ASTUTE BUSINESS PARTNERS

The Practice Readiness Guide

How AU/NZ Financial Planning Practices Build Offshore Delivery That Actually Works

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10,000+	30+	60%
Advice docs delivered	Practices served AU/NZ	Average cost saving

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Why I wrote this guide

Over the past five years, I've worked with more than 30 financial planning practices across Australia and New Zealand. I've seen offshore engagements that transformed businesses overnight, and I've seen engagements that collapsed within weeks, leaving practice owners frustrated, out of pocket, and convinced that offshore staffing simply doesn't work.

Here's what I know after 10,000+ advice documents delivered: the difference between success and failure almost never comes down to the quality of the offshore team. It comes down to whether the practice was ready.

Offshore doesn't fail financial planning practices. It reveals them.

When an offshore engagement struggles, the real problem is usually already there: undocumented processes, unclear handoffs, and advisers spending 80% of their time on non-advice work. Offshore simply makes the gaps impossible to ignore.

This guide is for practice owners thinking about offshore staffing and for those who have tried it and didn't get the results they expected. It's a practical, honest account of what works, what doesn't, and what you need to have in place before bringing in any offshore resource.

Read it. Share it with your team. If you want a direct conversation about your practice's readiness, reach out. No pitch deck required.

Ushan Nadarajah

Managing Director, Astute Business Partners

WHAT'S INSIDE

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01 Why Most Offshore Engagements Fail

Ask any practice owner who has had a poor offshore experience, and you'll hear the same explanations: "the quality wasn't there," "the communication was difficult," "the time zone made it impossible." These are the reasons that get talked about. They're rarely the real reason.

After working across 30+ practices, the pattern is consistent. The offshore team is almost never the variable. The practice is.

The three real reasons offshore fails

1

The practice wasn't process-ready

Offshore staff can only follow documented processes. If your SOA workflow, client handoffs, and compliance procedures live in someone's head or are inconsistent across the team, an offshore hire amplifies that chaos. They can't fix what isn't documented. Neither can a local hire, for that matter.

2

The wrong expectations were set from the start

Offshore staffing is not a plug-and-play solution. The practices that succeed treat it as an operational transformation, investing time in onboarding, workflow design, and ongoing feedback. The ones that fail treat it like ordering a product online and expecting it to just work.

3

The problem was workflow, not headcount

Some practices go offshore because they're overwhelmed. But overwhelm is often a symptom of process breakdown, not headcount shortage. Adding an offshore resource to a broken workflow gives you a more expensive broken workflow.

The offshore team isn't the variable. Your operational readiness is.

02 The 5 Operational Gaps You Must Fix First

Before any offshore resource is deployed, these five gaps need to be addressed. They're not unique to offshore; they affect every hire you make. But offshore makes it impossible to paper them over.

01

Undocumented SOA process

Everyone on your team knows how to prepare a Statement of Advice. Nobody has written it down. The moment a team member leaves, or you bring someone new in, the knowledge walks out the door. Document your SOA process before you hire anyone, local or offshore.

02

No clear client handoff protocol

Who does what between the adviser and the support team? What does 'ready to paraplanning' look like? If your team has to ask these questions daily, you don't have a process; you have a habit. Habits don't transfer offshore.

03

Compliance tasks owned by the wrong person

High-cost adviser time spent on low-cost admin work is where most practices bleed money quietly. Before going offshore, map every task your adviser is doing. Anything that doesn't require their specific expertise or client relationship is an offshore candidate, but only once it's documented.

04

No time audit

You can't offshore what you haven't measured. Run a simple time audit across your team for one week. Where is time actually going? The results are almost always surprising, and they tell you exactly where offshore capacity will have the most impact.

05

Onboarding that takes longer than three weeks

If it takes more than three weeks to bring a new team member up to speed, your processes aren't processes; they're tribal knowledge. Could a capable new hire follow your workflows from day one without asking 20 questions a day? If not, that's your first project. Not the offshore hire.

03 A Real Practice Transformation — The Numbers

REAL CLIENT OUTCOME

From 6% margin to 30%.

Same adviser. Same clients.

A boutique financial planning practice. One principal adviser, one client service officer, 60 clients. The adviser was working 50-hour weeks, 80% of his time on research, SOA writing, and implementation. The business was running but not growing.

Before ABP

6%	50 hrs	80%	$80K+
Profit margin	Working week	Time on non-advice	Adviser salary

Phase 01 — Part-time paraplanner (20 hrs/week)

ABP deployed a dedicated part-time paraplanner. The adviser redirected freed time toward business development and improving the client value proposition.

+50%	15%	$120K
Revenue growth in 6 months	Profit margin (up from 6%)	Adviser salary (up from $80K)

Phase 02 — Full-time administration officer

ABP deployed a full-time admin officer. The adviser now outsources 90% of the administration work, and another 25% of the time is recovered.

30%	90%	$160K+
Profit margin (up from 15%)	Admin outsourced	Adviser salary (up from $120K)

The adviser didn't change. The clients didn't change. The business model changed and the numbers followed.

04 How to Choose the Right Offshore Partner

Not all offshore providers are built the same. The right choice depends on what your practice actually needs. Here's what to evaluate:

01 Consulting approach, not just placement

The best offshore partners ask hard questions before they place anyone. They want to understand your workflows, your compliance requirements, and your handoff process. If a provider's first question is 'how many staff do you need?' rather than 'tell me how your practice operates,' that's a red flag.

02 ISO 27001 certification

Your clients' financial data is sensitive. AFSL obligations are real. Any offshore partner handling SOAs, client files, or personal financial information should hold ISO 27001 certification not as a box-tick, but as evidence of a formal, audited information security management system.

03 AU/NZ financial services experience

Paraplanning in Australia and New Zealand is specific. AFSL compliance, SOA requirements, FSC standards, your offshore partner needs to understand this landscape, not learn it at your expense.

04 Transparent onboarding process

A good offshore partner has a structured onboarding process, not just 'here's your new team member, good luck.' They should explain exactly how they transition your workflows, how long it takes, and what success looks like in the first 90 days.

05 Track record you can verify

Ask for client references. Ask to speak with current clients. Any reputable offshore provider will facilitate this without hesitation. Testimonials on a website are a starting point direct conversations are the real due diligence.

05 What Good Offshore Delivery Looks Like

Practices that get offshore right treat it as an operational model, not a staffing solution. Here's what that looks like in practice.

Labour-led vs consulting-led offshore

Labour-led offshore	Consulting-led offshore
Competes on price	Competes on outcomes
CV first, questions later	Operational diagnosis first
You manage the integration	The partner manages the integration
Fails when processes are unclear	Identifies gaps before deployment

The first 90 days

Days 1–14

Operational review

Before anyone is deployed, your offshore partner works with you to map key workflows, identify documentation gaps, and agree on what 'ready to deploy' looks like for your practice.

Days 15–30

Onboarding and shadowing

Your offshore team member works alongside your existing team, learning the practice, the clients, and the communication style. This is an investment, not a delay. What happens here determines the next two years.

Days 31–60

Supervised delivery

The offshore team member begins taking on tasks with quality review at each stage. Feedback loops are tight, expectations are clear.

Days 61–90

Full productivity

With the right onboarding in place, most offshore team members reach full productivity by day 90. This is when the real capacity dividend shows up in turnaround times, client load, and the principal's time.

06 Your Practice Readiness Checklist

Use this checklist before engaging any offshore provider. If you can answer yes to all 10, you're operationally ready. If not, the gaps you find are your first priority.

PROCESS

☐	Your advice process is fully documented step by step, not just outlined
☐	Your client handoff protocol is written down, and every team member follows the same process
☐	You have a clear definition of what 'ready to paraplanning' looks like for each client file

WORKFLOW

☐	You have completed a time audit in the last 3 months, and you know where time actually goes
☐	Your adviser spends less than 30% of their time on non-advice tasks
☐	A capable new hire could follow your workflows from day one without daily guidance

OPERATIONS

☐	You have documented quality standards for advice documents what 'done' looks like
☐	Your compliance review process is clearly defined and doesn't depend on one person
☐	You have onboarded at least one new team member in the last 2 years in under 3 weeks

READINESS

☐	You have clear KPIs you would use to measure an offshore team member's performance

Score 7 or fewer?

The gaps you found aren't reasons to delay offshore. They're your roadmap. Addressing them will make every hire local or offshore more effective. If you want help working through them, that's exactly what ABP does before any deployment.

READY TO TALK?

Let's have a direct conversation.

No pitch deck. No brochure. Just an honest conversation about your practice and what offshore delivery could look like for you.

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