

## Future-proofing financial services

When Jirsch Sutherland recently bolstered its team of equity Partners with the promotion of Perth-based [Jimmy Trpcevski](#) and Brisbane-based [Chris Baskerville](#) – bringing the national tally to nine – it took a significant step in future-proofing the firm.

While the insolvency space has experienced technological shifts from manual accounting to electronic and cloud-based programs (not to mention plenty of disruption in terms of artificial intelligence and data analytics) Jimmy and Chris say there are the same “pressure points” that lead to practitioners getting involved in someone’s personal life or business.

“Between them, they have managed and been appointed to a significant number of large and complex external administrations across a diverse range of industries and jurisdictions around Australia,” says National Managing Partner [Bradd Morelli](#). “But it’s their vision for the firm’s future, coupled with their commitment to providing solutions for matters they handle, that makes them such valued members of our firm.”

We asked both Partners a few key questions about what’s impacting business on the west and east coasts.



## Jirsch Sutherland Partner Jimmy Trpcevski



## Jirsch Sutherland Partner Chris Baskerville

### **How would you describe the current business landscape in your respective cities?**

**Chris:** Brisbane is quietly optimistic in either a slight recovery [after the election], or at least a 'soft landing' economically speaking. We are starting to see the effects of property developers who entered the market too late or have over-extended, retail and food outlets showing signs of distress, and there feels like a slowing down of consumer spending on luxury and discretionary items. The Queensland government is doing its best to facilitate infrastructure spending, but that appears to be in the final stages of major projects near Brisbane. Finance brokers are informing me of the tough conditions for people to obtain finance.

**Jimmy:** Businesses in Perth are waiting for some good luck to head their way while anticipating if the results of the recent election will have any bearing on the landscape. We're also mindful that the attitude of the banks and the Australian Taxation Office will ultimately depend on how businesses continue to operate and manoeuvre through this challenging economic climate. It is quite tough in Western Australia, which is solely and heavily reliant on the resource industry;

when that's down, everyone seems to be down.

## **From compliance to data analytics and broader stakeholder engagement, insolvency professionals face constant disruption. How does Jirsch Sutherland navigate this rocky terrain?**

**Chris:** Jirsch Sutherland's aim is to help its team of experienced trustees and liquidators, refers and clients take advantage of disruption, be early adopters of innovation, and realise the business value of key emerging technologies. It's better to be on the front foot by disrupting and challenging our own businesses before others do so. The key thing to remember is that embracing technology is not an option but rather a necessity for future-proofing our businesses.

**Jimmy:** Chris sums it up!

## **How has technology changed the way insolvency practitioners work?**

**Chris:** Most businesses we deal with have cloud-based accounting programs, which makes it easier and timely to extract key financial information. We're seeing more embrace these digital systems to support their businesses (i.e. sales, HR, accounting, stock control) meaning that, although a company has let their subscriptions lapse, the data is still maintained and accessible by external administrators. Crypto-currencies are another source of assets available to companies, SMSFs and individuals. We need to consider the Australian 'crypto-exchanges' as bank accounts recover the digital currencies and tokens for the benefit of creditors.

**Jimmy:** While every appointment is different, there are still the fundamentals that remain the same: keeping good records, keeping good financial accounts, and being on top of the business operations. Insolvency practitioners are still required to analyse the information that goes in and out of a business and look at both the historical and future perspective of that data.

## **What advice would you give financial services professionals who may be reluctant to embrace change?**

**Chris:** Not only do we need to be familiar with the technology that is disrupting our clients' business models, but we must, as professionals, understand how such technological innovation can influence our own business practices around advising clients and in undertaking insolvency. It is no longer "survival of the fittest", it is now "survival of the adaptable". In other words: change or die!

**Jimmy:** Clients are changing the way they do business and if we want to remain expert advisers to them, we must continue to innovate and work creatively. Embracing technology will inevitably lead to greater efficiencies and will allow us as financial services practitioners to focus on advising with better facts – which can be accessed more quickly, often with a few strokes of the keyboard – as a consequence of this change.