MANAGEMENT
FOR
DESIGN

Business and Practice Management Systems Survey Results

SEPTEMBER 2017

Contents

Background

Management for Design and the Association of Consulting Architects (ACA) have recently conducted an independent survey of Business and Practice Management Systems used by, and available to, Architects, Engineers and Consultants in the Australian marketplace. This is the first comprehensive survey of this information ever undertaken in Australia with the actual users.

As you are aware there are a myriad of business and practice management systems available to your business and the industry to manage your finances, projects, clients and documents. Currently there is minimal independent information describing the effectiveness of these systems and minimal expert assistance regarding making the right choice for you and your business.

The purpose of the survey is to research and assess the functionality, effectiveness and importantly the use of the various business systems used in practice. The results are a summary of the actual users experience and we hope to assist you to make a more informed decision around what's right for your business.
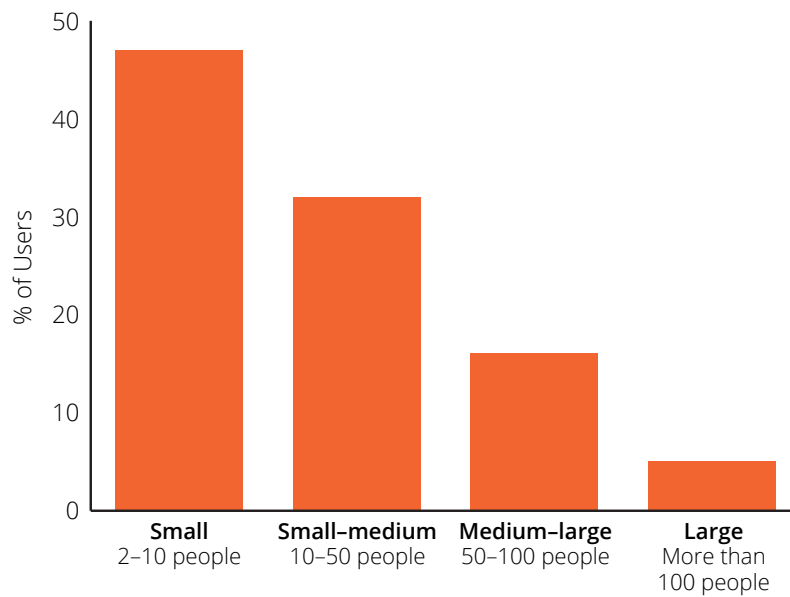
The work involved:

· Investigating the technologies available in Australia

· Formulating and distributing the market survey

· Collaboration with the Association of Consulting Architects

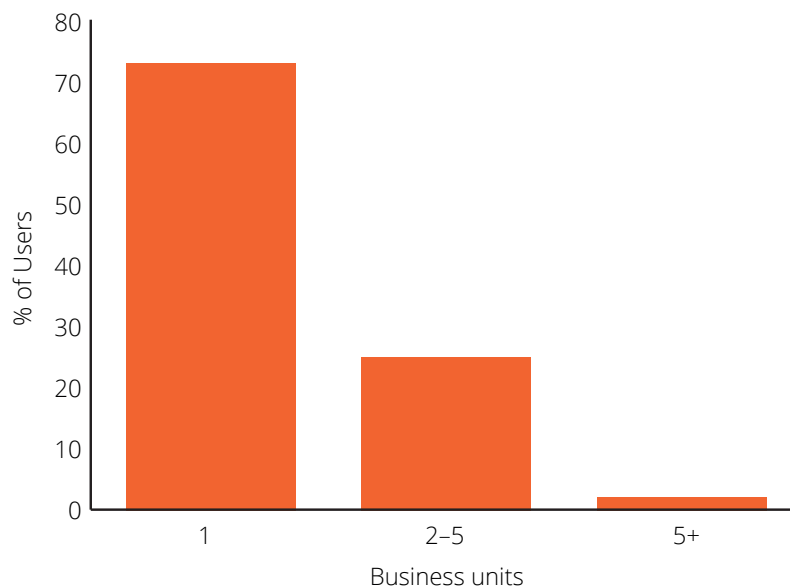· Analysing the results of the extensive market survey.

We have collated the results of over 180 businesses across Australia varying in size from 2 people to over 500 people. Thanks to those of you that provided responses to the survey.

Respondents

The highest percentage of our respondents have 2–10 people in their business

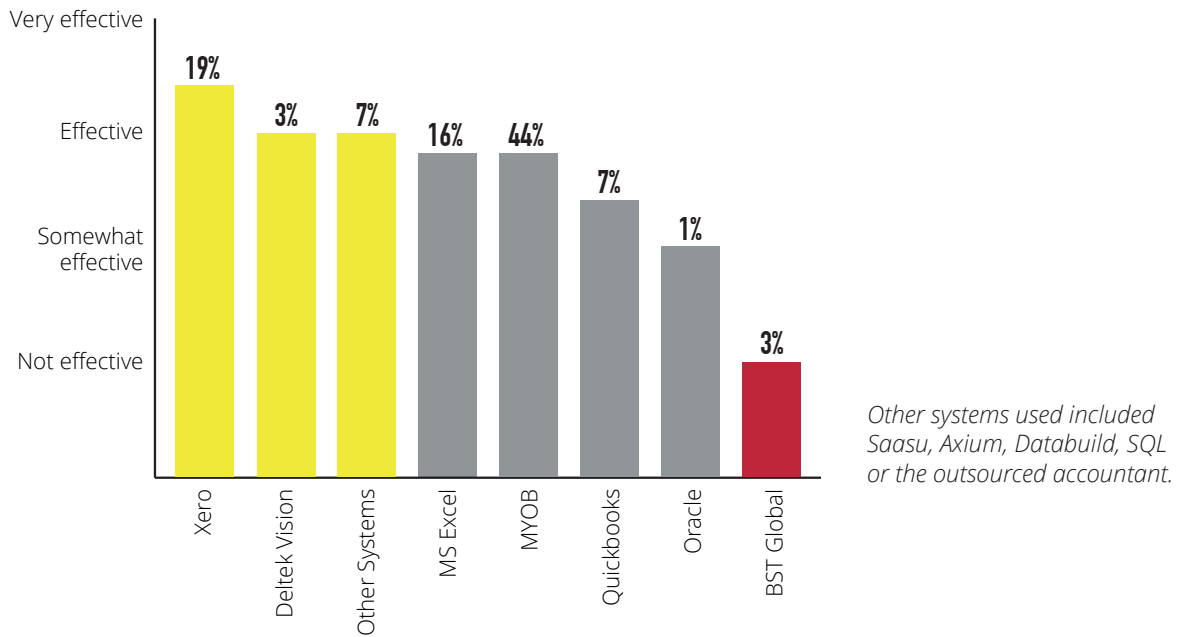**Most of our respondents have one business unit**

Results

As expected there are numerous systems in use across the industry. Typically, as businesses become more complex — more business units, more departments, more locations, more people — there is a tendency to move to integrate the various functions of finance, project accounting, client and document management (commonly termed an Enterprise Resource Planning [ERP] System). Examples of ERP systems used in Australia include BST Global, Oracle and Deltek for Professional Services.

Typically, the smaller the business, the less integration occurring across the various functions of the business and more application of stand-alone systems such as Xero for accounting, Total Synergy for time entry/project accounting and MS Project for project planning.
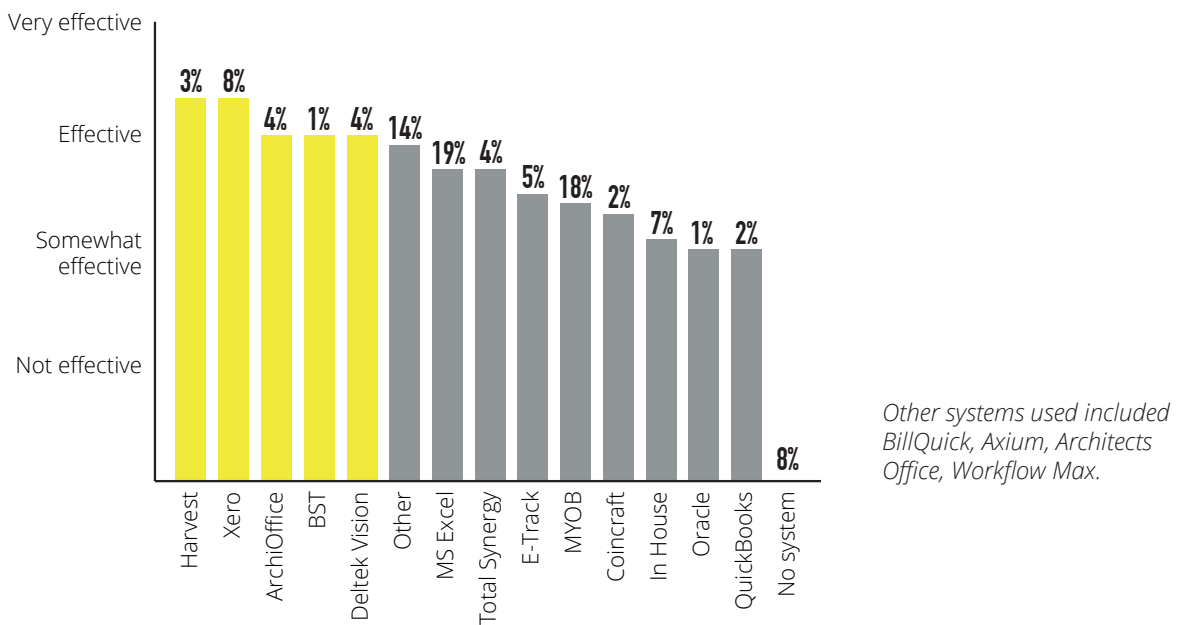
The results are summarised into 2 categories:

- **Proportion of users (%)**
- **Rating of effectiveness across the following categories:**

    ■ Not effective

    ■ Used and somewhat effective

    ■ Used and effective
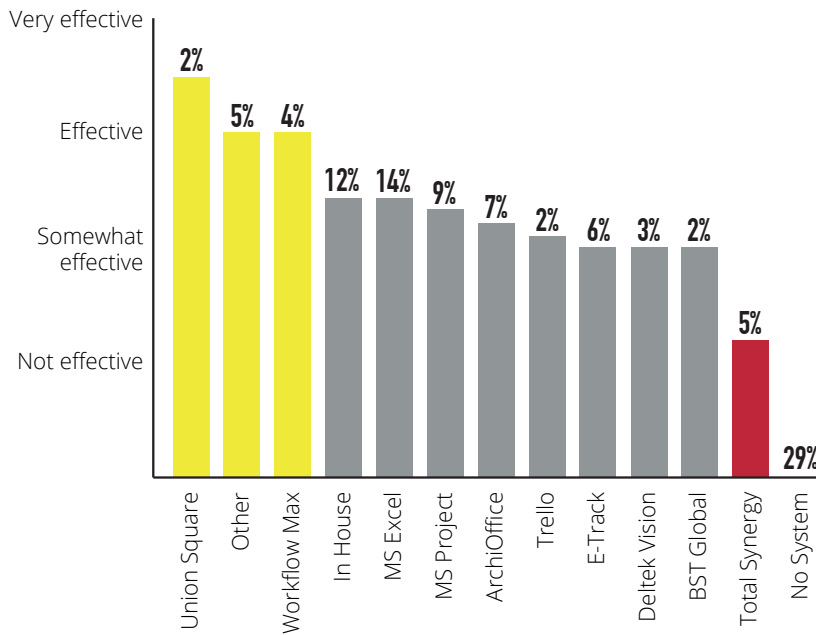
    ■ Used and very effective.

Which accounting system do you use and how effective is it?

Bar chart with y-axis labels (top to bottom): Very effective, Effective, Somewhat effective, Not effective.

System	Value
Xero	19%
Deltek Vision	3%
Other Systems	7%
MS Excel	16%
MYOB	44%
Quickbooks	7%
Oracle	1%
BST Global	3%

Other systems used included Saasu, Axium, Databuild, SQL or the outsourced accountant.

Which time and invoicing system do you use and how effective is it?

Bar chart with y-axis labels (top to bottom): Very effective, Effective, Somewhat effective, Not effective.

System	Value
Harvest	3%
Xero	8%
ArchiOffice	4%
BST	1%
Deltek Vision	4%
Other	14%
MS Excel	19%
Total Synergy	4%
E-Track	5%
MYOB	18%
Coincraft	2%
In House	7%
Oracle	1%
QuickBooks	2%
No system	8%

Other systems used included BillQuick, Axium, Architects Office, Workflow Max.

Which project control system do you use and how effective is it?

Very effective

Effective

Somewhat effective

Not effective

Union Square	Other	Workflow Max	In House	MS Excel	MS Project	ArchiOffice	Trello	E-Track	Deltek Vision	BST Global	Total Synergy	No System
2%	5%	4%	12%	14%	9%	7%	2%	6%	3%	2%	5%	29%

Other systems used included Newforma, Filemaker Pro, Architects Office.

Which resource management system do you use and how effective is it?

Very effective

Effective

Somewhat effective

Not effective

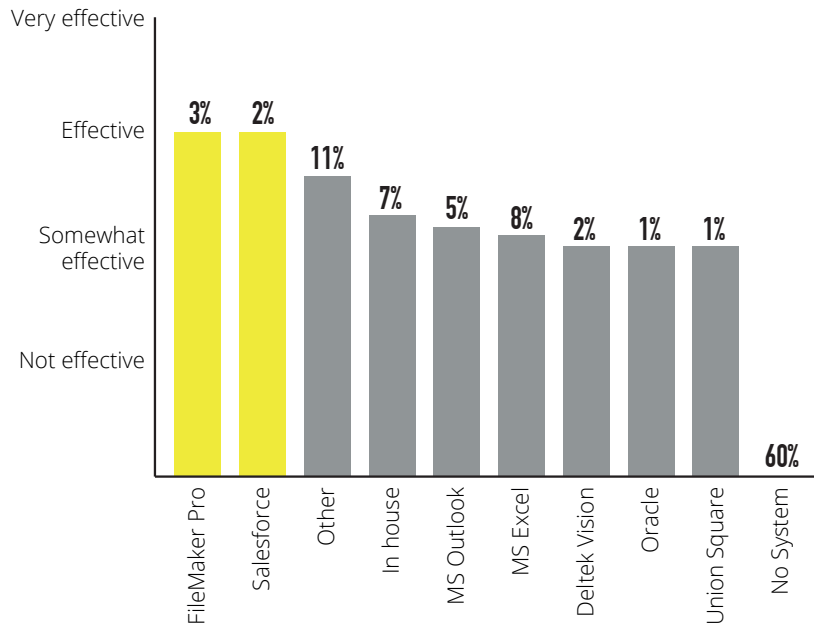| Other	In House	MS Excel	BST Global	Deltek Vision	E-Track	MS Project	Workflow Max	Total Synergy	No System
10%	7%	16%	2%	2%	4%	7%	5%	3%	44%*

* 64% of firms with less than 5 people do not have a resource management system in place

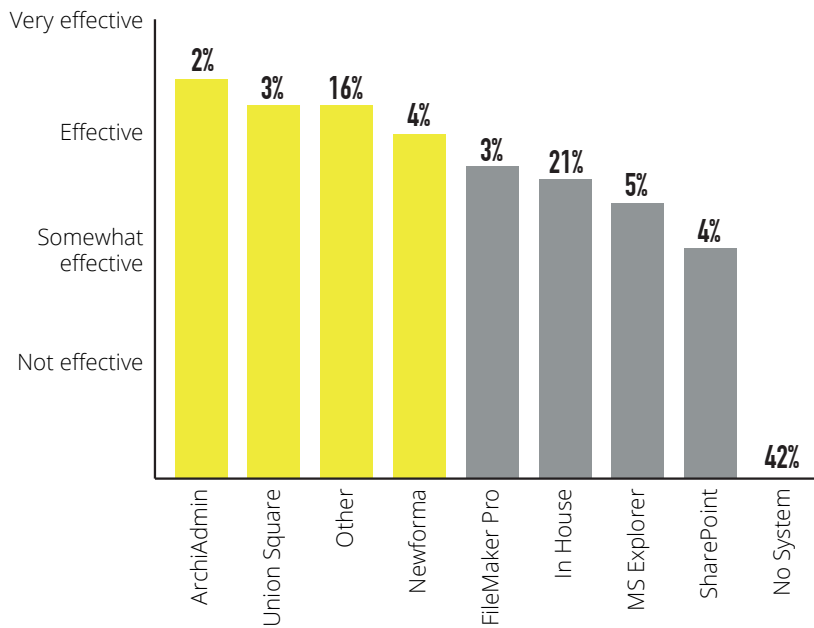* 28% of firms with more than 5 people do not have a resource management system in place.

Other systems used included Architects Office, Filemaker Pro, Basecamp, Harvest, Replicon.

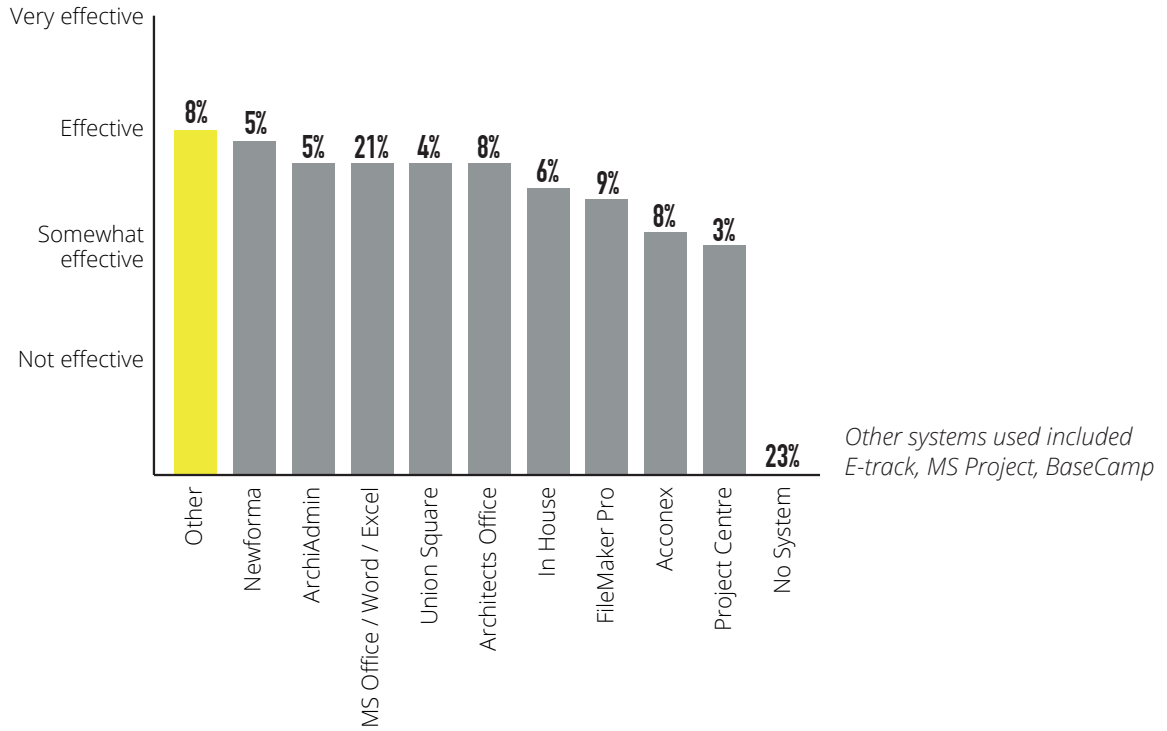## Which customer relationship management system do you use and how effective is it?

Chart — y-axis labels (top to bottom): Very effective, Effective, Somewhat effective, Not effective

Bars with values:
- FileMaker Pro — 3%
- Salesforce — 2%
- Other — 11%
- In house — 7%
- MS Outlook — 5%
- MS Excel — 8%
- Deltek Vision — 2%
- Oracle — 1%
- Union Square — 1%
- No System — 60%

Other systems used included E-track, SharePoint, FileMaker Pro, Trello, Podio, Zoho.

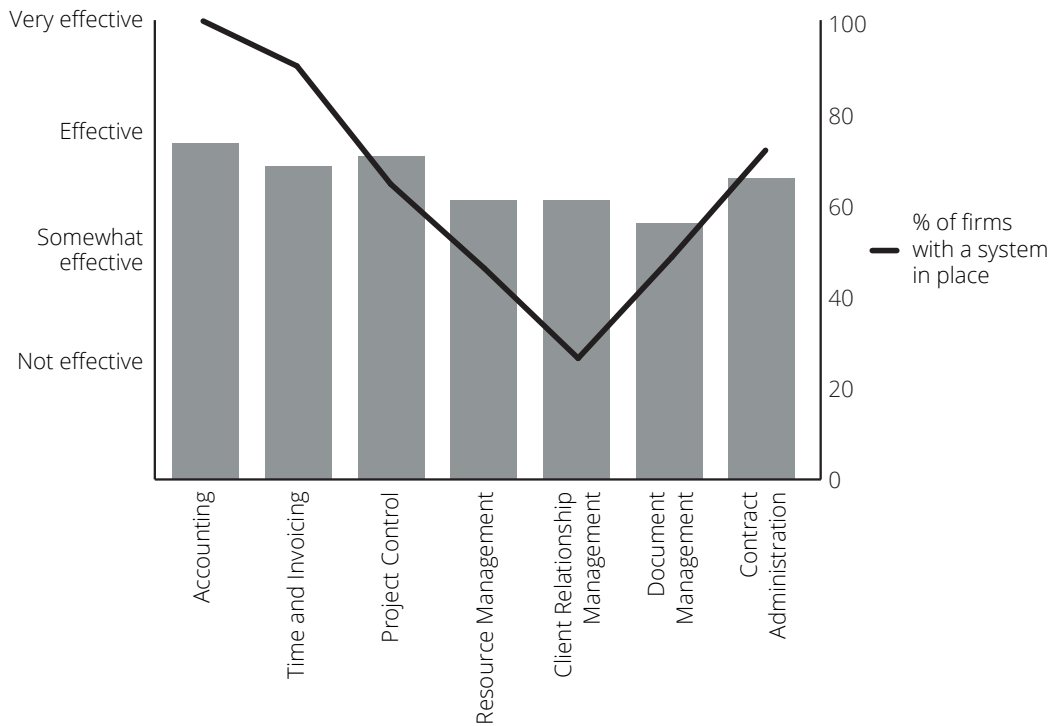## Which document management system do you use and how effective is it?

Chart — y-axis labels (top to bottom): Very effective, Effective, Somewhat effective, Not effective

Bars with values:
- ArchiAdmin — 2%
- Union Square — 3%
- Other — 16%
- Newforma — 4%
- FileMaker Pro — 3%
- In House — 21%
- MS Explorer — 5%
- SharePoint — 4%
- No System — 42%

Other systems used included E-track, Architects Office, Aconex.

Which contract administration system do you use and how effective is it?

Other systems used included
E-track, MS Project, BaseCamp

Summary results

% of firms
with a system
in place

Insights

- Only 2 accounting systems are considered effective or very effective — Xero and Deltek Vision

- Xero is considered effective or very effective in 90% of businesses as an accounting system

- The level of effectiveness of project control systems is very low — a concern considering this is one of the key foundations of any project centred business. The most effective project control system is Union Square (although this is a small sample size)

- 44% of our respondents did not have a resource management system. And of those that do the level of effectiveness is very low

- Less than one in five businesses have a system specifically designed to manage resources

- Extraordinarily 28% of firms with more than 5 people do not have a resource management system in place

- 60% of businesses do not have a system for managing customer relationships i.e. clients, contacts, leads, opportunities, activities, prospects. And typically, the most effective systems are not integrated with the other systems in the business and are "stand alone"

- More than 40% of businesses do not have a formal document management system

- The most common platform for managing contract administration is still MS Office e.g: Word, Excel — 23%

- There are **no** systems across project control, resource management, CRM and document management that are consistently rated "very effective" by our respondents.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the results aren't great! Business systems are one of the key foundations of business and it is only from having effective systems that you can control and build your business. Your systems should run your business and your people should follow your systems. A key responsibility for every business owner is to systematise your business. Having said that, the effectiveness of any system is typically not solely related to the software functionality.

The effectiveness of the systems in your business is a combination of numerous factors including:

- Leadership commitment and support
- Effective implementation
- Using the right system for your business
- Ease of use
- System functionality
- Complexity of system
- In house "champion" in the business
- Ongoing investment in the systems, e.g. upgrades
- The extent of integration across the system modules
- Date integrity
- Partner/vendor support, expertise and availability
- Time using the system
- Training.

We all need to do more as an industry!

It's only through having strong business systems in place that will allow you to take time away from your business, knowing that everything is under control, knowing that your team of great people that you trust are following the approved systems in your business and knowing that your team has everything in place to drive the success of the business.

About Management for Design

Our team can take care of your everyday business management functions, from finance and accounting to business management, IT, business systems and people organisation. Our most important contribution can be assisting you with strategic business planning and change management. Refocusing your way of working means you'll spend less time micro-managing, but the key decision-making will always remain firmly in your hands.

We understand all the fundamentals that need to be in place to run an efficient and highly productive design practice. Our systems provide the critical business information you need to make informed decisions to enhance performance, improve operations and generate more business.

For managing work we have proven processes to deliver effective project management, resource planning and project costing.

We are firmly positioned around where business is heading — information anywhere/anytime, business intelligence and out-sourcing/partnering to enable your business to focus on your area of expertise.

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Management for Design provides integrated business systems and services to the design industry across Strategy, Finance, Information Technology, Human Resource Management and Business Systems.

By working with Management for Design our clients are enabled to focus on what they are great at and to control and build their businesses. For more information visit www.m4d.com.au or phone 03 9645 8834.