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John Ball, Corporate Tax Manager, Ward Williams

About Ward Williams

Ward Williams was established in 1992 in Weybridge, Surrey. Now almost 20 years later, the firm works out of three offices in Weybridge, Bracknell and Uxbridge, employs around 60 staff and is the largest practice of chartered accountants in Elmbridge.

It is also one of the most progressive firms in the South, offering a wide range of complementary tax and financial solutions for small and medium size companies in addition to the more traditional accountancy and tax services. In one notable innovation, the firm launched its own HR company three years ago.

The approach to information gathering and storage at Ward Williams is equally dynamic. Head office in Weybridge became paperless in 2000; all client files are now kept electronically and the firm's library is fully online.

What LexisNexis services do Ward Williams use?

“We have always embraced the latest developments in IT,” says John Ball, the firm's corporate tax manager. “Searching for a piece of paper is time consuming and because our offices are quite a distance apart it's not practical to have a library of text books.”

Ward Williams became one of the first firms in the country to choose the new Tolley®Library, the UK's most authoritative source of tax law and practice materials. Featuring cutting-edge search technology, the system contains thousands of trusted tax, legal and regulatory sources such as Tolley's, Butterworths, Simon's, HMRC manuals, De Voil's Indirect Tax Service and the Yellow and Orange Tax handbooks.

Before subscribing to a package, the firm ran a rigorous internal trial in which TolleyLibrary and another provider were both put to the test. Mr Ball explains “We used both real and simulated problems so we could compare the two. Overall, TolleyLibrary was better. In my view it is more complete and more comprehensive than its competitor. On tax cases it is especially strong. Such is the depth of analysis that even on the most complex issues we can turn to TolleyLibrary when we need a second opinion. We very rarely need to use paid external consultants.”

Another attraction for Ward Williams was the training offered by the team from LexisNexis, enabling fee earners to get the maximum benefit from the electronic library system. Mr Ball says “TolleyLibrary is user-friendly, allowing junior members of staff to carry out more in-depth research and freeing up senior fee-earners to focus on more lucrative work and face-to-face contact with clients, which we believe is very important.

“Finding relevant information is usually very straightforward. With its tick-box function, the system allows much more focused searching. On some consultancy work we estimate that we may be earning 30 per cent more, simply because of the ease of research.”

Mr Ball also highlights the good working relationship between Ward Williams and the team at LexisNexis, adding “They are making constant improvements to the system and I have always found them willing to listen to us.”

Mr Ball concludes “TolleyLibrary offers us the best possible support at a value-for-money price. By having TolleyLibrary I believe we are able to offer clients a better service.”

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