

Professional Services

Growth firmly on the agenda

Jason Clout

Small national accounting group Sothertons said its structured approach to marketing would see it through the economic slowdown and enable it to pursue growth plans.

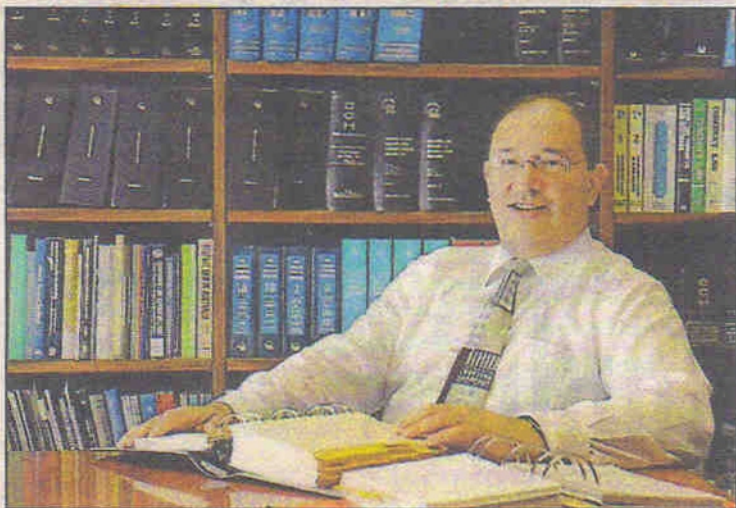
National chairman Robert Lissauer said it was unusual for a small practice to have a business development manager, but the firm's Melbourne office had appointed one recently.

The national group has five other independent offices, one in NSW, South Australia, Western Australia and two in Queensland, Brisbane and Gladstone.

"All the offices have a marketing plan," Mr Lissauer said. "At the Melbourne office, the business development manager is there to get the message out about our skill set and make sure that the new business plans don't get clogged, which can happen when the principals of a firm intend to work on new business but actually get caught up on other things."

A recent meeting of directors and partners – the titles differ depending on whether the office is incorporated – settled on the plans for growth, which may include more regional offices such as Gladstone.

Acquisition of other accounting firms was handled by the individ-



Robert Lissauer . . . looking for the right cultural fit.

Photo: EDDIE JIM

ual Sothertons' offices, he said. The Melbourne office would look at the right business and cultural fit.

"One of the other interstate offices explored an acquisition recently, although elected not to pursue the deal," Mr Lissauer said. "But there are opportunities."

The economic slowdown had not had a negative impact on Sothertons business, he said. In fact, "clients might need us more".

Sothertons target market is companies with turnover between \$20 million and \$100 million, or

what Mr Lissauer described as the "M in SME".

One of its attractions for business clients was its hourly fees compared to larger firms.

At \$300 to \$400 for a director or partner it was a more economic option than the big four or second-tier firms.

Staff recruitment was challenging in the current competitive market. "But money is just one aspect," he said. "We aim to have a quality workplace with flexible working arrangements and benefits for staff."