

Why having your head in the cloud benefits your business



Aly Garrett, All In Advisory

Award-winning accountant Aly Garrett likened getting clients onto the cloud a decade ago to “pushing s— up a hill”. Today, Garrett’s expertise in taking clients on this journey is the foundation of her firm’s success.

Aly Garrett, founder of the Adelaide-based and award-winning firm, [All In Advisory](#), discovered 10 years ago that many people are wary of change. This is when she first tried to get her clients to move from using office-based computers – and keeping receipts in shoeboxes – to cloud accounting solutions. Garrett soon found she had her work cut out.

“I realised it was fear and insecurity that were stopping people from making the change,” says Garrett. “So I spent time educating my clients about what the cloud actually was and how it could help their business. Once they were familiar with what it could do, it was an easy strike rate.”

While Garrett established All In Advisory in 2018, she has been assisting clients on their cloud journey for many years, helping them to discover the advantages it brings, including 24/7 access to real-time data from anywhere via laptops, tablets and smartphones; secure data storage; streamlined processes, and less stress at tax time.

Momentum building

Garrett predicts an imminent “tidal wave” of change as people move from paper to the cloud. “I find my younger clients are more open to the move,” she says. “Our firm specialises in family businesses and it’s the second and third generation who usually want to bring about greater efficiencies. They’re more aware of the penalties – such as falling profit margins – of not changing in response to disruption.”

Giving clients the right support is the key to success, Garrett says. “We make people feel comfortable about the change; we look at what they are currently using, then we recommend,

implement, train, educate and hold their hand. That's why we haven't had anyone who's moved to the cloud, move back to paper."

And COVID-19 has played its part with the trend. "After the first lockdown, more people had to work from home, so there was a high demand for a secure and capable system that could be accessed remotely by multiple employees," Garrett says. "And that's what the cloud offers."

Breaking the glass ceiling



Aly accepts her Jirsch Sutherland-sponsored Partner of the Year (Boutique Firm) award for 2021

Garrett's decision to specialise in cloud computing has been integral to not only getting clients to move across to it, but to her firm's success in general. At the recent Australian Accounting Awards, she took home Partner of the Year (Boutique Firm), which was sponsored by Jirsch Sutherland, and the Accountants Daily Excellence Award, while her firm was awarded the Boutique Firm of the Year (less than 20 employees).

"Winning these awards is about building our credibility, our community and being a leader in that space – they are an opportunity to be recognised for our ideas. It's also a great time for reflection, to look at what we've achieved. And it's nice to get some recognition along the way," she says.

Since starting the firm, Garrett has won nine awards including two Women in Finance Awards and in 2019 was one of Practice Ignition's Top 50 Women in Accounting. "More women are stepping into senior roles and owning their own businesses," she says. "While there's a shift in gender inequality, there's still more work needs to be done."

A believer in community over competition, Garrett often shares her work and family life on her social-media platforms. "When we set up All In Advisory, we wanted to build a community," Garrett says. "COVID helped to break down some of the barriers around sharing as more people were working from home. This meant your clients and team got to know more about you, including meeting everyone's children and pets. People are now more comfortable with breaking the divide between work and home."

Rising to the challenge

When the pandemic hit, Garrett also learnt how resilient and resourceful her clients are. “They built new revenue streams; some went online,” she says. “Our hospitality clients turned to offering takeaways if they hadn’t before. Some of them pivoted overnight. I’m super proud of them and they’re seeing the benefits now.

“Our clients also learnt that accountants are more than just number crunchers. They are consultants who can work with them to help solve many business issues. With COVID, we had to digest legislation, quickly get it out to clients, and help get their cash flow back on track. Like Jamie Beresford, Founder of Practice Protect and Fresh Method says, “Accountants are like financial doctors and COVID-19 is like all your patients are sick at once.”

You can listen to Aly Garret’s podcast Aly & Andrew’s All Aussie Accounting Adventures, which she presents with Andrew Van De Beek of Illumin8 accounting at accountingadventures.com.au.