

Best Practice

Key points and tips

- Dictionary definition (noun):
Best practice is the way of running a business or providing a service that is recognized as correct or most effective. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/best-practice>
- **Best practice** is a way of working that reflects your own high standards and values.
 Best practice represents **both** of these things:
 - Technical expertise
 - Professionalism
- For **Best Practice Bookkeeping** these two aspects can be expanded:

Technical	Professional
Compliance – eg. GST filed on time	High standards
Efficient workflow – eg. using cloud software tools	Earned client trust
Accuracy – eg. ‘in balance’, correct coding	Integrity
Audit trail – eg. workpapers, variance reporting	Ethics
Peer Reviews / Business internal checks/controls	Effective communication
Standard Operating Procedures	Delivering on what you promise to clients

- For **YOUR Best Practice** way of working these two aspects can be developed:

Technical	Professional
Continued learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CPD hours ▪ On the job training ▪ External courses and study 	Terms of engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defined services clearly explained to the client ▪ Agreed terms that match your own values ▪ Regular review and two-way feedback
Expertise with key software products: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accounting software ▪ Payroll software ▪ Bookkeeping practice tools (eg. Asana, XPM) 	Trust and integrity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delivering on what you promise ▪ Having the clients’ best interests at heart ▪ Generated client confidence for your expertise
Internal processes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Month-end checks ▪ Year-end preparation checklist ▪ GST Reconciliation spreadsheet ▪ Client procedure document 	Ethics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly defined values that you openly share ▪ Demonstrating membership principles in the way you work – consistently and visibly ▪ Way of working that reflects your own values

- Look after your reputation!
 - This is your most important business asset – nurture it
 - Deliver and act in a way that reflects your value messaging – always and consistently
 - Don't gossip, always be respectful, act professionally > it all gets noticed
 - It's OK to be you, your way of working doesn't have to be for everyone – hold your ground!
- Best Practice does not have to mean 'expert'
 - Best Practice applies to **all** levels of experience
 - Demonstrate your high standards for both the technical aspects of bookkeeping **and** your core values
 - Aim for continued improvement – we are always learning
 - Having a wider lens on processes helps with modifying and updating procedures as things change (eg. changes in legislation, new technology, your own personal and business development)
- Be a good member!
 - Be fully aware of what your professional memberships require of you
 - Highlight your member status with clients, on your website, with your marketing (this can identify you as a step ahead of the competition as well as showing your professionalism and strong ethics)
 - Conduct yourself professionally and in accordance with the membership requirements – aim to over deliver!
 - Review at each renewal to make sure these organisational principles (of the member entity) are still a good 'fit' with your own vision and values
- Methods
 - Standard Operating Procedures
 - Deskfiles
 - Checklists
 - Flowcharts
 - Learning and development – formal and informal

There is no best method of documenting and executing best practice. Find the methods that suit your working style (you will likely need a combination). If you have a team make sure you regularly discuss and update your chosen way of working. If you have demanding clients lay the ground rules from the beginning so you are working in a way that delivers best practice (never do something that is a conflict with the law or your values).

- Review – evaluate – continually improve
 - Keep things current – particularly regarding compliance / legal requirements
 - Communicate changes to your team / clients / other stakeholders at the time
 - Review your services and associated deliverables – can these be refined or changed?
A risk versus value approach is a good one
Conduct your reviews in a consistent way, and regularly (at least annually), record your findings/actions
 - Be open to feedback – make sure it is two-way – talk to your team members, talk to your clients – they may have great suggestions!
 - You don't have to do what you have always done – change can be for the better!

“In business, ‘professionalism’ is not a tactic but a moral value.”— Amit Kalantri

Magician, mentalist, and author