



'Friendly culture': New Truman Hoyle recruit Andrew Seaton, right, with managing partner Shane Barber

Picture: Bob Finlayson

Boutique firms ride the legal services boom

SOME of the biggest winners in this legal services boom have been the boutique firms. Sydney firm Truman Hoyle has grown fast by specialising in the new economy industries of telecommunications, technology and media, and now a high-profile appointment shows it is intent on expanding its areas of expertise.

Andrew Seaton has joined Truman Hoyle as a partner to boost its corporate and commercial practice. Seaton was a founder and former managing partner at workplace, corporate and commercial specialist firm Australian Business Lawyers.

He says he was drawn to Truman Hoyle by glowing praise from its clients, the collegiate working environment and the firm's partnership model.

"From a culture point of view, I think Truman Hoyle leads the way," Seaton says.

"They have managed to evolve a culture that is truly friendly and collaborative, breaks down all the normal team barriers, and seems to provide a very harmonious environment."

Five years ago, managing partner Shane Barber joined Truman Hoyle with the idea of turning



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Chris Nicholson

the boutique firm into a communications, technology, media and intellectual property law specialist with a focus on the entire Asia-Pacific region.

It has proved to be a highly successful plan, with the firm growing from two partners and two lawyers to 11 partners and more than 30 lawyers.

That rapid growth does not show any signs of slowing, and Seaton is not the only new face at Truman Hoyle.

In recent weeks, former Australian Broadcasting Corporation counsel Megan Edwards has joined the firm's IP and media practice, and Mitchell Kelly has come on board from hi-tech giant Siemens, where he was a London-based corporate counsel. Barber says each of them met the profile of a Truman Hoyle lawyer.

"Part of our recruitment strategy has been to look at lawyers who have been trained in the big firms and who have made the

move in-house but are then looking to come back into the profession," Barber says.

"Those lawyers are very rounded in that they've had excellent training in the big firms, but they're very commercially astute, having spent a number of years in-house."

Barber, a former PricewaterhouseCoopers Legal partner, says the firm's media expertise, combined with the cost-effectiveness that Australian law firms enjoy, makes Truman Hoyle an attractive proposition for Asian businesses and the regional operations of global businesses.

The firm's clients include Expedia, the world's biggest online travel agency, and US-based technology consultants BearingPoint.

"It's grown very quickly but it's really being driven, especially in recent years, by client demand," Barber says.

"The firm now acts for a lot of technology, media and telecommunications companies across the Asia-Pacific region, and increasingly they're requiring us to staff up to meet the demands of their work."

Barber says that Seaton's cor-

porate and transactional skills will complement Truman Hoyle's existing new economy expertise and make it a one-stop shop for clients and expand its client base in more traditional industries.

The recent success of the firm has created its own challenges, says Seaton.

"For me the biggest challenge will be to see the corporate and transactional side of the practice grow," he says.

HWL Ebsworth has announced two new appointments to the partnership. Mining and energy specialist Gail Owen joins the firm's Melbourne commercial group from Gadens, and asset management and regulatory compliance specialist Wayne Jenvey joins the litigation group in Brisbane from Dibbs Abbott Stillman.

MARK Inston has been appointed a partner in the banking and finance practice at Melbourne firm Hall & Wilcox. Inston, who will lead the practice group, joins the firm from Freehills in Melbourne.