

Practice makes perfect

Simpler, slicker and cost efficient — just a few of the ways that CPA Inprotech has improved a leading Hong Kong IP practice.

Can a single piece of software actually make life in a busy IP law firm simpler and more efficient?

The answer is yes, according to Hong Kong firm Deacons, which believes that CPA Inprotech is helping it to face the future with more confidence. As one of Hong Kong's largest IP law firms, Deacons handles a substantial proportion of all the intellectual property filings in the former British colony. Closer ties with China have presented opportunities to expand the company's business onto the mainland, with large regional practices operating out of offices in Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou and other business centres in East Asia.

While Deacons successful business practice is based on providing a high level of quality and service, it also has a policy of employing a relatively low number of professional and administrative staff. As with any company trying to tread that fine line, its approach necessitates striving for higher levels of efficiency – something it has found can only be achieved by streamlining its operation with the help of information technology.

Since 1996, the prime component of that technology has been CPA Inprotech. It is the basis of nearly all the activity in the IP department and is used to manage patent, design and trade mark registrations and renewals as well as domain names, litigation and opposition cases. On a daily basis, it is the essential tool employed by a staff user base of more than 50 people.

The software has enabled Deacons to design its own tailor-made systems, and staff find it flexible and simple to apply to their particular requirements.

The firm is able to manage its procedures at a vastly increased rate, but without sacrificing the standard of its work. CPA Inprotech's enquiry function, for example, enables the company to track both physical and electronic files located throughout the office and, subsequently, access to important documents is much faster.

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Clients appreciate the speed at which information is provided and CPA Inprotech's document automation facilities see the system write more than 1,000 letters and documents each day. Clients and staff alike say that the standing instructions system allows even the most demanding requests to be actioned quickly.

Partner Lindsay Esler, who heads the firm's IP practice, has no doubt of the benefits of using the system. Esler points to the company's ability to decrease the number of professional staff in the Hong Kong and East Asia Trade Marks Group from nine to four in the five years since it implemented the system as evidence of tangible benefits: “Over the same period our work volume has increased by nearly 100% and turnaround has dramatically improved. The effect on efficiency and profits has been fantastic.”

While clerical staff numbers have been downsized by around thirty percent, Deacons has been able to re-direct the surplus workforce into a variety of other fields, such as data quality and client-interface initiatives.