

Dream team bands together

Written by: Julie May

Almost all advisory practices that deal in life insurance have a story about how a claim has helped a client or client's family in the event of injury, illness or death.

For staff from financial planning practice Edplan, their story is a little closer to home.

The team, which was run by directors Paul Hardick, Phil Campbell and Richard Tasich up until last year, hit a roadblock when 31-year-old Tasich died in 2008 from an unexpected heart attack.

"Richard was always very fit and healthy, which is why what happened took us all by surprise," Hardick says.

"I'd mentored Richard when he joined the business and was lucky enough to also be able to call him my best mate."

It was a hard time for Edplan staff, but Tasich's passing brought them together as a team and as a group they were successful in ensuring there were no loose financial ends for Tasich's wife and family.

A great personal loss to the team, Hardick says there was a lot of emotion involved, so having a practice that was not dependent on one principal or director was important.

"We've since hired Lee Wallace as our new director and chief executive," he says.

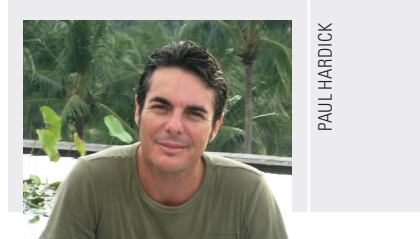
"I met Lee years ago through mutual expatriate contacts in South-East Asia, plus I knew he had great overseas investment banking experience and was already an Edplan shareholder."

He says it took many years to get the team to where it is today, but from his perspective it is the dream team.

Joining the financial planning industry in 1995 following a career as a high school teacher, education has always been Hardick's passion.

"Because Edplan specialises in financial planning services specifically for the teaching industry, it has been an interesting transition," he says.

Going from a classroom full of teenagers to a meeting room with one or two people was a massive change for Hardick, but also gave him greater insight into Edplan's key client base.



PAUL HARDICK

"We predominantly service teachers but we also advise their partners as well," he says.

"We like focusing on a niche as it enables us to have a better understanding of our clients."

Edplan offers services including financial planning, salary packaging, retirement planning, gearing, leasing, financing, mortgages and insurance.

"We do a lot of seminars and state-wide conferences so that we can reach a bigger audience, and it has also proven a great way to expand our client base," Hardick says.

"We currently host about 10 state and regional conferences a year for teachers and we would like to do more of these going forward."

What makes the team unique is its ability to keep clients up to date, with staff also happy to make school and home visits.

"We've also got a team member whose sole responsibility is to continuously phone clients to see how they are and whether they need to meet with us," Hardick says.

"By having this role we're able to get through talking with a lot more clients than we would otherwise."

The Edplan team comprises 10 staff members and six advisers.

"Everyone on the team, whether they're financial planners or not, have or are currently studying their diploma in financial planning and we have an internal graduate program too," Hardick says.

"Through the graduate program if we have a back-office staff member who displays potential talent to be an adviser, we will put them on the graduate program where they will receive mentoring from one of our more experienced staff members, which also enables us to replicate the

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SNAPSHOT

Name: Edplan
Location: Sydney CBD
Funds under advice: About \$200 million
Clients: About 2000
Platform: Navigator badged as FCI
Software: Xplan
Research: Morningstar
Staff: 16
Dealer group: Self-licensed under First Capital Financial Planning

expertise of our top advisers as well."

Edplan has a robust education and training program, he says.

There is a lot of different experience across office staff, including exposure to financial services companies overseas, he says.

"Younger team members are also invited to attend meetings and participate in role plays to help build their interpersonal and relationship skills," he says.

Edplan accesses its external training programs through financial services education provider Kaplan and attends seminars and professional development days hosted by different dealer groups.

Keen to share industry knowledge, team members have also on occasion presented at industry events chaired by the Association of Financial Advisers and Million Dollar Round Table.

Outside of work, the team enjoys its sport and fitness, something it has placed more importance on since Tasich's passing.

"We recently went rock climbing together and even did paragliding as part of one of our professional development days," Hardick says.

"Campbell and I are also avid surfers and often go to beaches in Bali to do this."

Having a happy and healthy work environment has always been important to Hardick.

"If people have a healthy and positive work environment and like the people they work with, then it's more likely that they will come back and want to develop their careers here," he says.

Edplan's future plans include revamping its IT systems and finalising a succession plan to enable key staff to purchase equity in the business so it can sustain its longevity. «