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Alan Rolfe, Tax Manager, Hopper, Williams & Bell

Hopper, Williams & Bell's requirements:

Hopper, Williams & Bell has been providing accountancy, business and tax solutions for a quarter of a century.

Steady growth during this period and the impressive number of referrals from satisfied clients are testament to the high esteem in which the firm is held. Amid this progress, it remains independent and takes pride in offering the same personal touch as it always did.

HWB now employs 40 staff at its offices in Eastleigh, Hampshire, and focuses primarily on business clients, which amount to about 70 per cent of the workload.

Over the past few years, there has been an information revolution within the firm as it makes the transition from a cumbersome and often inefficient paper library to an online library.

The LexisNexis solution

After reviewing the alternatives, HWB selected Tolley®Library, the leading tax information resource available online, and a combination of LexisNexis training solutions.

“We chose TolleyLibrary for the depth of content and the fact that we could tailor the package precisely to our requirements,” explains Alan Rolfe, the firm's Tax Manager. “Our clients expect us to be fully up-to-date and we have complete confidence in TolleyLibrary. With the general election and two Budgets, 2010 was a challenging year and we were very impressed by the updates provided.”

TolleyLibrary is the most comprehensive research tool for tax and accountancy professionals; it offers the user a single point of access to thousands of the most trusted tax and accountancy sources available. It combines frequently updated, authoritative sources, such as Simon's Taxes and De Voil Indirect Tax Service with a range of current awareness information to keep you completely up-to-date.

In parallel to the introduction of the online library, HWB has also transferred their training online using Tolley's Webinars online seminars and in-house courses.

Webinars offer interactive training sessions, delivered to your desk on a range of practice areas, while the shorter Tolley's® Seminars Online provide monthly updates on key changes in the fields of personal and corporate tax presented by leading lecturers.

How did HWB benefit?

Hopper, Williams & Bell experienced the benefits of a significant decrease in time spent loose-leaf filing and travelling, making their staff more efficient and an increase in the quality of advice they were able to provide their customers.

In the past, HWB had a dedicated filing clerk, who updated the paper copies. As HWB continues its move online, that work is diminishing and can now be completed by secretarial support staff. As well as freeing up time, another bonus has been releasing the space which previously housed the library, allowing the Accountancy team to have a dedicated area of the office.

Not only useful on a day-to-day basis, TolleyLibrary was shown to its maximum advantage during a recent cold snap, which paralysed the Hampshire area: “We found that many workers who could not reach the office, or had problems with child care, could work remotely,” says Mr Rolfe. “The online library really came into its own.”

Introducing TolleyLibrary is also helping the firm win new business, as HWB is able to charge for advice provided to smaller companies without access to the same level of expertise: “The depth and detail of content is so good that we are able to handle some very complex tax issues,” says Mr Rolfe. “By advising other firms we have increased our earnings by tens of thousands of pounds annually.”

The switch from external training sessions to in-house learning has also three important benefits:

- significant reduction in travel time and cost
- improvements in the quality of learning
- quicker reactions to changes in the law

“We are reacting more quickly to tax law changes and providing a better service. The quality of the online training is excellent, with a wide range of speakers.” The move has resulted in major savings, by cutting travel times to outside training sessions which, in the past, were up to 80 miles away. “We were wasting 200 hours a year solely on travel time,” says Mr Rolfe. “The online training courses are saving us £8,000 a year. Additionally, they have given us greater flexibility over training because we can choose the exact topics we require, often at a time that suits us best.” Mr Rolfe also highlights the benefits of being able to train his staff in the office: “The tax department now sits down as a group in the office to watch Tolley Seminars Online, allowing us to discuss important changes and immediately advise clients.”

In conclusion, he says: “By going online we have not only improved our efficiency, but also made significant time and financial savings. On the research side alone, we are saving many hours a week and the information is so much more accessible. Overall, I believe the LexisNexis package we subscribe to offers the best content we can find at an affordable price.”

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