRACTICE IN ACTION: WHITELAW MCDONALD

Client: Alan Johnston
Practice Manager

Whitelaw McDonald are specialists in Business, Personal and Compensation Law with over 30 years experience. In order to be agile, client-centric and engage in the regional matters the firm values responsive line of communication with the client and regular visits to regional areas.



WHAT WE NEEDED

"My day at Whitelaw McDonald starts at 7am, when I sit down and work out my plan for the day. Then the staff arrive, and who knows what can happen from there" says Alan Johnston, Practice Manager at Whitelaw McDonald. *"As Practice Manager it's up to me to take care of everything from new business to changing a lightbulb! It's a very varied job."*

"In 40 years of work, the only constant has been change. I was brought back to Whitelaw McDonald three years ago to help improve operations and profit. A big part of that brief has been getting the practice to embrace technology. We're a fairly well established firm, and we've had a lot of the same people working with us for many years. The low staff turnover is good in lots of ways, but it does make it harder to get people to change the way they do things. Old habits die hard."

BEST PRACTICE SOLUTION

Alan embarked on his mission. He aimed at automating and streamlining processes, but he knew it wouldn't be an easy task. *"While our staff still like to do a lot manually (we have 55,000 paper files in storage) we've begun to adopt some newer systems. Late last year, we realised it was time for a new accounting system. I did some research – some of it online, but I also asked around. Infinitylaw came up as the best in every regard, so that's what we went with."*

Elements that worked particularly for Alan's practice were:

- Easy to use clocks allowing all the practitioners record time and fees earned more efficiently than ever before
- All client information accessible from one place

- All the matter budget, notes, and expense charging all in one place helping to minimise offline filing
- Great visibility of work in progress, unbilled disbursements and expenses
- Easy bill generation with a click of a button
- Training from the Best Practice team that helped everyone in the firm familiarise themselves with the system easily

WHY IT WORKS FOR US

Implementation of Infinitylaw required change to existing habits. *"Some of the staff were reluctant to make the shift to a new system,"* – says Alan, *"but the Best Practice team from Thomson Reuters went to a lot of effort to make the transition smooth – they gave us an implementation program, then came in to train the staff for about ten days. And once staff started using Infinitylaw their mindsets changed. Now we save a lot of time, our time can be recorded more accurately and our finances are better managed."*

"Almost everything about it is better. We get more reliable figures, it's easier to input and extract information, there's better management reporting, it's more practical, more economical and easier to use. The Best Practice team are responsive too; they'll answer phone calls and they're there for you. If something's not happening as it should, you can call and they'll sort it out."

Alan's happy with the solutions he's been provided: *"I like seeing that things are done properly; raising standards and maintaining them. As Anthony Robbins says, 'CAN I' – which stands for continuous and never-ending improvement. That's what I think we should aim for. That's Best Practice."*

COMPANY PROFILE

Location: Newcastle

Size: 36 employees

Specialty: Compensation, Business and Personal Law

Website: whitelawmcdonald.com.au

Key Challenges: Increase profitability and efficiency of the law practice. Streamlining operations and reducing the amount of manual work.

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