

CASE STUDY: Solari & Stock

with Michael Solari
Director



1.

The Challenge

Our boutique law firm specialises in family law, wills and estates, commercial law and property. All our files are stored electronically, so our lawyers can easily access them. Plus, our precedent library and office management programs enable us to provide client service remotely, such as at conferences or even in Court. Of course, this was particularly useful during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

Despite being a digital-first practice, there was clearly a gap in our legal research functionality. Sure, we were using a range of legal resources, but I found these to be clunky and the whole process to source trusted information wasted our time. We needed to search through each piece of information, read through numerous cases to encounter the most recent case, and on point. Even then, I wasn't convinced I was getting the most up-to-date cases, and the most relevant case in relation to the matter.

Solari & Stock was ready for the right platform to take our legal research to the next level. There are nine practitioners in our firm and our lawyers clearly needed access to all the search results and information from various sources in the one place, within a shorter timeframe. For a specialised boutique firm like ours, it is imperative that we serve our clients as responsively as possible. Our legal research processes at the time were not compatible with how we wanted to work. Not to mention, we didn't have a substantial library with comprehensive information. In fact, we only had specific traditional texts that we would update every couple of years. Basically, I need to have confidence in our research capacity.

2.

The Solution

I'd heard about Westlaw. It sounded interesting to me as it has the Laws of Australia, and a whole lot of other texts – in fact the largest collection of authorised and specialist law reports in Australia. It also offers Key Cite and a number of other search features. So I made an inquiry, I was given a demonstration and I thought it looked really good. Then I had a 14-day trial, and I thought how fantastic is that!

We're still new to it, but I've found it is very easy to use. I can just type in my question in plain English and I get all of this material, including the most recent cases, commentary and references. On one little point I was using it to research a matter, which was only about tree roots damaging a person's pipes. It would have saved me, I suppose at least an hour to an hour and a half researching through various sources. I had all of the information I wanted virtually instantaneously. Then after spending around 15 minutes reading the materials, I had the answers I needed. It was fantastic. I didn't expect it to be that quick. It is just so concise and I can rely on it every time I login.

3.

The Future

One of Westlaw's great benefits for us is that it means that my lawyers are more confident that their research is comprehensive and up-to-date. Westlaw is very user-friendly and Solar & Stock's lawyers are able to find things easily. For our business this means that our people spend less time conducting legal research and have more time to look after their clients. From the clients' perspective our lawyers are clearly more confident in advising them, because they know that they're up-to-date with everything. I think it's excellent.

It means we're able to offer better advice and we can compete with bigger firms. The advantage for us is that we can market ourselves in this way; we can say we have the most up-to-date research available to us.

Westlaw has filled the gap we had in our library and research resources. It has met our original challenge and achieved much more for our firm. It has enabled our business to go to the next level in providing legal services and advice to our clients.

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