

Pioneers of the cloud: Tim Hoopmann

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Abby Hempfling April 2017



Being an early adopter of cloud accounting hasn't always been an easy journey for Xero bookkeeping partner Cornerstone Group – but it's a decision the firm says they have never regretted.

With Xero hitting a new milestone of 1 million subscribers this week, it's easy for many of the converted to forget that the cloud is still a relatively new concept.

Reminiscing about this considerable change at the latest Xero Roadshow event was Founder of Cornerstone Group – and one of the early pioneers of the cloud – Tim Hoopmann. In the six years that Tim has attended the Xero Roadshow, the number of attendees has grown from 300 people to 8,000 plus.

The early days

Tim remembers how tough those early days were, before Xero was a well known brand.

“Being one of the early adopters of Xero came with a lot of challenges. In the early days, we had to beg and plead customers to switch to this brand and concept no one had ever heard of.”

Back in 2007, Cornerstone Group started out as a traditional desktop and paper-based manual bookkeeper business. However, Tim was always looking for something different to set them apart.

“I've watched the full transformation of the bookkeeping industry,” he says. “I found that with bookkeeping in its traditional desktop form, there was no differentiation. We just did what everyone else did.”

“When we started to heavily promote and market the business, we asked ourselves, ‘What's our point of difference?’. That's when this new way of working came along — a new platform that was all about streamlining and making our customers' lives easier,” Tim says.

“It set us apart and allowed us to run a better business.”

Making the transition

Cornerstone Group tackled this transition to the cloud by switching their own business onto the Xero platform first — before their clients. In doing this, it was much easier to talk to customers about Xero, and help them understand the benefits.

“We trialled everything that was suggested for our customers. We tried new add-ons and acted as the ‘testing ground’ for new products and features.”

“It helped us figure out what worked well. Then we were able to provide really strong recommendations to our customers out of our own experience.”

Growing on the cloud

Since this pivotal decision, the business has been completely cloud-based for a number of years.

“We are all about using the best cloud accounting software to make our customers’ lives easier. I’ve taken the business to the maximum we can in this space, and I can attest that it does work. It is successful.”

“I can run Xero on my iPad or iPhone sitting in Hawaii, on a beach, or anywhere. Someone said the other day they reconciled their invoices while walking up Machu Picchu,” he laughs.

Defining success

Part of this success has come down to figuring out what kinds of clients Tim wanted to attract — that is, likeminded clients who embrace the cloud as much as he and his colleagues do.

“The cloud is here and it’s real and it’s now,” says Tim. “There’s no reason to be manual, paper-based or clunky. Or to say, ‘I lost forms’ or ‘I can’t find something’.”

“It’s incredibly powerful and liberating. And as a business owner that’s what I want. And I can sell that to other business owners that also want that. But I’ve also learned the hard way that not all business owners want that.”

“Some people like to stay in their comfort zone. That’s fine. I just can’t help them. They are better off dealing with a bookkeeper who will help them in this manner.”

A community mindset

But for those clients who embrace Xero, Tim believes the bookkeepers and accountants within the Xero community are more connected and engaged than ever.

“Xero do a really great job of creating a community,” he says. “That didn’t exist before for bookkeepers or accountants — you start to feel you are a part of something.”

For more details about the survey, and for advice on tackling late payments, visit www.xero.com/au/cashflow-gap