

## Risk video bites – Define what you do

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Things can go wrong if you spread yourself too thinly over a wide range of different work types. Working in areas where you have little or no experience increases the risk of an error. In addition, those files can also be very stressful and demand a disproportionate amount of your time and energy.

A good strategy to survive and flourish as a practitioner in the current legal environment is to define the work you will do and focus on being exceptional at that defined area of law. It is also sound claims prevention practice.

Start by writing down the work you will do. Think about your work areas carefully and define them in detail. Be specific so you have clarity and a clear focus. A general description such as 'conveyancing' is too wide and does not clarify if you accept work in areas such as interstate property, farms, water, superannuation borrowing and property taxation issues.

You should also document the work you do not do so you have a clear pre-determined position on which work to decline. It can be difficult to reject work, particularly if you have acted for that client before or you are already doing other work for them. If you have articulated that you do not act in a certain area of law you have a clear mandate to say 'no'. Dabbling in work outside your knowledge and expertise is dangerous so saying 'no' to this work is an important risk management strategy.

There are benefits of practicing in defined areas of work.

- Concentrate your study and learn all there is to know in your defined area of work. You can't learn all the law in all areas of practice but you can learn all the law in one or two areas.
- You can develop systems such as checklists, workflows and precedents to efficiently and safely do the work. A focus on defined work helps you justify the time and effort to build and maintain these systems. It also makes business sense to build and maintain a system for work you will use over and over again.

- In addition to high level legal advice, you can add high quality customer service because you learn the touch points, issues and stresses that clients experience from regularly doing that work.
- You will also be able to provide clients with proactive advice instead of being reactionary to issues that arise.
- You will be able to give more accurate cost and time estimates, and be better equipped to discharge your cost disclosure obligations.
- You can develop a network of support services and other professionals, such as barristers, accountants and other experts, required for the work you do.
- You can establish a specific marketing plan for the work and clients you want.
- Working in a defined area of law you know well with the support of good systems gives you more control. It is certainly less stressful than the responsibility of doing work outside your knowledge and experience.

In short, there are many benefits of only taking work in narrow and clearly defined areas of practice. Define the work you do carefully and focus on it. Say 'no' to all work outside your defined areas. Take control of your work by controlling your work intake.

Thank you for listening.