

Case study: Sparke Helmore

## Top 50 law firm Sparke Helmore embraces technology for flexibility, productivity and efficiency



As Sparke Helmore has grown it has continued to innovate through technology to achieve: flexibility, productivity and efficiency

Australian Top 50 law firm Sparke Helmore Lawyers has experienced continual growth since opening the doors to its first office in the Hunter in 1882. Now, with nine offices across Australia and some 800 staff, Sparke Helmore is a vibrant national firm servicing an enviable client base of Australian and global corporations.

Sparke Helmore's strategic goal at the time of engaging with BigHand was to find a software solution that could help save time, create more efficient and flexible work practices as well as promote the benefits of an agile workplace. And, as the firm has grown the relationship with BigHand has continued to strengthen and evolve over the past eight years.

### Digital development transformation

Lee Hodge, IT Director at Sparke Helmore, led the implementation of BigHand Voice for digital dictation (when her role was Project Manager). Lee commented, "The legal networks and relationships that BigHand has globally were seen by us as being very beneficial. We also saw BigHand's team as different to most IT suppliers in that they act as partners and consultants, sharing their market-leading knowledge and expertise with their clients, which is an important element of any successful working partnership".

### Successfully managing the change

The implementation was completed in four months, with onsite training from the BigHand team across Sparke Helmore's eight offices including the Word Processing team (WP).

The success of the implementation came down to a sound change management strategy and robust training. "The BigHand team led the implementation phase — from the technical requirements right through to user training. BigHand supplied helpful supporting documentation and even sourced hardware for our end-users. The smooth roll out of the software, as well as managing the change among the lawyers and the WP team was crucial to the success of the project", commented Lee, adding "We got our senior leadership involved to lead by example so as to encourage staff to adopt the software, stressing the merits of BigHand compared to the previous bespoke solution".

With the growth of the firm has come growth in the use of the software. Today, after eight years of using BigHand Digital Dictation, Sparke Helmore has over 300 authors with usage across the firm remaining high and continuing to grow.

### The benefits: resource management and agile working

There were immediate benefits following the roll out. Traditionally the WP team would be scheduled to work in the office from 7am through to 10.30pm.

The richness of reporting from the software meant that management was able to identify team output including peaks and troughs in workflow and with this data could reduce the spread of scheduled hours accordingly, plan ahead and introduce part-time staffing to assist with periods of high volume.

In addition to resource management the software allows for all dictation tasks to be logged through one centralised system, which can be accessed anywhere and anytime. This functionality meant the WP team did not have to physically be in the office to do the work. It also meant that during busy times or holiday periods work could be picked up as and when required, thereby decreasing the chance of workload backlogs.

### Today: time savings, improved productivity while on the go

During the initial implementation, Sparke Helmore also rolled out BigHand Go mobile app, which at the time was compatible with Blackberry handsets. As the firm moved to iOS and Android, so too did the Mobility app, and eventually to what is now BigHand Go, a fully-featured digital dictation application for all major smartphone and tablet platforms. The objective of moving to BigHand Go was to drive even greater efficiencies and productivity across the business as well as support mobile working.

Michael Dwyer, Adelaide Local Managing Partner and Board member at Sparke Helmore, explained the benefits of BigHand Go. "If you are out of the office at a meeting and you want to dictate a memo while the content is fresh in your mind you can use the App, set the correct priority level and know that the finished product can be sitting on your desk when you return to the office. The same applies when you are at court dealing with multiple matters and need to record the outcomes promptly. You can easily use your phone to dictate issues or findings and make the time between court commitments productive."

### Removing the need for dictation hardware

The savings associated with implementing the software have been substantial.

"By using BigHand Go, we have decreased our need for capital expenditure. We don't have to invest in purchasing dictation equipment and the expense of maintaining that equipment. Staff can simply use the App on their phone",

commented Lee. Emerging competition and increased client demands means that law firms are looking to internal processes combined with advanced external technologies to drive productivity and efficiencies in all aspects of day-to-day work. Lee concludes, "Law firms have to be as competitive as possible in the current environment and as a business, we are constantly assessing ways to assist our lawyers to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently so as to have a positive impact on the service we provide to our clients. BigHand Go is one of the tools that can help achieve this."

## Contributors



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