

CASE STUDY: FOLEY HUGHES

with Andrew Franicevic
Partner

1.

The Challenge

Foley Hughes is a four-partner practice located at the edge of the Auckland CBD. Operating for over 40 years focusing on Commercial and Commercial Property, and General Practice matters.

Our legal research needs vary from juniors to seniors but as with most small to medium sized firms, we rely upon currency when it comes to legal research. Making sure juniors have access to recent case law or commentary on sections of the acts relevant to recent case law is a given. Personally, I rely on current third-party forms and precedents outside of the day-to-day documents. These would be our primary reasons we would purchase a paid service. We do engage searching the Internet but only as a last resort or 'first glance'. A general Internet search will usually get me to an article that a law firm has published but are always only a very general starting point.

Traditional databases can be confusing in how they present information. My desk is already cluttered enough. When I'm using a legal research tool I just want to find what I'm looking for, and to trust that the information is accurate in as little time as possible.

2.

The Solution

In comparison to traditional databases, and the Internet, the new Westlaw is smarter, more direct and faster in connecting us with the legal answers we need.

I find the new Westlaw has a novel combination of both the traditional way to find legal information, and how I usually search on the Internet. Typing in questions means that the system generates results that intuitively connect me with relevant legal answers. What I find particularly useful is the smart suggestions in the search bar. I can begin to type a question, or the component of a question, and the exact legal research question I want will appear for me to click on. Searching is no longer linear so I can go backwards and have better visibility of the research I've already done so I'm not doubling up on work for a matter.

I have reasonably limited time so if I don't find something in the first couple of pages during a general Internet search, then I resume a more traditional approach to research. If I'm using statutes and I want to find out the current position, I'm confident I'll find it quickly using the new Westlaw. It's a useful tool I'd be looking for if it didn't exist. In general, I use the Internet far less now for starting legal research.

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3.

The Future

Foley Hughes sees the value in the new Westlaw as an important tool to support knowledge workflow across the firm, not just for partners and seniors, but juniors still learning the legal landscape. I know that juniors benefit with the flexible searching options such as with the natural language searching. This is why we see a bright future with the new Westlaw as our firm continues to grow.

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