

The value of specialising

How building a specialised brand can help grow
boutique practices

Presented by: Keith James

SALA CPD 2026
10 October 2026



Three years at SALA, **one story**

2024

Leveraging data

Use a CRM to capture clean data, so you know which services sell, which marketing works and where clients drop off.

2025

Automation & AI

Use automations and AI to follow up faster, run intake consistently and free lawyers for legal work.

2026

Specialised brand

Today: why being known for something specific makes the data and the automation work harder for you.

THE AUDIENCE PULSE · SHOW OF HANDS

- 1** **Of your last ten new clients, did five or more come for the same type of matter?**
- 2** **Do you have a clear idea of your revenue by Practice area?**
- 3** **How many do first consultation for free?**

Presentation roadmap

1

Why specialise now

How clients find a lawyer, and why generalists struggle

2

How we specialized

Why we now charge more and take on more files

3

Efficiency with tools & AI

Data, product, team, tools and brand, step by step

PART 1

Why specialise now?

How clients actually find and choose a lawyer in 2026

A crowded market of small firms

16,793

private law practices across Australia
(Oct 2024)

78%

of them are sole practices or have
one principal (2024)

71%

of Victoria's 4,485 practices are sole
practices (2024)

?

The client's problem: when thousands of small firms all say "we do family, property, wills and crime", the client has no reason to pick one over another – except price.

Most clients don't see a **legal problem**



Only 1 in 5 Victorians

seek advice from legal services for their legal problems.

Not seeing it as legal = not searching terms we use

People search for their situation, not for an area of law.

What this means for your brand

Name the problem in the client's own words: "my ex won't let me see the kids", not "parenting orders".

A referral starts the journey. **Online finishes it.**

74%

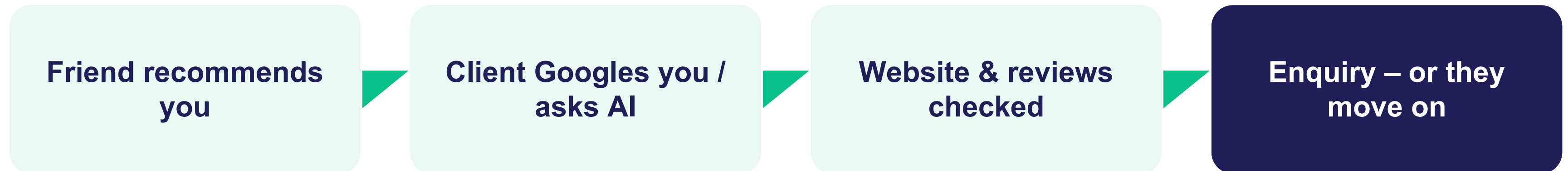
of legal clients research the firm online
AFTER getting a personal
recommendation

50%

of future clients have already asked AI
for legal help before contacting a
lawyer

> 1 in 2

say they won't choose a firm that
doesn't offer online chat



Specialising doesn't mean **doing less**

What changed as we specialised

\$1,308 → \$2,211

Average fee per lodged visa, up 69%

1 Charge more

Clients come to us as immigration specialists, so they are paying for expertise, not shopping on price.

13% → 47%

Share of lodgement revenue from employer-sponsored visas

2 More files

Every file follows the same process, so the same team can take on more of them.

OUR JOURNEY

As we specialised, more people booked consultations, even as we charged more for them.

Paid consultations each financial year



Consultation revenue: \$46,215 → \$102,200, more than double in two years.

Where we started: a general practice

THEN – 2021–22: 8 areas of law

- Immigration
- Conveyancing
- Family law & intervention orders
- Wills & probate
- Business & commercial
- Litigation & disputes (incl. VCAT)
- Debt recovery & caveats
- Criminal (traffic)

NOW – 2026 SO FAR: 2 CORE AREAS



From 8 areas of law to 2 – with Immigration at the center.

Every practice area is its own **small business**

1

Product building

How you deliver the work

- Problem identification
- Solution building
- Precedent and workflow development
- Training and scaling

2

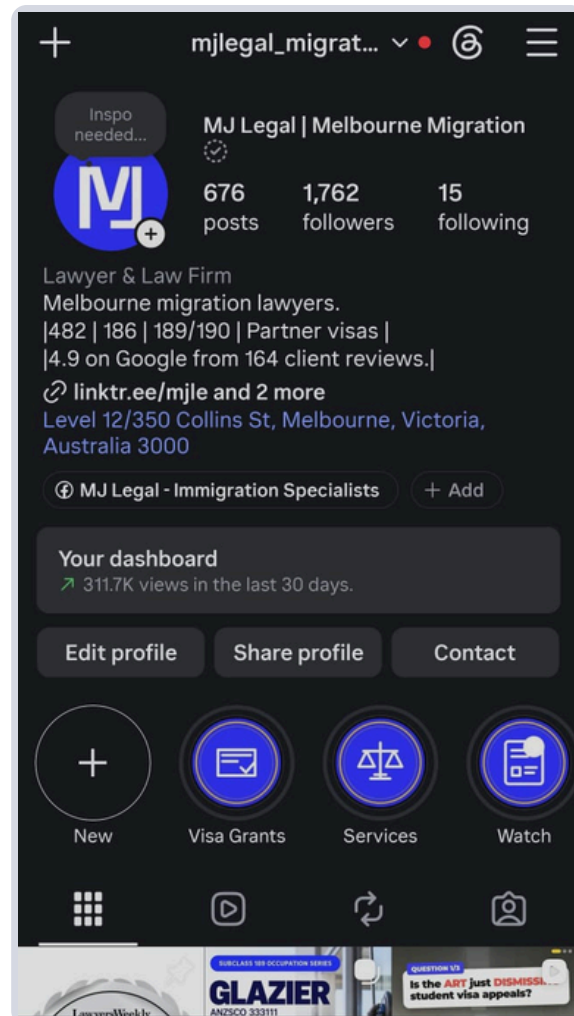
Marketing

How clients find and choose you

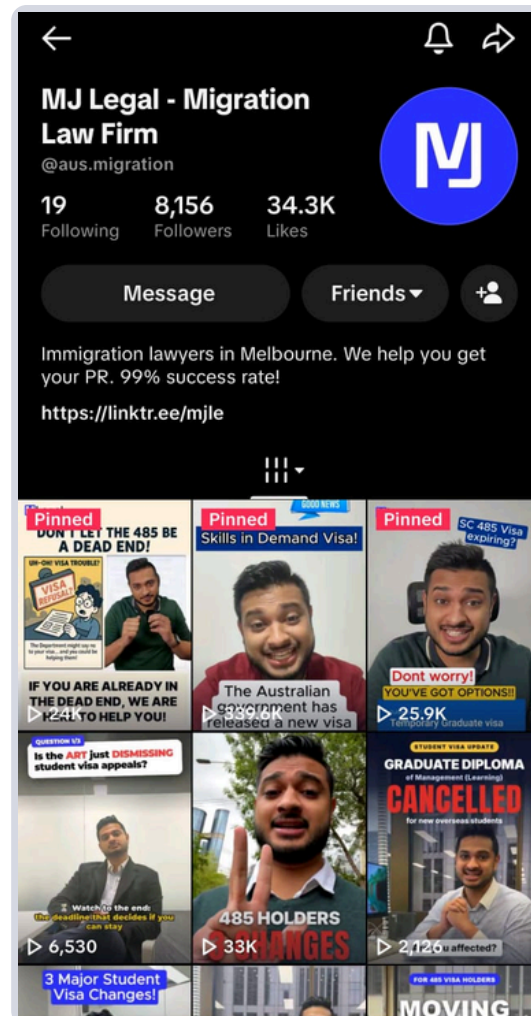
- Consistent message - solution orientated
- Channels for organic content
- Paid advertising - for rapid growth

Add a practice area and you build each of these from scratch.

A specialist brand **people follow**



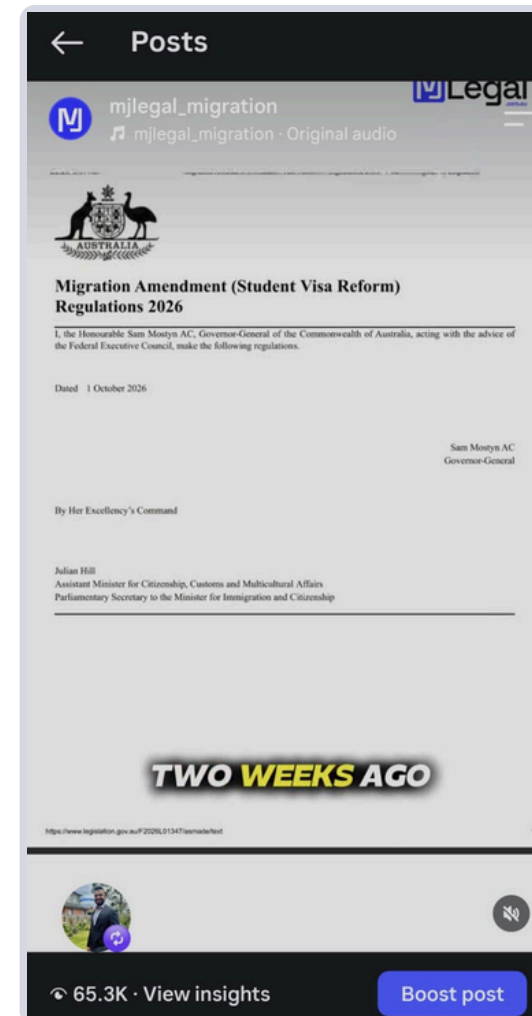
Instagram: 1,762 followers and 311,700 views in the last 30 days



TikTok: 8,156 followers and 34,300 likes



A video on changes for 485 visa holders: 24,000 views



A video on the new student visa law: 65,300 views

Our Instagram and TikTok pages talk about one thing only: Australian migration.

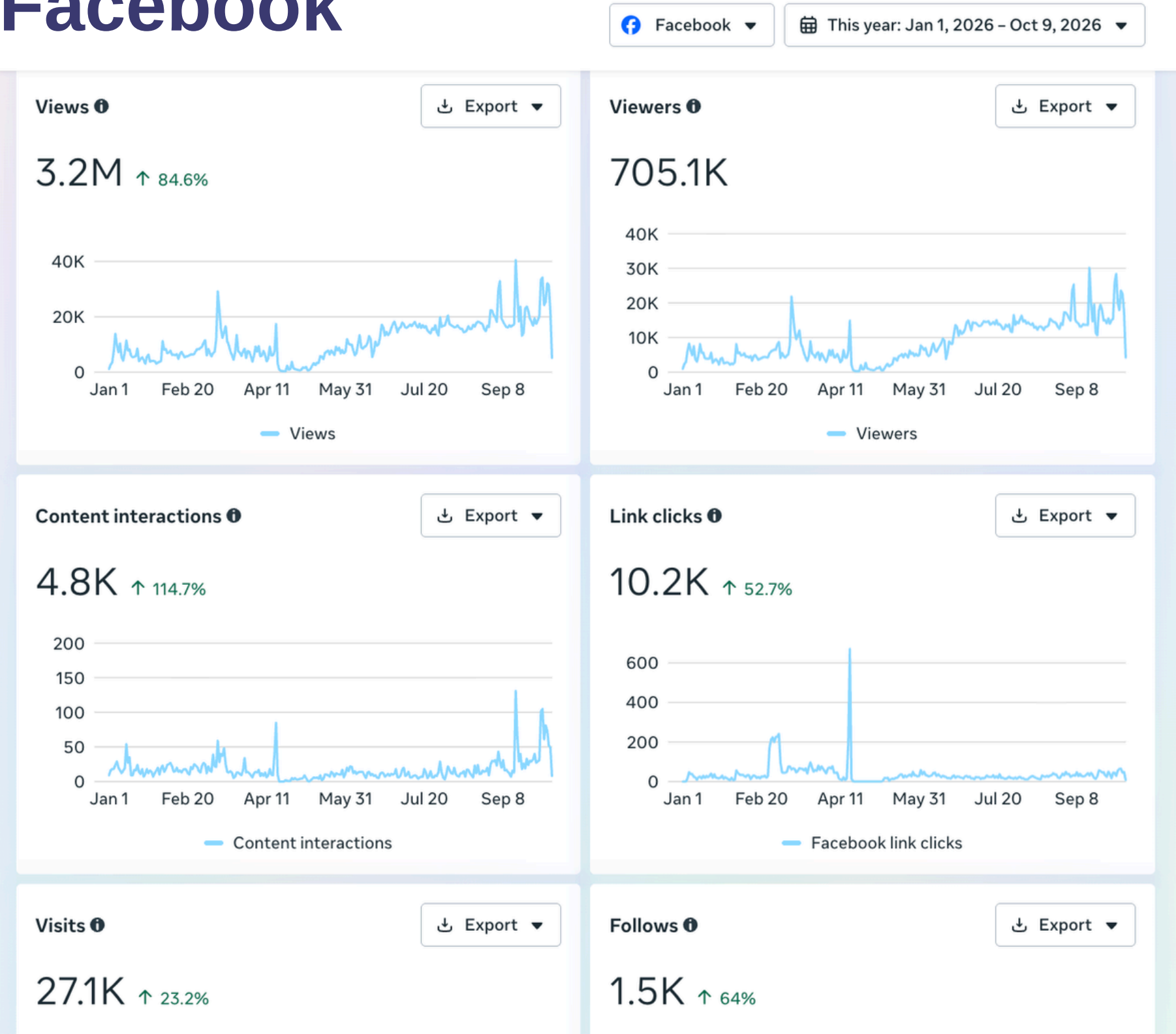
- Together they have almost 10,000 followers,
- Instagram posts were viewed more than 311,000 times in the last 30 days.

Post about one area repeatedly Your audience will recognize you for your expertise and will remember you.

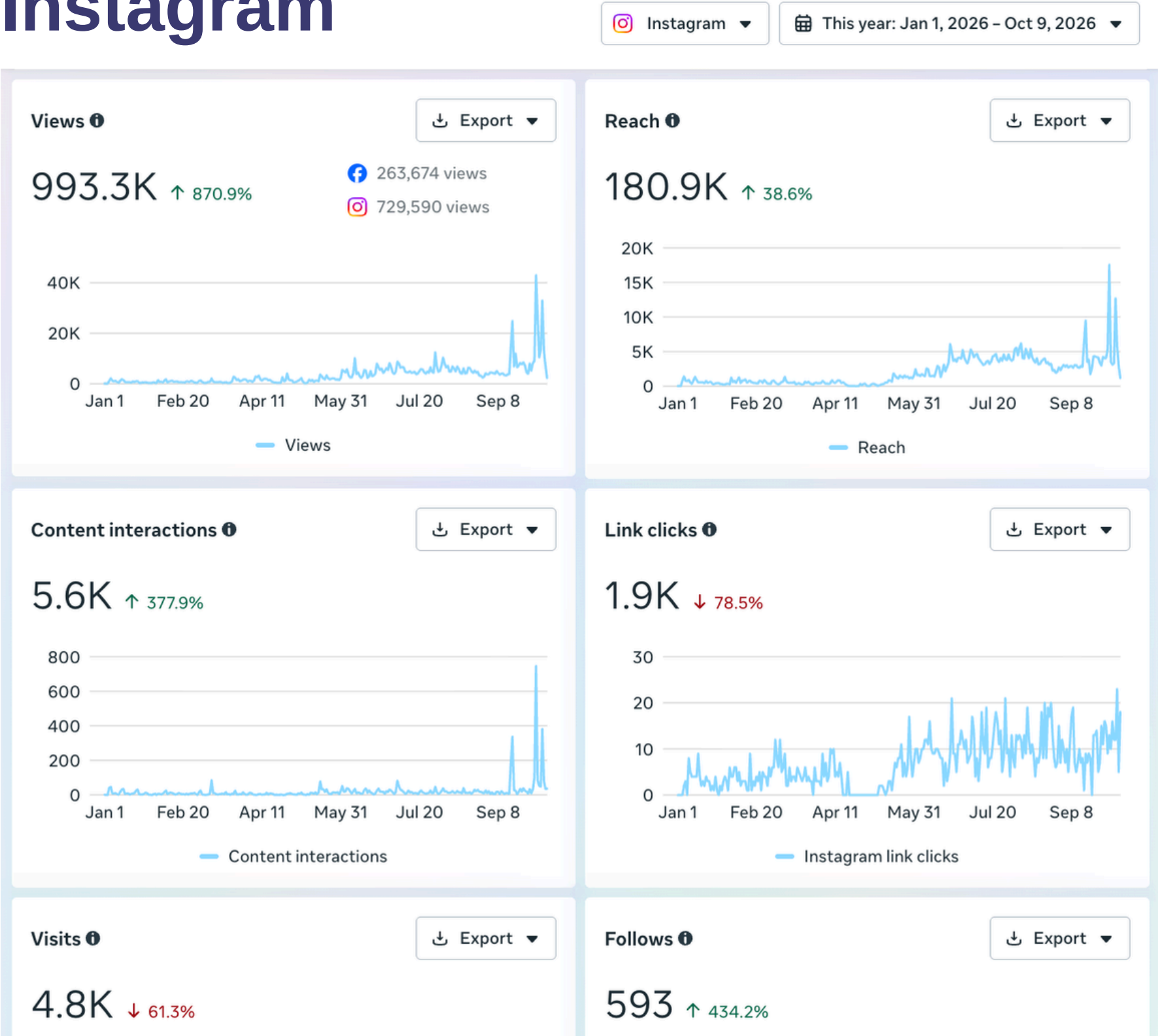
Our audience grew as our message got narrower

- In 2026 so far, our Facebook posts have been viewed 3.2 million times, up 85%, and our Instagram views have grown almost tenfold.
- We didn't post about more topics; we posted about one topic, Australian migration

Facebook



Instagram

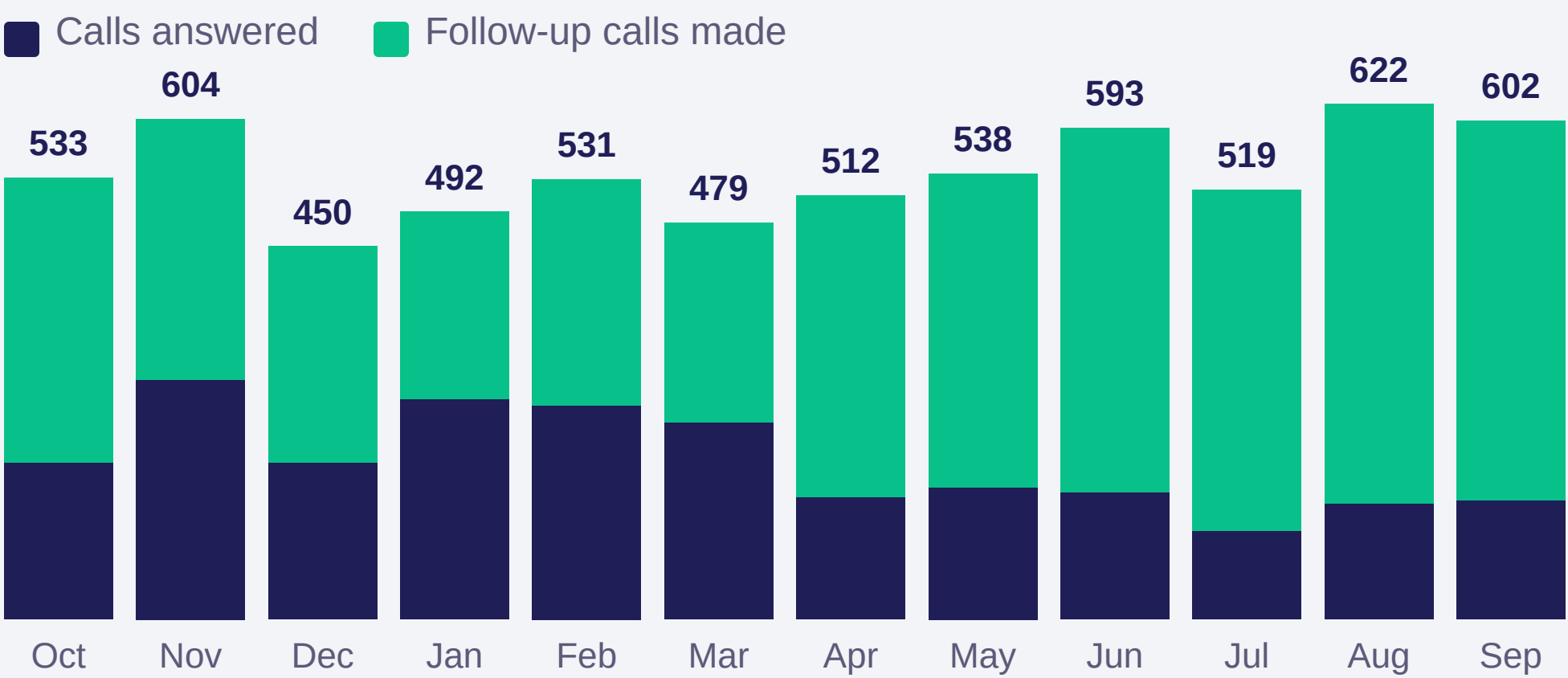


One sales specialist, 6,475 calls a year

Because our enquiries are all about migration, one dedicated person can answer them and follow them up.

Calls handled by our sales specialist

Each month, October 2025 → September 2026



1

About 25 a day

2,279 calls answered and 4,196 follow-up calls made across the year.

2

47%

of all the calls our office answers are picked up by our sales specialist.

3

29% more

follow-up calls across the firm than the year before

Specialising makes the work repeat, so one dedicated person can own it.

Source: Zoom Phone call logs, October 2024 – September 2026 (client service extension)

Marketing: six building blocks

1

Audience

Identifying exactly who you serve

2

Marketing Channels

Where your audience live

3

Content

Guides, videos and FAQs that answer it

4

Digital

Website, Google profile and social media

5

Advertising

Campaigns aimed at that one group

6

Lead generation

How an enquiry reaches you – and gets a fast reply

Each one depends on the audience – change the client or practice area, and all six change.

Same firm, three different clients

Conveyancing	Family law	Criminal
First-home buyer <i>"Should I sign this contract?"</i>	Recently separated parent <i>"What happens with the kids and the house?"</i>	Someone due in court <i>"What do I do at court?"</i>
WHERE THEY LOOK Property sites, brokers, agents	WHERE THEY LOOK Google, medical professionals' friends and family	WHERE THEY LOOK Google – urgently
WHAT THEY WANT FIRST Contract checked within a day	WHAT THEY WANT FIRST A calm, clear first plan	WHAT THEY WANT FIRST A call back today

The cost of being a generalist

x3

the work

Three sets of workflows, documents, compliance checks and staff training

÷3

the marketing

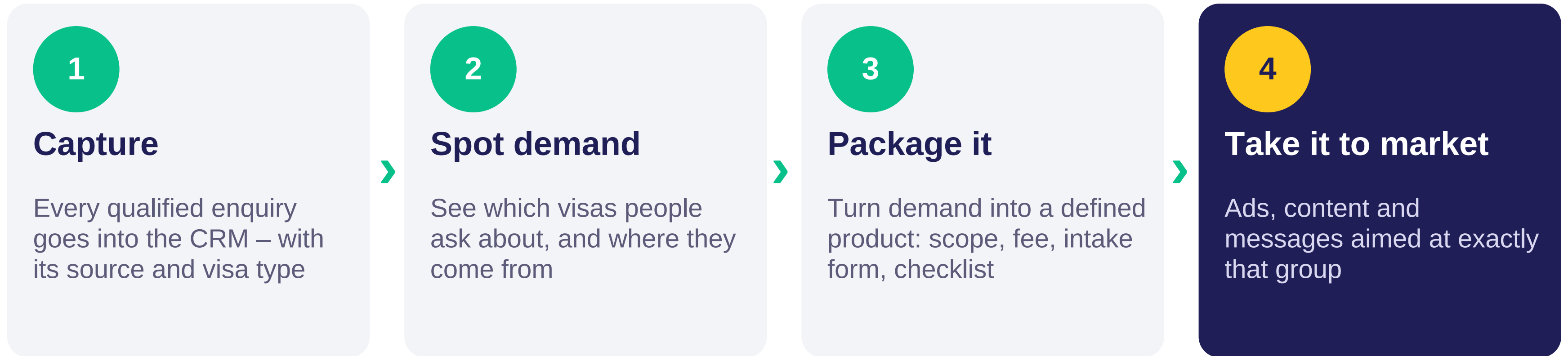
Three audiences, three campaigns – one budget, so none gets enough to work

Specialise: build it once, use it on every file, spend every dollar on one audience.

PART 2

How we specialized?

We let the data tell us **what to build**



Example

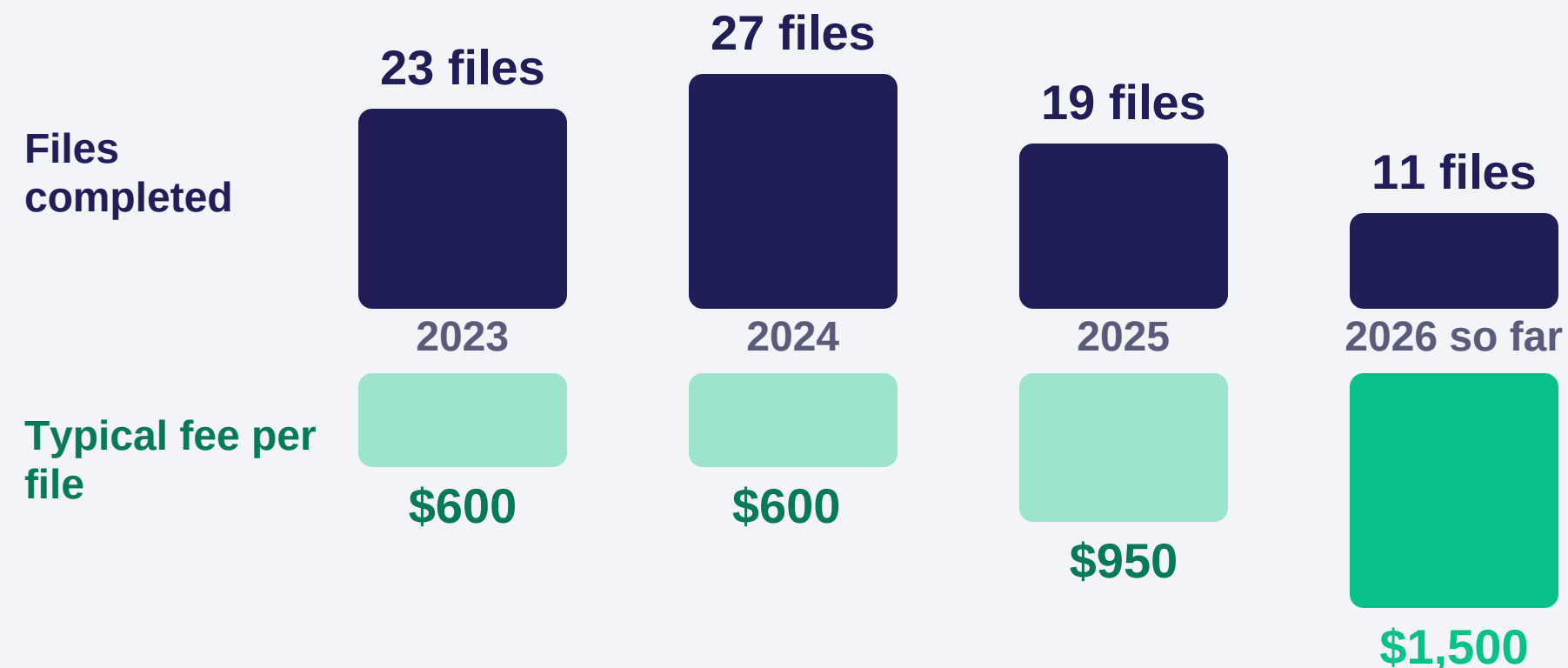
Employer sponsorship and partner visas each became a defined product – their own intake form, document checklist and ad campaign.

Volume isn't **value**

We raised our visitor visa fees -

- we made less money the more we did this service.

COMPLETED VISITOR VISA FILES AND TYPICAL FEE PER FILE



This year, 11 completed files have earned as much as 23 files did in all of 2023 – and 7 more are still in progress.

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

Think of an intervention order matter that brings in \$1,500 but keeps a lawyer at court for a whole day.

It feels like steady work, but it may be costing you money.

A simple test: is this service a loss leader or is it the end service itself.

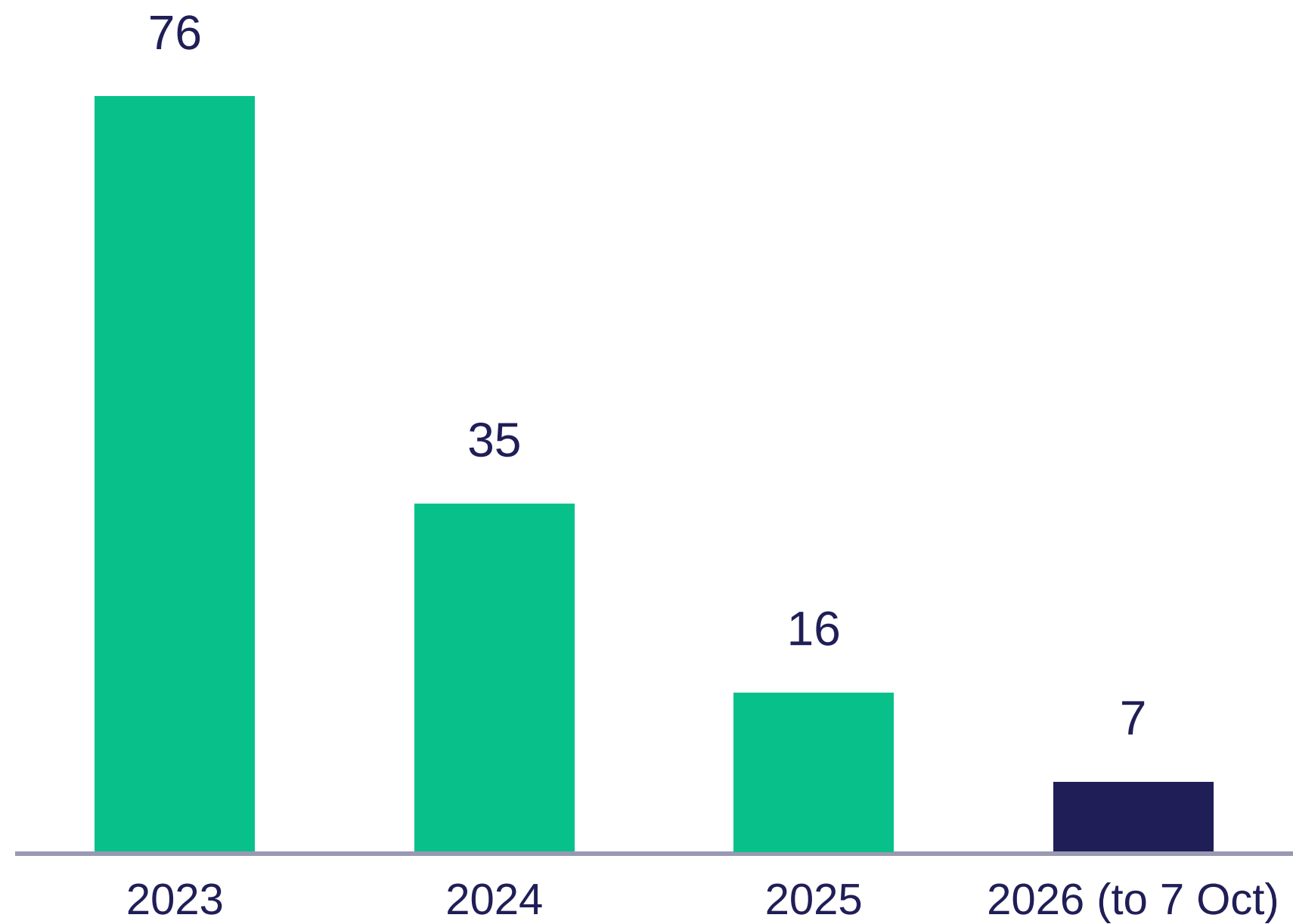
If the number is too low, consider

- Raising the price
- Bundling the service with a higher margin service
- Stop offering it - Ultimate maturity

Judge each service by its margin, not by how many enquiries it brings in.

Refine: remove what **doesn't fit**

New Non Immigration matters (–90% since 2023)



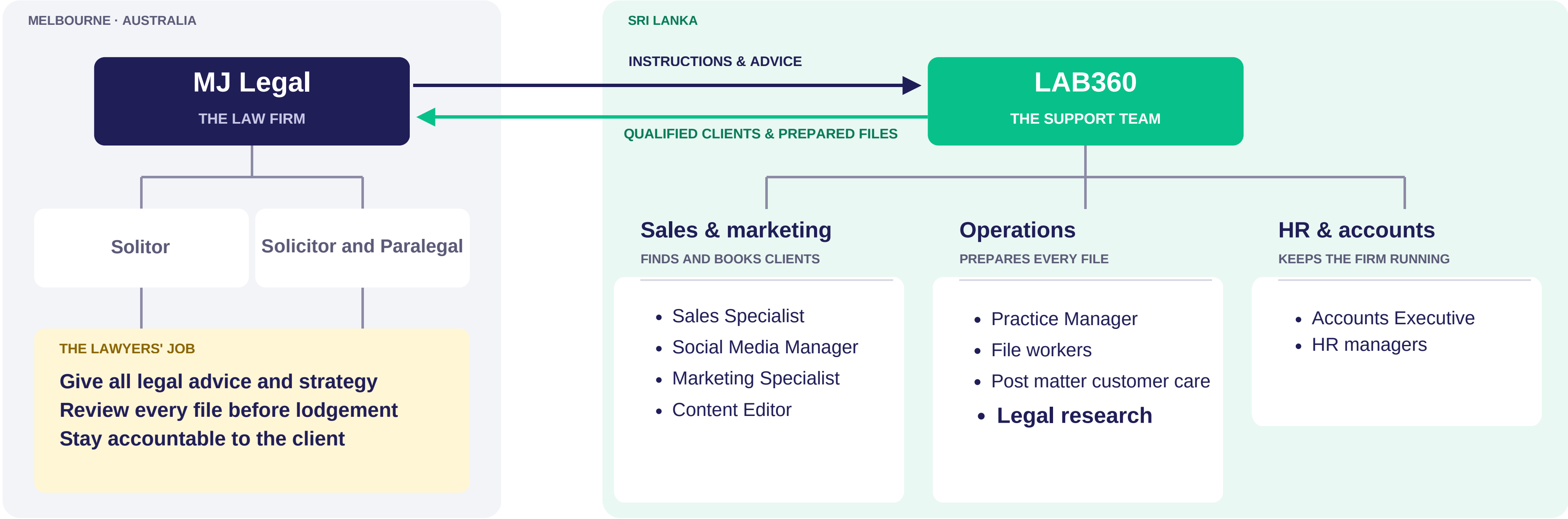
Services we stopped taking on

Litigation	10 matters	last: Jun 2023
Debt collection	14 matters	last: Aug 2024
Commercial disputes	20 matters	last: 2025

How we decide

- Margin: does it pay for the time it takes?
- Client: is this the client we want more of?
- Fit: can our processes and team run it at scale?

Specialising let us build dedicated teams



Specialising let us build **tools that scale**

1 WhatsApp Bot

- Knows what questions qualifies clients
- Books eligible clients for calls with team

2 Online intake form

- Deep client understanding before first meeting
- Consultations are solution orientated

3 CaseFlow, our own tool

- Volume allows us to build bespoke tools

4 Intake flow

- We have follow up automations after first inquiry
- Defined cost metrix for our services

5 Social media

- Followed by high intent audience
- Watch us for breaking news
- 382 videos – what clients ask becomes what we post

6 Every lead tracked

Each enquiry tagged with the ad or channel it came from

You can only automate work that repeats. Specialising makes work repeat.

The intake form



Before your consultation

-  1. About you & your visa
-  2. Skills, work & English
-  3. Plans & anything else

• First name

Last name

• Email address

Phone number

Date of birth

Select Date

Country you live in

Australia × ▼

State or territory

Select... ▼

Address (Primary) – Street

Address (Primary) – Zipcode

• Are you the main visa applicant, or the partner / dependant of the main applicant?

Select... ▼

• What is your relationship status?

Select... ▼

• Do you have dependent children?

Select... ▼

Upload your passport (photo page)

Drop files here, or click to select files to upload.

• What is your date of birth?

Pre - consult Prep

MJ LEGAL
Skilled Migration — Client Intake

Please complete the details below and return to keith@mjlegal.com.au

#	Field	Details
1	Full name (as on passport)	
2	Date of birth	08/10/1999
3	Current residential address	103/23 Palmerston Street, Carlton, VIC 3053
4	Current visa subclass and expiry date	Subclass 485 18/09/2028
5	Australian qualifications (include institution and state)	Qualification: Master of International Relations Institution: Monash University State: Victoria Year completed: July 2026
6	Overseas qualifications (include country of study)	Qualification: Bachelor of Laws (LLB Hons) Institution: University of London Country: Sri Lanka Year completed: -
7	Work experience related to field of study (AU or overseas) Include hours per week	Employer: Asialink Role: Research & Executive Support Intern Country: Australia Dates (from - to): 2025 - Present Hours per week: - Employer: Dialog Axiata PLC Role: Coordinator - Group Corporate Services Country: Sri Lanka Dates (from - to): September 2023 - May 2024 Hours per week: - Employer: Smart Legal Role: Business Development Executive Country: United Kingdom (Remote) Dates (from - to): June 2022 - January 2023 Hours per week: - Employer: Econsult Asia Role: Junior Legal Assistant & Administration Officer Country: Sri Lanka Dates (from - to): January 2022 - June 2022 Hours per week: - Employer: SW Legal (KPMG Affiliated) Role: Legal Intern Country: Sri Lanka Dates (from - to): November 2021 - January 2022 Hours per week: -

8	IELTS / PTE score (most recent)	Test type: IELTS Date: 10/08/2026 L: 6.5 R: 5.5 W: 7.5 S: 8.5 Overall: 7.0
9	Skill Assessment	No
10	Marital Status	Never married
11	Studied Regional	No
	Notes	Her sister is who came for a consult with on 30th Sept.
11	Questions	What options do I have? Realistically, what is my pathway to PR? I am considering secondary school teaching (Law). Is there anything I should consider before starting? What other options do I have based on my experience? What is the best option you would recommend?

Our WhatsApp assistant

1

Responds

- Automated conversations
- Dedicated AI assistant per client type



2

Qualifies

- Asks the key questions: visa type, current visa and expiry
- Qualifies the client based on our service availability



3

Hands over

- Passes Sales qualified leads to our sales team with a summary.
- Matter is added onto our CRM through an API automatically

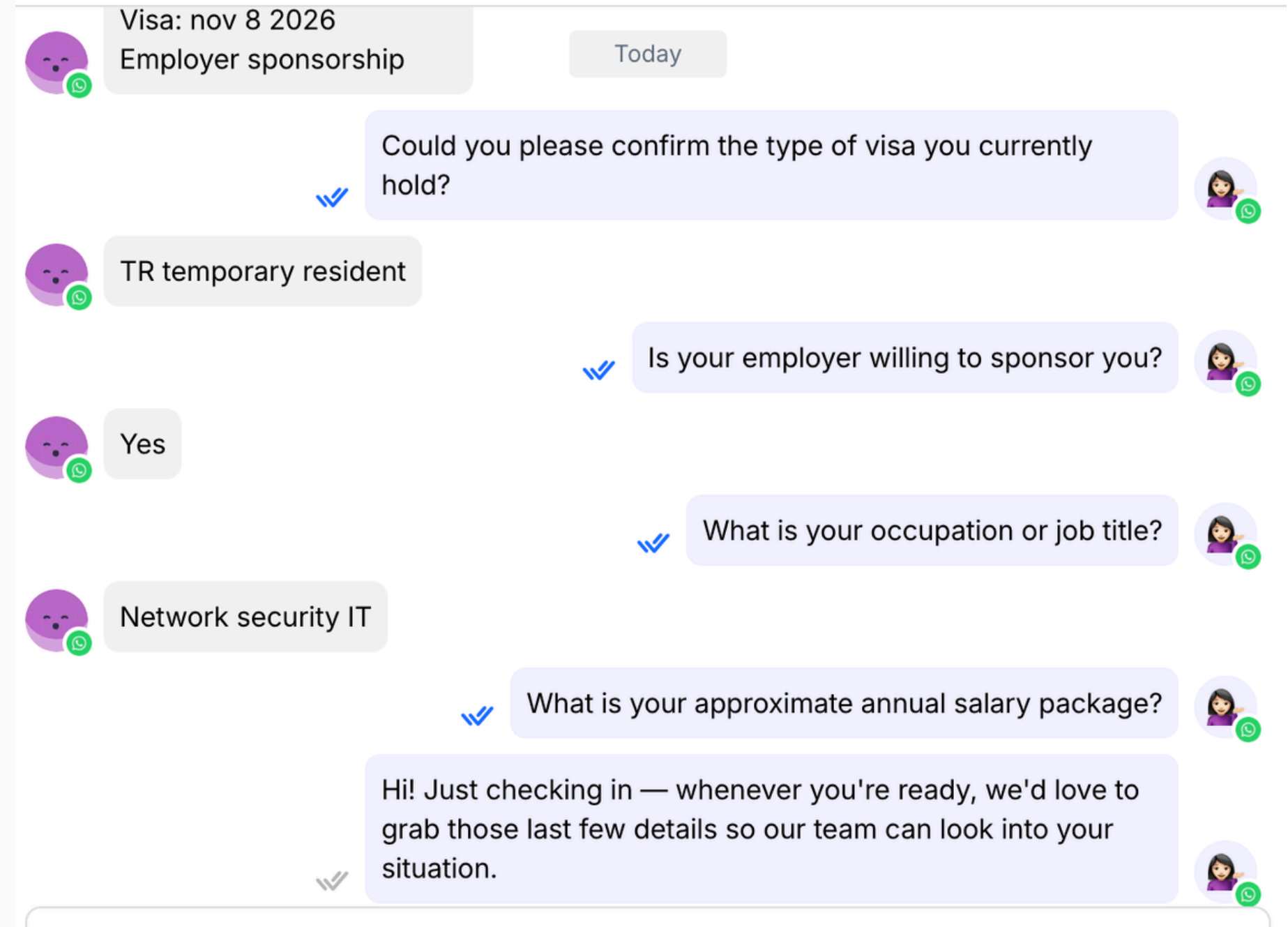
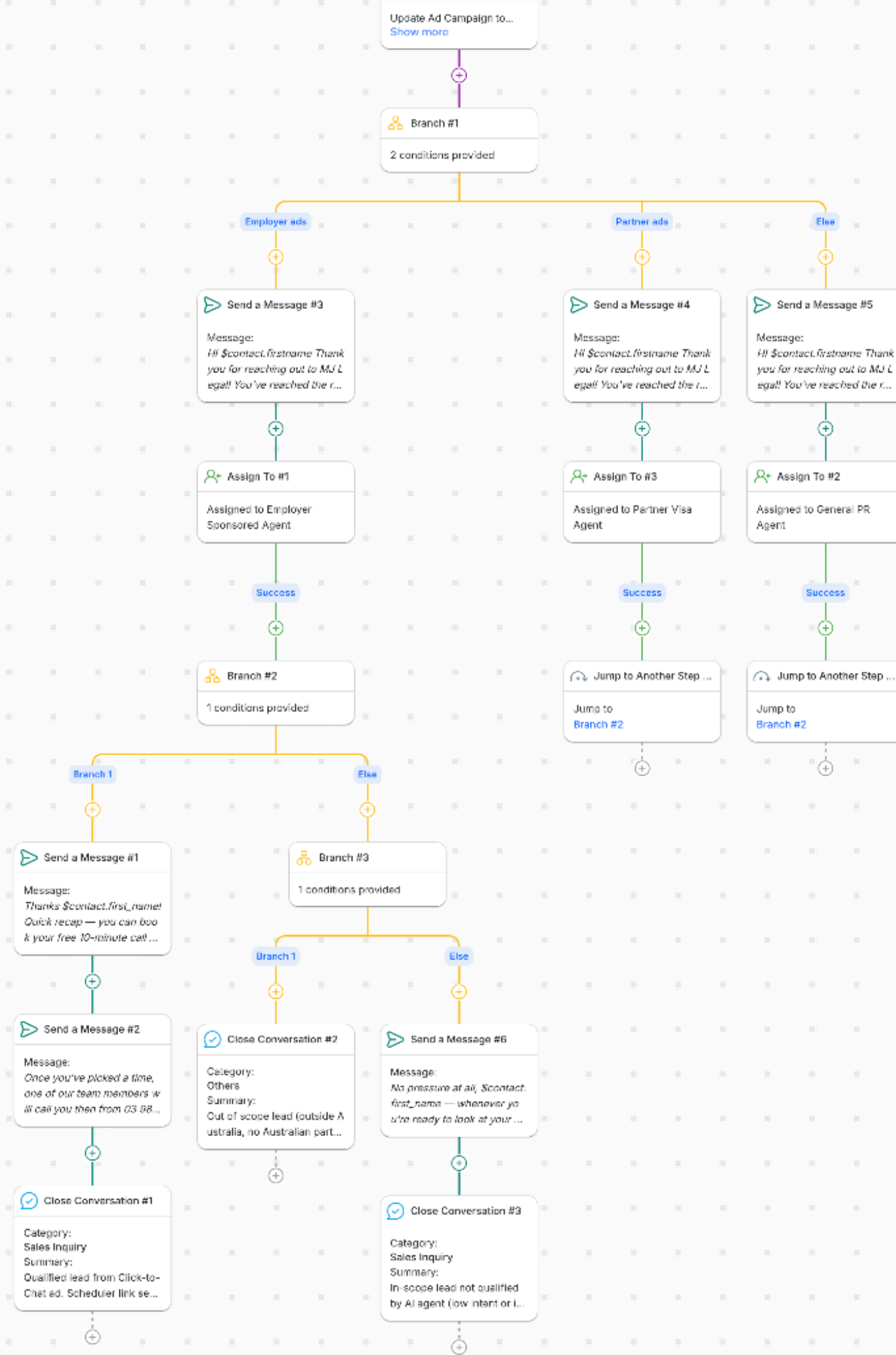


4

Reports back

Tells Meta which chats became qualified leads, so ads are optimized

Our chatbot



Our chatbot

485
407,482

Sep 24, 2026

12 march 2027

Thank you. What is the expiry date of your current 485 visa?

geotechnical engineering

What is your occupation or job title?

56k

What is your approximate annual salary package?

yes they sponsor before

Has your employer sponsored overseas workers before, or would this be their first time?

Sep 24, 2026

geotechnical engineering,
annual salary package: \$56,000;
employer is willing to sponsor and has
sponsored overseas workers before. Employer
Sponsored path questions completed.
Scheduler link shared with the client to book ...
[Show more](#)

Conversation closed by Receptionist - Instagram Only (Claude edited) v3 · Sep 24, 8:31 AM

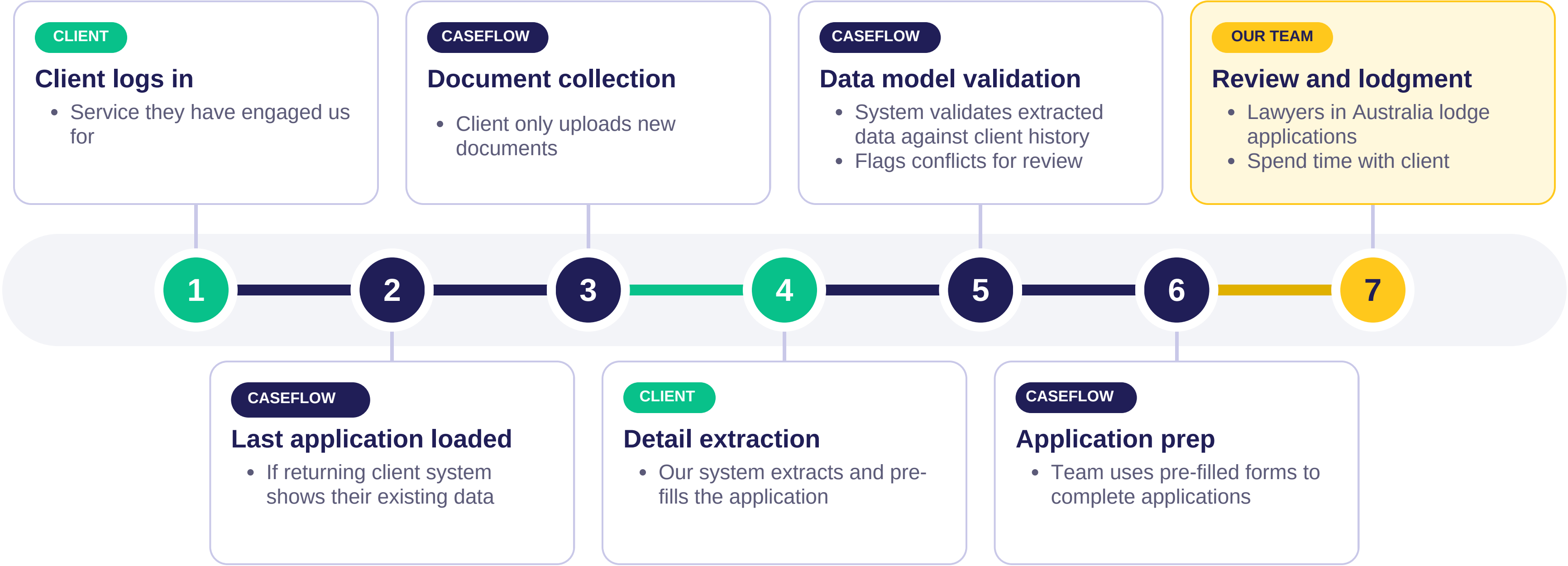
Sales Inquiry

Summary:
Kauroo Kamlesh (geotechnical engineering) has a current Subclass 485 visa expiring 12...
[Show more](#)

Receptionist - Instagram Only (Claude edited) v3 assigned this person to Hari Nadesan

Thank you! The best next step is a call with our team — please pick a time that suits you here: [scheduler.zoom.us/clien...](#)
Once booked, our team will call from 03 9890 7315 — please save the number so you know it's us.

CaseFlow: the client's journey



Clients never start from scratch, and our team never retypes what is already on file.

Client Intake Portal - Document Upload

03 9890 7315

admin@mjlegal.com.au

← Back to Instructions

Continue to Application Form →

Your changes aren't submitted yet. Re-submit when you're done.

Re-submit

Identity

Course

Academic

Financial

Health

Character

Family

YOU CAN UPLOAD MORE THAN ONE DOCUMENT PER FIELD

If you have several files for the same document, upload them all together in the same box.

Upload identity documents for the primary applicant. Documents not in English must be translated. Accepted formats: PDF, JPEG, PNG.

Passport

Drop files here or click to browse

PDF, JPEG, PNG, DOCX or an iPhone photo — max 15MB

01 Passport - Nethmi Rathnayake.pdf

72.1 KB

Birth certificate (original and translation)

Drop files here or click to browse

PDF, JPEG, PNG, DOCX or an iPhone photo — max 15MB

Previous Australian visa grant notification (if applicable)

Drop files here or click to browse

PDF, JPEG, PNG, DOCX or an iPhone photo — max 15MB

10 Visa Grant Notice - Student (subclass 500).pdf

59.7 KB

Helpful Resources

Guides and instructions for preparing your documents.

No resources for this section yet — follow the on-form guidelines, or contact your migration agent if you need help.

Client Intake Portal

Application Form

DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS

TEMPORARY GRADUATE VISA

Subclass 485

01

APPLICATION CONTEXT

01.1 Visa type (stream)

Post-Higher Education Work stream

01.2 Occupation code (ANZSCO)

Select the occupation...

01.3 Occupation name (ANZSCO)

01.4 Qualification

Honours Degree (Other)

01.5 Current location

AUSTRALIA

01.6 Reference number type

Application ID (TRN)

01.7 Reference number

EGO4850DEMO01

02

PRIMARY APPLICANT — PASSPORT

02.1 Family name

RATHNAYAKE

02.2 Given names

NETHMI

02.3 Sex

Female

02.4 Date of birth

14/03/1999

02.5 Passport number

N7788123

02.6 Country of passport

SRI LANKA

02.7 Nationality of passport holder

SRI LANKAN

02.8 Date of issue

02/06/2022

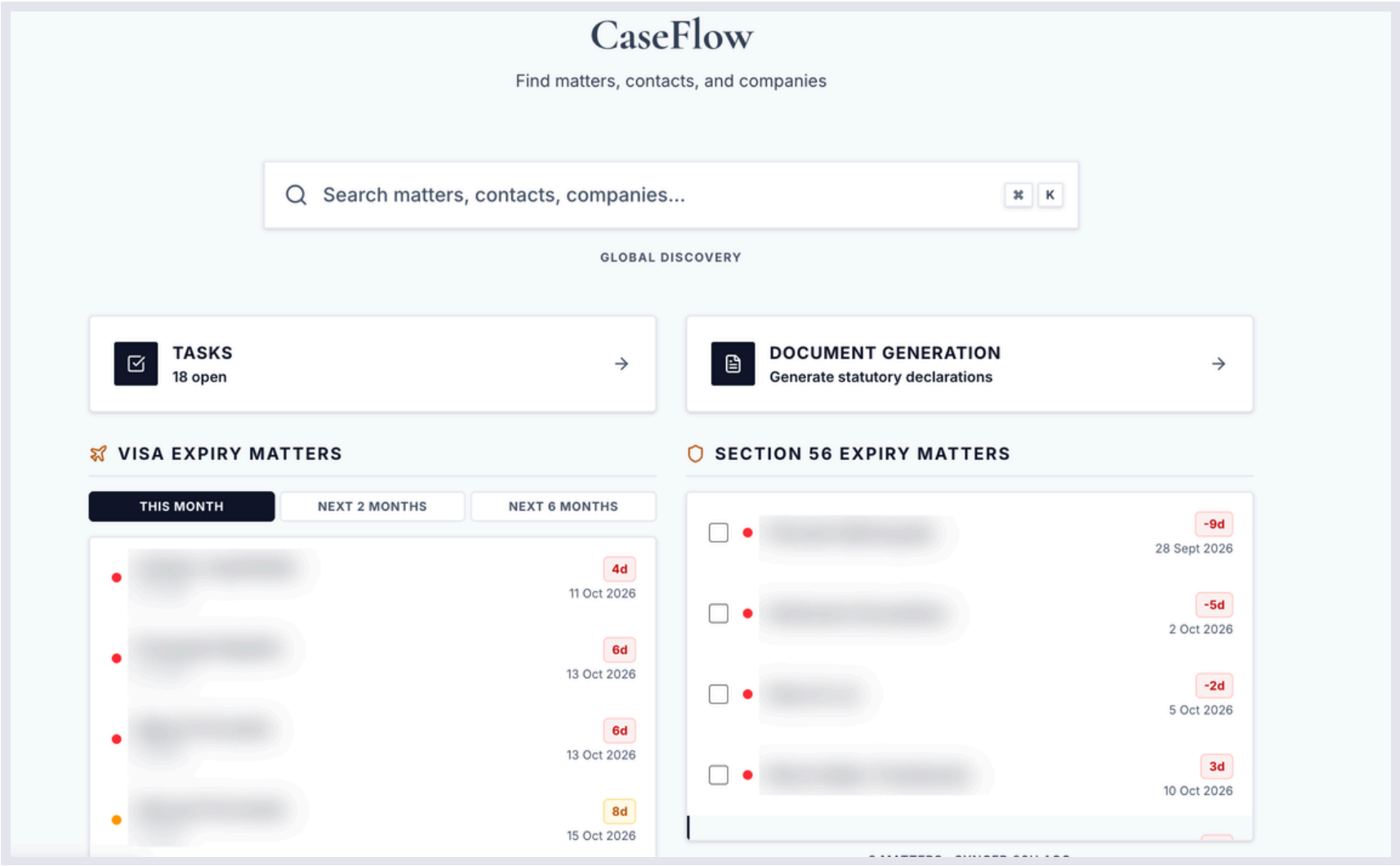
02.9 Date of expiry

01/06/2032

02.10 Place of issue / issuing authority

COLOMBO

CaseFlow Dashboard



Deadline radar

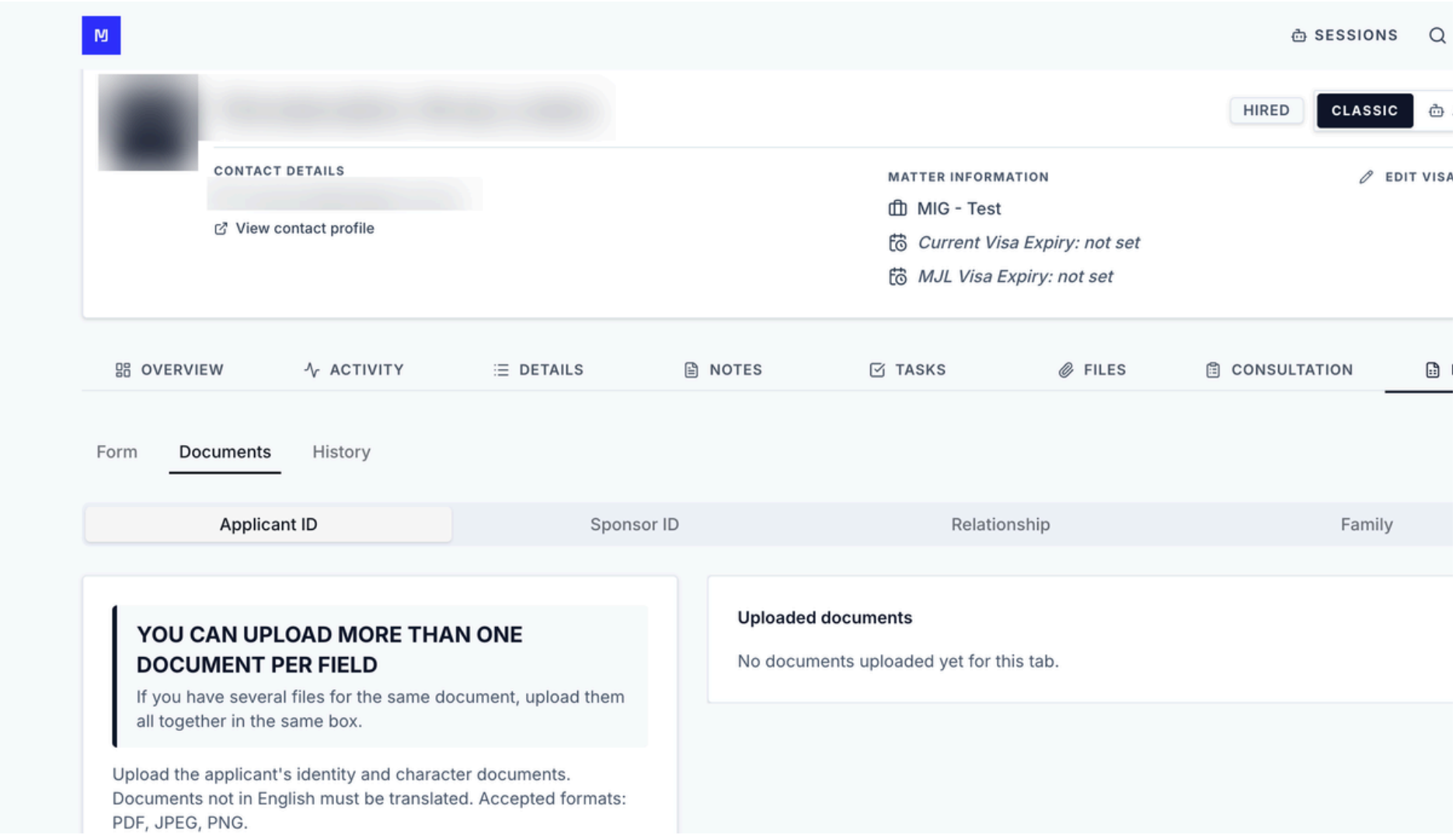
Visa expiries and section 56 response deadlines, by urgency

Documents generated

Statutory declarations drafted from the file

One matter view

Intake, documents, tasks and notes in one place



CaseFlow Agent Mode

M

SESSIONS

A

TW

THAMASHA WALGAMA

HIRED

MIG - Test

CLASSICAGENT

> write {"content":"# Matter 18771169 — Thamasha Walgama — State\n\nLast updated: this

I've published three widgets reflecting the current (mostly empty) state of the matter:

- Party status — Thamasha Walgama:** hired/open status, portal visibility on, SharePoint eligible but not yet filed, and a flag that it's been 22 days since last contact.
- Lodgement readiness (0/4):** no intake submission started, no evidence uploaded, no extraction run, no SharePoint filing — all pending.
- Open tasks:** empty, since none exist in the system.

I deliberately left out `key_dates` and `evidence_coverage` widgets since there's no genuine data yet to populate them without inventing something.

I've also saved a baseline summary to durable matter memory so this doesn't need to be rebuilt from scratch next time.

One thing worth flagging: both the case title ("MIG - Test") and case blurb ("Test for partner visa caseflow") suggest this might just be a test/setup record rather than a live matter. Let me know if it's actually live — if so, the next real step would be kicking off intake and figuring out what evidence is needed for the specific partner visa subclass.

Ask about this matter, or tell the agent to do something — changes apply directly and are logged...

Send

WORKSPACE

EXPAND

Live widgets the agent maintains for this matter.

CLIENT / APPLICANT — THAMASHA WALGAMA

Matter status

Hired — Open

Email

thamasha@mjlegal.com.au

Portal access

Visible to client

SharePoint filing eligibility

Eligible (not yet filed)

Days since last contact

22 days

Maintained by agent · 31 aug

LODGE MENT READINESS

0 of 4

Intake submission

No submission record yet started

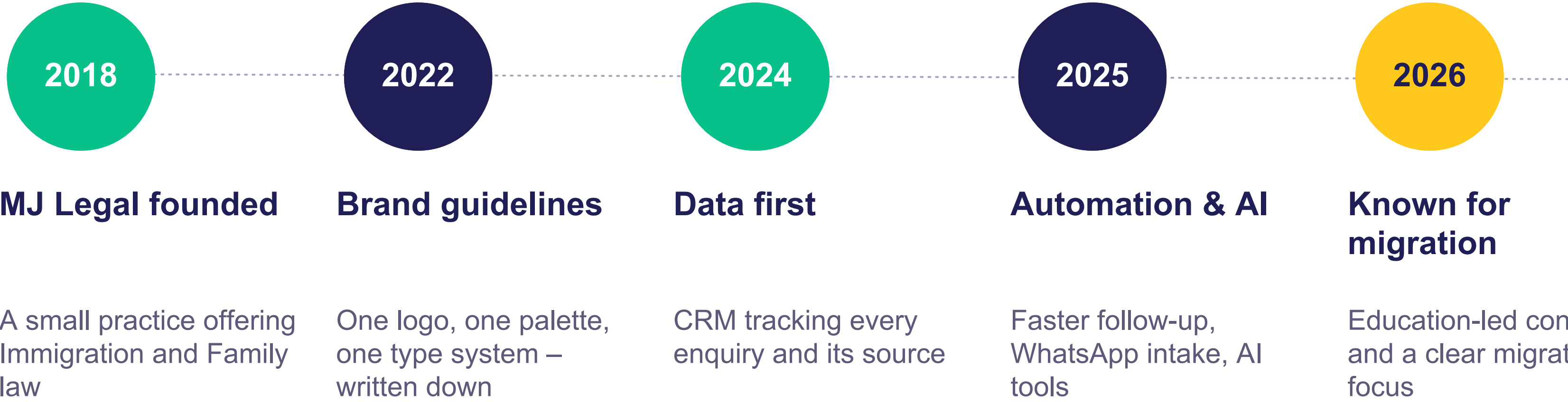
Evidence documents uploaded

No files in intake

Document extraction

No extractions recorded run

How our brand took shape



Key takeaways

- ✓ **Clients search for situations, not practice areas**
 - Speak their language
- ✓ **Referrals open the door – online checks close it**
 - Make your specialty obvious online
- ✓ **Specialising is about what you lead with**
 - You can still do other work
- ✓ **Your first reply is your brand**
 - Be reachable where clients are
- ✓ **Stay accurate and measure**
 - Rule 36, the ACCC, and five numbers

**Thank you for
listening...**

It's time for your questions!

Keith James | MJ Legal

