



Talking practice efficiency with MJ Kane & Co

“We went completely digital
in three months”

Get started with Xero



Introduction: MJ Kane & Co



MJ Kane
Associate Director
MJ Kane & Co

With 20 years in the business, a shelf full of awards and over 8000 clients in more than 30 countries, Northern Ireland's [MJ Kane & Co](#) is still growing — and technology is driving their success.

Originally founded by Michael Kane in Carrickfergus, the practice now has offices in Belfast and Liverpool, with Michael's son MJ serving as Director.

When MJ took over the day-to-day running of the practice, he wanted to position it as a forward-facing firm. "I took over a practice that was very manual," says MJ. "You'd walk into a room and there would be a pile of paper here, a pile of paper there, filing cabinets everywhere and envelopes all over the place. I sat down with the other partner, Jonathan, and we thought, how can we make this more efficient?"

They decided to pivot the firm to online accounting processes, though things didn't immediately go to plan. "The first software company we tried was a complete and utter disaster," says MJ. "It couldn't cope and just kept crashing. The criticism came to me for putting things in too quickly." But, knowing that the future of accounting was digital, MJ wasn't deterred. The firm decided to try again, this time with Xero's cloud accounting software. "Our Xero account manager Pamela Ward assured us Xero would work and it did," says MJ.

"We've never had an issue, it's never crashed. Then what attracted us in addition to that was all the integrations and how complete everything was. We weren't bouncing around different programmes and software."

Embracing digital

MJ Kane went all in on the switch to digital, moving everything over from physical servers to cloud-based software in the space of three months.

“There wasn’t a single piece of paper left,” says MJ.



Because of the size and speed of the change, as well as the problems with previous software, some staff were initially a little hesitant. *“The resistance at the start was there, so we sat everyone down and explained why we were doing it,”* says MJ. *“People had lots of questions, but we went through it all and they understood the vision. At the end of the day, they all wanted the same thing, which was for the company to succeed, better-paying jobs and more career satisfaction.”*



Work from anywhere, anytime

Xero is designed to be intuitive to use, and MJ Kane's staff got to grips with it easily. "It forces you to follow a logical order, so we were able to get people trained up very quickly," says MJ.

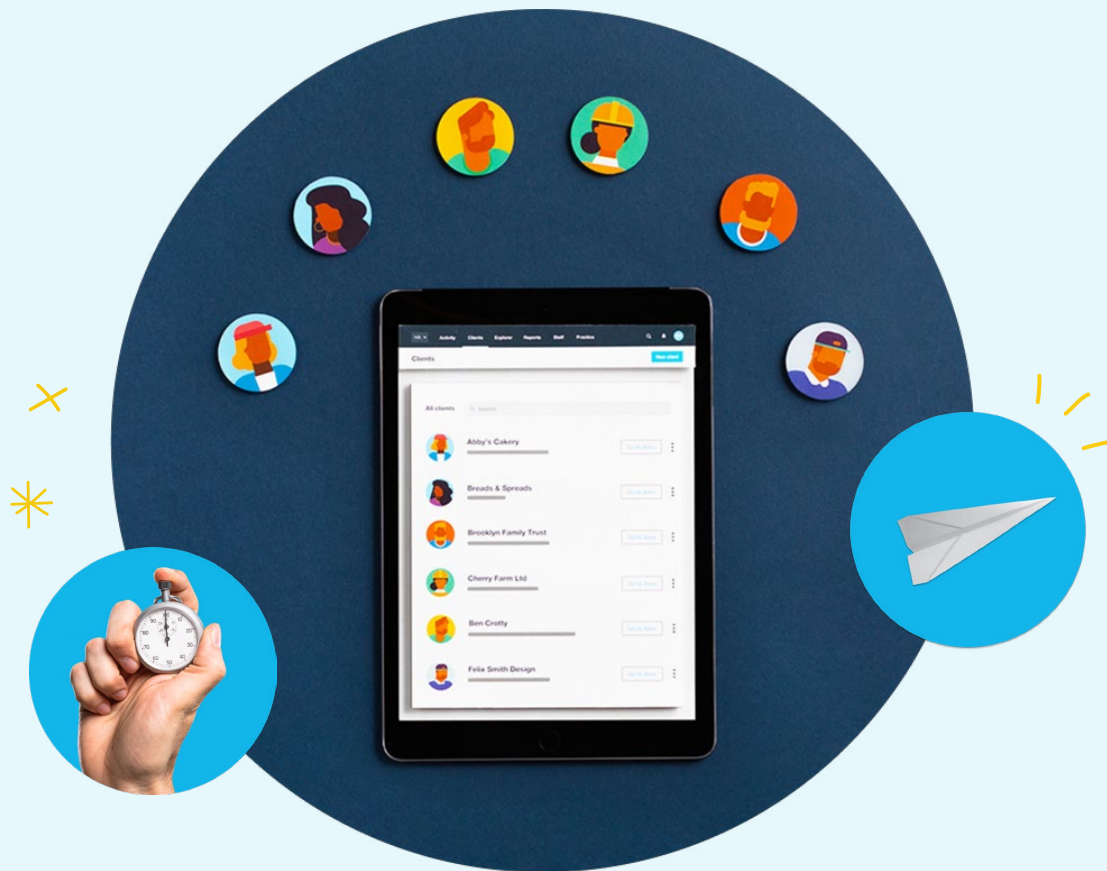
Xero automates admin and compliance tasks to improve efficiency. It's cloud-based, meaning staff can log in anytime, from anywhere, using any device. This makes remote working simple, enables better collaboration and means workloads can be shared more easily. MJ Kane also use [Xero Practice Manager](#) to assign work and allocate tasks, as well as to track and invoice time spent on jobs and create customised reports.

"Now everyone sees a huge benefit," says MJ. "Staff work from home and are only in the office two days a week. They get pay rises on an annual basis because we've been able to cut costs."

While much of the accountancy industry is grappling with a staffing crisis, MJ Kane has reaped the benefits of switching to digital accounting. "I don't struggle with finding talent or teaching staff," says MJ. "It's enabled us from a staff perspective to grow. Just 20% of our clients are based in Northern Ireland; the rest are in Ireland, elsewhere in the UK and around the world. By having that online presence, we can train someone in the Republic of Ireland or Bahrain on how to use the system and tap into that market."



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Taking the pain out of tax season

MJ Kane use the full Xero platform, using Xero for bookkeeping, tax, workpapers and practice management. [Xero Tax](#) — end-to-end tax and accounts production software — streamlines and speeds up their compliance work.

“In the digital age clients expect things done quickly,” says MJ. “We had to adapt and the only way to do that was to move to Xero Tax. There’s no point digitalising everything else and making it really efficient, then you get to the year end and clients only care about one thing: where’s my tax bill? We need to get that information to them as quickly as possible.”

“ We now save a stupid amount of hours and the staff love it.”

Xero Tax connects to bookkeeping data in Xero, simplifying the accounts production and tax filing process. “With systems we’ve used in the past you’re having to jump back into an Excel spreadsheet and it took 30-40 minutes to submit a set of accounts,” says MJ. “Now it’s done in 15 minutes and clients know they’re getting their accounts out the door a month from the year end.”

Xero also integrates with a huge variety of other software and apps to create a bespoke tech stack for your practice. “One thing that has helped us enormously as a practice is FYI,” says MK. FYI is a cloud document management engine that automates processes — including chasing documents from clients.

“I could not comprehend how much time people were spending just chasing before,” says MJ. “We were chasing and chasing, and then still submitting estimates because we were not getting the information on time. We needed a system that would do it, and FYI offered that. We now save a stupid amount of hours and the staff love it.

You don’t realise how many minutes you spend re-asking for VAT information until the system starts doing it for you and you open it up and it’s just all there.”

FYI integrates seamlessly with Xero, allowing MJ Kane to track time, record expenditure and regularly assess their pricing structure.





Add **value** for clients



It's not just staff who appreciate the improved efficiency, but clients too.

"They're really happy with the service and they refer people to us," says MJ. "We take on 600 clients a year." The practice can only grow at that speed thanks to the technology they've got in place. "Without leveraging all the different products and stacking them the way we do, we wouldn't be able to service the extra clients," says MJ. "We can do it with the same amount of staff because we are so efficient and because we also educate the client to use Xero."

Automation is transforming the industry, freeing up time that would previously be spent on mundane tasks like data entry. This allows practices such as MJ Kane to expand their advisory services and help their clients to grow their businesses.

“I think as accountants we all recognize that we can only charge so much for a set of accounts,” says MJ. “So the way we can grow our companies is through value-added services and asking clients, what else do you need? If you’re spending all your time chasing for VAT information you can’t offer to look at cash flow projections or help with mergers and acquisitions. That aspect has shot our turnover way up.”

His biggest advice to other practices thinking about making the switch to online accounting? *“Leverage the support system available,”* he says. *“I tried to do it myself originally and fell on my face. Now when I need something, I ask my Xero account manager and she sorts us out.”*

“Any initial hurdles were more than worth it”, he says. In the first year of using Xero, MJ Kane’s turnover increased by 33%, and they’ve continued to expand, including opening up a consultancy firm.

“It all comes back to how efficient you can make the practice. Because when you can clear up the inefficiencies, you can really start to add value.”





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innovative practice tools, thriving community,
and on hand accounting experts help increase
efficiency so you can do more**

