

WMD Law is an elite mid-sized NSW law firm employing around 50 people. Headquartered in Miranda, NSW, the firm's success in this region has seen it grow to incorporate an additional four offices that spread from Newtown in Sydney to as far south as Merimb

Rebecca Flynn, who has been with WMD since 2000, is one of the firm's four Principals and takes overarching responsibility for WMD's technology solutions. She explains that the firm upgraded from an old analogue, tape-based dictation system to BigHand back in 2012 and haven't looked back since. While tapes served their basic purpose, they were a slow and limiting way to dictate compared to digital dictation solutions. Coupled with the fact that replacement tapes and analogue dictation equipment were becoming increasingly difficult to source, and not to mention very costly, it also introduced significant inefficiencies and risk to the business. Remote and flexible working for fee earners wasn't supported and work sharing between admin staff was restricted to their physical location which meant the firm wasn't able to utilise support staff across all the offices to the detriment of the business.

Driving efficiency with digital workflow

Keen to ensure the firm was up to speed on technology solutions to support the business' drive for efficient delivery of legal services to their clients, Rebecca was introduced to the benefits of BigHand by her IT consultant and was particularly impressed by the workflow capabilities of the solution; as a multi-branch business it provided great opportunities for work sharing between offices, creating efficiency and reducing overheads. Using BigHand voice productivity solutions and moving completely away from tapes, the firm has slashed typing delay and created a new, more efficient way of delivering transcribed work.

"We were previously using old recorders and tapes which were notoriously difficult to use. You'd lose them or wipe them and you'd have support staff in the regional offices not able to access tapes held elsewhere," says Flynn. "Some support staff were twiddling their thumbs and others were flat chat."

"People who were big dictation users love it, and even people who weren't avid users of dictation are using this system to send through verbal instructions and tasks to admin staff as it's much quicker to use their voice to do this than to type an email".

There was a clear path to a rapid return on investment; and despite being hesitant initially on whether the firm should make the investment, once the installation and rollout had taken place, the firms' management team knew they had done the right thing.

The benefits are clear says Flynn; "It makes our work easier to do and makes us more efficient."

Enabling mobility, increasing efficiency

The quest for lowered overheads, increased profitability and better productivity is an ongoing battle for any law firm and Rebecca was keen to provide her lawyers with technology to support the firm's business philosophy of providing efficient, personal and practical advice to their clients. Being able to work easily whilst on the go, from anywhere, was integral to this. Each WMD Lawyer is supplied with an iPhone and an iPad and with the secure BigHand app on their devices, the lawyers are able to create dictations/voice instructions on the fly and have them sent securely into the workflow to be accessed by any of the firm's support staff regardless of location.

"Last week I was coming back from a conference in the city and dictating the file notes and a letter - when I got back to the office it was done," says Flynn.

She also uses the system to dictate content of documents in what she describes as a "brain dump" first draft process that can be transcribed and emailed directly to Flynn so that she can finesse the final document herself.

Furthermore, having the BigHand app on their iPhone allows the lawyers to track the progress of their submitted work quickly and easily without disrupting the support staff.

Flynn says that an additional benefit of using the smartphone approach is that it's been possible for lawyers to take photos using the phone and send those back to support staff to be integrated with the documents.

"This has improved our turnaround time and meets client needs faster. If one of our lawyers is at court they can dictate something, have it typed and immediately emailed back to them at court. You couldn't do that before."

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