

QuickBooks bringing WA computer firm closer to home

The company:

The introduction of the GST in July 2000 muddled and confused the minds of many. Steve Neal wasn't one of them.

He saw an opportunity to start a business and today Neal.IT, a computer consultancy in tiny Esperance, WA, enjoys more than \$1 million in annual turnover.

"People spent their \$200 GST vouchers on computers and software but they didn't know how to set them up," said Mr Neal, of the federal government's assistance to small business owners to help shoulder the cost of integrating the GST into their operations.

At the time, the now director of Neal.IT worked from home for his primary competitor. Soon swamped with requests for his service and knowledge, Mr Neal branched off and has been leading his own firm ever since.

In the event you've never heard of Esperance, you're not alone. The town is home to about 9400 residents and it's tucked away on the state's south coast roughly nine hours by car from Perth. Better known in travel circles as The Bay of Isles for its location on scenic Esperance Bay and the several hundred islands of the Recherche Archipelago offshore, Esperance is your classic country town.

"This is the type of town where it takes a half an hour to walk down the main street because you stop and talk to everyone," says Neal, who is also the President of Esperance's Chamber of Commerce after moving from South Australia in 1995 with his wife, Lorri, an Esperance native, who is now Neal.IT's office manager.

That close knit community, however, is very good for business.

Neal.IT caters to everything from local and regional transport companies and manufacturers to farmers, the hospitality industry and the town's expanding tourist services. The company supplies computer hardware, software and training with such brands on its shelves as Optima and Apple.

In addition, Neal.IT repairs PCs, configures networks and is the local agent for Internet broadband providers Westnet and BigPond. And they're good at it as evidenced in Neal.IT's selection as the Business category winner of the Australian Telecommunications User Group (ATUG) National Broadband Awards.



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Steve Neal,
Neal.IT

The challenge:

Prior to the introduction of Connectix and its integration with QuickBooks, Mr. Neal said in a best-case scenario it took two days to arrange the invoice. Worst case, three months using with manual logs and chasing the customer.

While admitting some customers were a little offended at first being presented with an invoice that previously came weeks later in the post, Mr Neal says it's now standard business practice and customers have adapted. Plus, the process has done wonders for the businesses' cash flow.

He recalls a recent project two hours west of Esperance that by the time Mr Neal returned to the office, the invoice had already been paid.

“I was able to go home, put my feet up and have a beer,” he said, noting invoices generated by QuickBooks all contain a remittance slip to facilitate prompt customer payment. “It didn't work that way in the old days.”

The solution:

The distance Mr Neal and his three technicians are often required to travel to job sites has necessitated the introduction of Connectix – a remote scheduling and mobile invoice application which expedites communication and transaction processing. Mr Neal has integrated it directly into QuickBooks Premier 2008/09 QBⁱ series in the company's Esperance office.

Connectix allows Neal.IT's technicians to have work allocated to them remotely and, upon completing a job, enter cost details of the project. An invoice is promptly returned back to the job site enabling the customer to pay using cash, credit or debit on the spot before the technician has even left the location. In minutes, the transaction is processed, Neal.IT is paid, and it's on to the next job.

For further information about this case study, contact customerservice@reckon.com.au or 1300 784 253