

# practiceprofile

MINT FINANCIAL PLANNING

## QUALITY NOT QUANTITY

Written by Samantha Hodge

**F**ROM THE OUTSET, MINT Financial Planning founder Damian Galle has been committed to building a practice that gives clients the high-quality professional advice they are entitled to.

To ensure the company maintains a high level of service and advice, Galle decided to limit the number of clients per adviser to ensure all clients receive quality proactive advice and the opportunity to participate in new and limited offerings, such as share floats and alternative investments. "We do not advertise for business and have never purchased a book of clients," Galle tells *ifa*.

"In fact, we have sold a large number of non-core clients that we have obtained through corporate super accounts we manage for some clients' businesses."

His plans to grow the business centre on bringing new advisers on board, rather than simply adopting more clients.

Within the next five years, he plans to build the firm to reach its maximum level of clients, as mandated, he says.

"[We want to] have a third financial planner join Mint Financial. Or better still, see our paraplanner grow into this role," he says.

When building the business in 2004, Galle drew on experience from his two previous roles at a Godfrey Pembroke practice and Vector Financial Services.

He explains that his experience at financial services companies that described themselves as advice-based businesses rather than sales-driven businesses prompted him to transfer the same practice definition to his own company.

"When building Mint Financial Planning we focused on building an advice-based business, taking the opportunity to service clients that were looking for tax and cost-effective ongoing proactive advice," he says.

Mint Financial's five-strong team has also adopted strict business rules to ensure all aspects of the business have the client as the

primary focus, he says.

Unless necessary, the company does not recommend platforms, and advice fees are fee-for-service and tax effective if possible, he says.

Instead the business provides its clients with a tailored reporting and administration service for investment portfolios, which "allows clients to avoid expensive administration platforms", he says.

"[These] rules have allowed Mint Financial Planning to continue growing through client referrals in all market conditions," he says.

While Galle remains passionate about his role in the industry and expects to continue in the business, he has concerns about how some practices offer advice to clients.

"I like the dynamic financial adviser firms that add real value to clients through their initial strategy and ongoing proactive advice," he says.

"[But] unfortunately in the financial planning industry many clients are paying high fees and are not receiving the quality service or advice that they are entitled to.

"This is usually due to the large number of clients that their advisers are trying to service, and/or the adviser's sales rather than advice focus."

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The 'comfort zone' of trail commissions, friendships rather than advice, and the old 'all business is good business' theory combine to delude advisers into thinking there is safety in large client bases, he says.

But he suggests there is potential to improve these types of practices.

"Removal of trail commissions and overrides on funds under management is a step in the right direction. Also, I believe that the opt-in legislation will force advisers to provide ongoing advice to justify their fees," he says. «



Damian

### snapshot

#### COMPANY

Mint Financial Planning

#### DEALER GROUP

AFS

#### LOCATION

Docklands, Melbourne

#### TOTAL FUNDS UNDER

ADVICE about \$55 million

#### PLATFORMS

none

#### SOFTWARE

Xplan

#### RESEARCH

Lonsec

#### STAFF

1 paraplanner, 1 admin

#### NUMBER OF ADVISERS

2

#### NUMBER OF CLIENTS

about 100