

FRANCE FAMILY FUNERALS

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Ian Cowling, General Manager

THE CLIENT

France Family Funerals (FFF) began in 1882 in Stockton as Jonah Bevan Funerals, making it the oldest continually operating funeral firm in the Newcastle area, and one of the oldest in NSW. Today, from its three branches and head office, the business serves families from all areas of Newcastle and the Hunter, with the focus still on providing care and professionalism to every family.

Uncommonly in the funeral industry, FFF has embraced the digital age and advances in technology; for instance, all its accounting and CRM software is cloud-hosted. It designs and delivers Life Tribute Photo Presentations from the cloud, and was the first funeral company in Australia to install OneRoom webcasting equipment in its chapels, bringing families globally into the “one room”. Its HeavenAddress online memorial pages have a high engagement rate with families.



THE CHALLENGE

The funeral industry is still heavily reliant on paper-based documents, with doctors, government departments, cemeteries and crematoria issuing hard-copy Medical Cause of Death, Cremation, Certified Death and Right of Burial Certificates.

As well as filling up two rooms in its head office, the company stored more than 50 large archive boxes of documents at an off-site storage facility, costing \$550 a month. Box numbers increased every year because documents need to be held for an indefinite time.

The need to keep all this highly personal and confidential information securely and accurately is paramount in every facet of the company’s operations, with staff working to strict procedures on responsible document handling. This resulted in an average of eight hours a week of filing and archiving; however, each time a file was required at another location, it took an average of 45 minutes to go to the off-site storage facility, find the lever-arch folder, then the file, then scan, email and fax it to other locations. This cost an average of \$400 a week in wages.

THE SOLUTION

FFF’s main aim was to improve efficiency and retain strict confidentiality. It wanted to remove the need for storage as much as possible and allow fast access to archives.

Viatek approached FFF offering a solution to improve its document workflow. Working through its needs and new ways FFF could use its data, the most efficient solution for the funeral home was to digitise its vast store of client records using Viatek’s Scan Bureau. Digitised documents would be stored in, and accessed via, the cloud.

FFF trialled the system with an initial batch of documents. After the first delivery became available and staff were confident all information had been captured, and the information was secure, they continued digitising the rest of the store. The certainty of knowing the digital documents were accurate allowed FFF to feel comfortable signing an authority for the original documents to be securely destroyed.

To keep digitising up to date and reduce current hard-copy stored files, FFF sends Viatek archive boxes of documents for scanning every six months.

THE RESULT

The faster, easier document handling has improved workflow, with only one entry point for file search and retrieval, greatly improving efficiency and the time spent.

Staff from any of FFF's three branches and head office - or working remotely - can access the high-quality documents on any device, anywhere, with search results returned in seconds. This has saved 45 minutes of work for each file. Not only has this removed wage costs of an average \$400 a week, but it's also meant staff are available for all other duties.



With the off-site storage facility no longer needed, the business is saving an additional \$550 a month. The two head office rooms that previously housed documents on-site are now also available for other uses.

FFF's GM, Ian Cowling says,

“Our business is now more efficient with Viatek scanning new hard copy documents every six months. We use our multifunction printers almost constantly, so with Viatek doing our scanning, our machines are free for our use. To commit an employee to scan and file documents is a resource I can - and now do - use elsewhere.”



France
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Viatek is the only Newcastle-area technology company to offer a scan bureau. While many funeral companies continue to allocate resources to scanning and storing documents, with Viatek's solution, France Family Funerals have again embraced change, and us, and our clients, are reaping the benefits.

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