

Westminster Lawyers

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Michelle Lopez [Practice Manager]



CASE STUDY

In the legal field, where a firm’s revenue relies directly on its lawyers’ and solicitors’ billable hours, productivity is a serious issue. It’s an issue of which Westminster Lawyers, a specialist family law firm practicing in Melbourne, Victoria, has a keen understanding. Founded in 2000 with five staff, the firm has expanded in recent years to a total staff of just over 20, including 11 lawyers. Central to its strong growth and ongoing productivity is an ongoing partnership with, and support from, itro.

From Outgrown Systems to Improved Productivity

As Westminster Lawyers expanded, it rapidly outgrew its old ICT (Information Communications Technology) infrastructure, which included desktop computers running as servers and was supported by an external sole-operator who lacked the necessary resources to support such a dynamic firm.

System failures and below par ICT operational efficiencies were proving to be a constant drain on the firm’s productivity. To remedy the situation, it needed to identify a provider that could deliver a comprehensive and on-demand ICT service.

According to the firm’s Practice Manager, Michelle Lopez, it was the timely referral from a Director for a free consultation from itro that initiated a chain of events leading to a fully tailored ICT infrastructure and support program. “One of our directors had worked with itro at another practice and gave them a strong recommendation,” she says.

With that recommendation, itro was brought in to deliver an initial assessment of the existing setup and address several performance issues.

“In the short amount of time they were here,” Michelle says, “the itro people actually fixed a number of problems that we’d been trying to get put right for some time.”

That was proof enough for Westminster Lawyers, and itro was quickly commissioned to put forward a customer service offering that included a managed upgrade of the firm’s ICT infrastructure and ongoing, on-demand support.

Performance, Reliability and Room for Growth

Westminster Lawyers realised immediate benefits as a result of itro’s “done right, done well” philosophy, with significant improvements in ICT performance and reliability being facilitated by an upgrade program that also ensured the firm’s existing infrastructure investments were protected.

itro’s discovery process was vital to delivering that outcome, and it began with detailed discussions held with Michelle to ascertain Westminster Lawyers’ ICT requirements and plans for business expansion. Those discussions were followed up by a detailed audit of the firm’s existing systems and hardware, building a full understanding of its operating environment upon which an upgrade plan could be based.

“Following the review, itro’s specialists were able to make several fast and cost-effective improvements that fixed a lot of the immediate problems we were having,” Michelle says. “System up-time improved and overall productivity was given a boost, but it was obvious that some of our old hardware was on its last legs.”

itro proposed an upgrade program that would ensure Westminster Lawyers had a fast, reliable operating platform, with the additional capacity required to grow with the firm over the coming years. A dedicated new server running Microsoft Small Business Server was the centrepiece of the solution, along with uninterruptable power supply (UPS) and backup facilities. A phased, replace-as-needed plan was also put in place for desktop computer upgrades, reducing up-front costs and protecting existing investments.

"We all noticed the difference immediately after itro's upgrade," Michelle says. "Our ICT systems now run faster, they're much more reliable, and in turn our productivity has improved dramatically. Where system crashes used to force us to reset our older server once every couple of weeks, we now have close to 100 per cent up-time!"

Best-Fit Practice Management

itro's knowledge of the legal industry proved invaluable when Westminster Lawyers needed to change its practice management software package, providing unbiased, expert advice on hardware and software to ensure a best-fit solution and smooth transition.

Practice management software is vital to the operation of any legal firm as it provides a range of specialised facilities including document management, time recording and legal accounting. When the firm's existing provider announced it was leaving the market, a new solution had to be found and Michelle turned to itro for advice.

"We looked at four different practice management systems," she says. "itro was able to give me the pros and cons of each one, covering issues such as hardware upgrades we would need and change-over costs." This information complemented Michelle's own research into each option's functionality, and enabled the list to be cut from four options to two. After further review, Leap Office was selected as the most cost-effective solution with the best fit for the business.

itro's expertise in server virtualisation allowed Westminster Lawyers to realise significant infrastructure savings during the implementation phase. A typical Leap Office implementation has modules installed across multiple servers. itro specialists, however, were able to engineer a virtual server solution that allowed the number of physical servers required to be consolidated, while still providing the same functionality, optimal performance and reliability to the firm.

As a Leap Legal Software partner, itro was also able to help streamline the data transfer process from the firm's previous solution and assist Leap with any issues specific to the Westminster Lawyers ICT environment. itro's partnership with Leap also means in many situations Westminster can turn to either company for ongoing support of the software, depending on the nature of the query.

Ongoing Service and Support

With its new ICT infrastructure in place, Westminster Lawyers continues to benefit from its partnership with itro by virtue of a comprehensive on-demand support offering.

"With itro, if we ever have an ICT problem, we know there is always someone on the other end of the phone ready to help us out," Michelle says.

"That simply wasn't the case with our previous provider - there were many times when all we could do was leave a voicemail message and wait for a response. It might take half an hour or more to get a call back, and that put a huge dent in our productivity. With itro, it's immediate."

In concert with Westminster Lawyers' itro help desk support, the firm benefits from remote access support. This enables an itro specialist to access Westminster Lawyers' systems securely over the internet, and address a wide range of issues without having to come on site.

"itro's remote support service is fantastic," Michelle says. "In most situations it's just as effective as having someone come in here. It saves both organisations a lot of time and it helps us get back up and running as quickly as possible."

In the event that an itro specialist is required on site, Michelle comments that it is consistently a sub-one hour response time.

Knowledge transfer and plain-English explanations are additional benefits of the itro support service, according to Michelle. "One of the best parts of the service is itro helps me learn to do things myself - the support personnel explain even technical issues in a manner in which I'm able to follow easily and learn to become less reliant on itro support.

"Overall, itro does a great job for us," Michelle concludes. "We now have a fast, reliable and future-proofed ICT infrastructure, support is just a phone call away, and the firm's productivity is better than ever."