



Holistic view of law firm sends it into the cloud

Auckland's new boutique law firm Speakman Law engaged Convergence for advice when setting up, and found web-based solutions would suit its requirements well and free up staff..

Speakman Law in Parnell, Auckland, specialises in tax and company law. When the firm was being set up earlier this year, it engaged Convergence to provide the entire end-to-end IT landscape for the business: everything from software and hardware to hand held devices.

Mark Presnell, the CEO at Convergence, explains, "As a start-up, Speakman Law required fully functional 'turn-key' solutions of their IT vendor. A comprehensive quick-start service for a new business is something we've provided at Convergence for a number of years. We call it 'IT-in-a-box,' which means that we take a holistic view of a customer's requirements." This includes selection and procurement of all of the components required, project management and integration

through to full staff training on delivery.

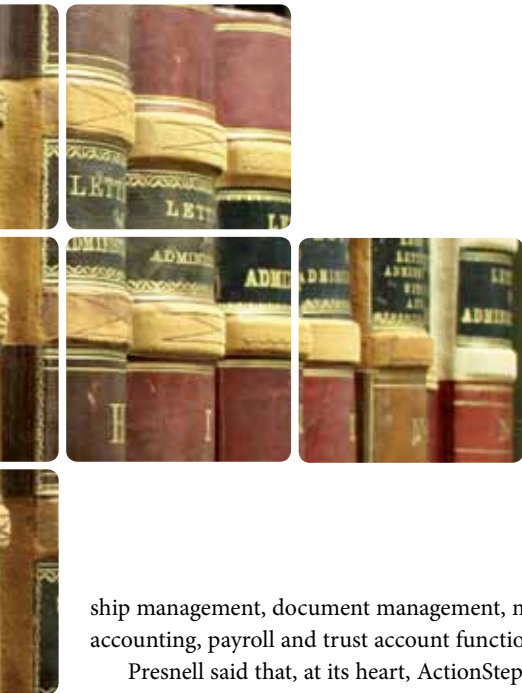
Presnell says that it is helpful to be involved with a new business from the ground up. "In the absence of any legacy investment in IT, we've definitely been able to leverage the benefits of cloud computing with great success for this law firm."

Time is money

The cornerstone solution, provided by Convergence, is practise management software called ActionStep. ActionStep is a cloud based offering which features excellent time-recording functionality, something that is essential for a professional services firm where the mantra is always "time is money." ActionStep also provides Speakman Law with customer relation-

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Wendy Hepburn,
office manager, Speakman Law,
Auckland



ship management, document management, marketing, accounting, payroll and trust account functionality.

Presnell said that, at its heart, ActionStep is a highly customisable workflow solution that can be used to manage and control the operational aspects of any business that has repeated tasks or processes. The solution was designed for environments where best-practice and compliance were paramount. This explained the high uptake within franchise organisations, legal firms and government agencies, where statutes often dictate how activities must be executed. Presnell described ActionStep in these words: "Having worked with a number of clients to integrate disparate cloud offerings, gluing together finance and CRM and operational systems, we saw ActionStep as a 'stand-out' offering in the marketplace. The commercial model of 'use-as-much-as-you-need' with no price differential, is a truly refreshing change from some of the approaches taken by multi-nationals to rate cards for cloud-based offerings."

Wendy Hepburn, manager at Speakman Law, had no trouble getting to grips with ActionStep software. "It's a neat and clean interface and extremely easy to learn – especially the accounting module. I've also enjoyed using the CRM sections of the software."


Hepburn also appreciated the many benefits of cloud computing from an IT administration perspective. This includes the absence of backup tapes, no need to run anti-virus or anti-spam software, or attend to version updates for applications. "Upgrades could render important systems unusable by staff for hours, or even days, in other law firms I've worked for in the past," she adds. "With the cloud-based environment we've created here at Speakman Law, we have effectively outsourced all of these mind-numbing functions to the software publishers. This means that we're all free to concentrate on our real jobs, rather than tinkering

with IT on a daily basis."

One giant step

Once the firm had its head in the clouds technically, the team at Convergence recommended and deployed Google's web-based email service, Gmail. "This was a perfect fit," explains Presnell. "ActionStep and Gmail talk to each other seamlessly. This means that emails, both inbound and outbound, are captured on the client's electronic file within ActionStep. Over time this builds up a complete chronological record of all touch-points with a customer – The Holy Grail of CRM!"

When it came to providing the office with computers, the firm took a giant step. The principal, Peter Speakman, elected to purchase only laptops and go the Mac way. No desk-based computers or servers were deployed. Peter went for highly-spec'd MacBook Pros, and he also ordered large Apple cinema display screens. Speakman said he wanted to create the best of both worlds – the freedom of being able to easily work off site, and the luxury of high definition screens when plugged in at the office. This seemed exactly what a multi-tasking professional needed in a fast-paced commercial environment.

The next step will be ensuring that staff are getting the most out of mobile devices. The firm is planning to extend the use of the iPhone as time goes on, including time-recording using. "I'm also looking forward to getting my hands on the marketing module within ActionStep," Hepburn said. 



CASE STUDY

> Speakman Law



AT A GLANCE

Industry

> Professional services

Business Objective

> Low levels of back-end infrastructure, rapid deployment of mission critical solutions, mobility, leveraging the cloud

Solution

> ActionStep hosted software, Gmail, Mac hardware and iPhones, VOIP delivered via the Convergence 'IT-in-a-Box' total solution package

Business Benefits

> A single SaaS solution to run almost the entire business, low monthly rental fees on cloud solutions, low cost telephony charge, single business-systems supplier



FOR MORE INFORMATION

> Convergence Limited

www.convergence.co.nz

Mark Presnell

mark@convergence.co.nz

Auckland: +64 9 525 2611

Wellington: +64 4 974 8658

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