

Outsourcing for business

Look outside the box for tech advice

Companies use 17 Ways' Virtual CIO service for the expert tech advice they need to grow or overcome "pain points", writes **Nalita Ferraz**.

When Tim Mallyon and John Tufts started 17 Ways, their boutique IT business, 18 months ago they needed complex legal contracts drawn up. However, because they had no need for a full-time in-house lawyer, they outsourced.

This got them thinking about the gap in their own industry for independent, senior technology advisers, and led them to create 17 Ways' Virtual CIO service, which provides chief information officers for small to medium businesses.

"There are a lot of organisations out there that are not necessarily of the size where they would need a full-time CIO," Mallyon says.

"Or they've grown quite quickly and they need technology advice, whether it be on strategy or to deal with pain points. What we do is we go in, we review what they're doing and make recommendations. We're not managing their day-to-day technology from an engineering perspective. We are, however, giving that high-level advice they need."

Mallyon and Tufts, along with former business partner Mark Guthrie, worked together at Macquarie Bank for 17 years, managing its multi-million dollar global technologies. Each has been in the IT industry for more than 20 years, and their experiences shaped their start-up.

"In my previous role as a customer I found that many of our technology vendors didn't really care



Providing the high-level technology advice businesses need: **Tim Mallyon, left, and John Tufts, of 17 Ways.**

about what we were trying to do," Mallyon says.

"All they were interested in was dropping a box and walking away, so this gap in the market was something we wanted to change."

17 Ways has a broad range of clients "looking to leverage the experience we had from that time we spent at Macquarie Bank".

Macquarie Bank is now one of 17 Ways' clients, as are smaller organisations and government departments. Most of the businesses are well-established and engage 17 Ways when their technology struggles to keep up with growing business demands.

This was the case with one of Australia's leading real estate groups, which needed a serious investment in IT to maintain its rate of growth.

"They called us in and we helped them find the

right technology service provider that not only understood their strategic path but was also fully committed to it now and into the future," Mallyon says.

Risq Group, a Sydney-based international employment screening company, engaged 17 Ways when increased customer demands called for a greater focus on their technology. 17 Ways' Virtual CIO service allows the business to "scale it up and down" as required, without having to have a "full-time resource sitting on the books", says Risq Group CEO Nick Roberts.

"For us it's been good to have someone who looks and acts like an employee of our business and certainly is acting in our interests... [and who] is able to evaluate options, products, vendors in a way that would have been harder for us," he says.

Guthrie, who left 17 Ways to return to the corporate world, is working as a consultant for his former partners as the Virtual CIO to Risq Group. He says technology can be daunting for businesses that often "don't have the background to validate what their partners are telling them".

He adds: "They don't know whether the solution being proposed is a good technical solution, they don't know whether the costs being proposed are sensible costs. Just having someone who is independent, who's on your side [and] is separate from the vendor themselves, gives an extra level of comfort around what you're actually spending your money on and whether the solution is right for you or not."

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