



## Spring 2009 Newsletter

### Building capability through new project skills



Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority made the decision to restructure their activities towards a project-based operation following a reduction in funding in 2008. After consultation with UNE Partnerships, a proposal was submitted and accepted for the delivery of project management training.

The principal focus was to improve capability within the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority. UNE Partnerships proposed a more consistent approach to project methodology across the organisation through the integration of standardised processes, tools and knowledge, and incorporating existing project management processes/methodologies that functioned well.

Aimed at project managers and project officers, the program was designed to provide participants with the practical skills and tools to plan, implement and manage projects effectively within their area of responsibility across the organisation.

To achieve this, a selected group of staff participated in two-day **Project Management Fundamentals Workshops**. The workshops introduced staff to the project methodology that would be used across the Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, allowing for

group discussion and participation. Whilst the workshops themselves were non-accredited, they provided a greater understanding of how the different elements of a project functioned.

For staff directly involved with projects, UNE Partnerships conducted a series of workshops and coaching services for those wishing to undertake accredited qualifications. Depending on their level of engagement, staff completed either a **Certificate IV in Project Management**, **Diploma of Project Management**, or the **Advanced Diploma of Project Management**.

New project methodology was incorporated into delivery and assessment items throughout the qualifications, ensuring that new skills were directly relevant to the workplace.

According to Lisa Roberts, General Manager of Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, "UNE Partnerships spent considerable time gaining an understanding of our organisation and successfully incorporated our requirements into a tailored training package that the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA staff can implement on a daily basis. By equipping our team with the right skills we can ensure that we maximise the efficiency of our organisation in delivering to our clients." ■



# Commonwealth Attorney General's Department



*Coordinators from Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Service*

The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department has partnered with UNE Partnerships in tailoring its **Diploma of Practice Management customised for Law Firms**.

The pilot group comprises 13 Coordinators from Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, who are located in rural and remote communities across Australia.

## Tailored workshops

The first of three workshops was held over three days in early August at the University of New England's Oorala Centre. In consultation with the client, UNE Partnerships has developed the program delivery to ensure direct alignment with the operational framework of the Attorney-General's Department. It is the first time the Department has taken such an approach to training that provides its Coordinators with a professional program in a university setting.

The workshop format provides the group with valuable professional development and the opportunity to complete a nationally recognised qualification. For many in the group this was the first time in many years that they had undertaken any formal study. The workshops allowed the group to discuss expectations and also allowed them to openly raise common issues in a supportive learning environment.

Sharon Brown from Broken Hill said "The workshop put me in the right frame of mind to start the course. The presenters helped put everything in perspective and they were able to impart a large amount of information to us in an enjoyable way which made it easy for us to cope with."

## Partnerships make a difference in regional Australia

The Mackay Division of General Practice prides itself on expanding the once limited professional development, training and educational activities for managers and staff from medical and specialist practices in the Mackay region.

The Division has worked closely with UNE Partnerships in supporting the employment and up-skilling of practice staff to build and maintain successful practices across the network.

The **Diploma of Practice Management customised for Health practices** workshops commenced in July this year and are held one weekend a month over five months at the Division's North Mackay office.

This is the second intake of workshop groups organised by the Division and UNE

## The outcomes

The program is designed to place the providers of the Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Service in a better position, by strengthening the Coordinators' skills and developing a more structured framework from which they can operate.

The Coordinators manage the day-to-day operations of the Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, responsible for budgeting and managing legal staff and counsellors. Each Coordinator has their own area of specialty but this program will bring everyone to the same level, developing a more consistent and systematic approach for individual legal units across the country.

It will ensure that there is functional service delivery that is consistent with the Operational Framework that fits within the guidelines set down by the Attorney General's Department.

The aim is to inspire and motivate participants and achieve positive long term outcomes in the workplace. ■

Partnerships. Previous graduates have benefited greatly from their training and the Mackay Division of General Practice was keen to get a second group together to extend this opportunity to other practice staff in the region. This was achieved through the determination of the Division, its resources, links within the industry and experience in delivering quality education.

The topics covered include: role of the practice manager; staff management; legal and administrative requirements; managing financial performance and systems; planning and systems for practice success; and meeting client needs. In addition the final assessment items centre on developing a business plan for each practice which includes reviewing the practice and its opportunities. ►

# Expanding opportunities with Facilities Fundamental Workshops

ISS Cleaning Services has a proactive approach to education and training and understands the benefits that ongoing professional development provides for its workforce.

Len Benson, Executive General Manager (Government Cleaning Division), engaged UNE Partnerships to present a workshop on the **Fundamentals of Facilities Management**. The workshop, which was held in Coffs Harbour late last year, was attended by over 30 staff.

ISS's Government Cleaning Division comprises 3000 staff, covering about 1500 sites across New South Wales. These include schools, police stations, courts and other government buildings. Currently, ISS is contracted to undertake cleaning; however their client has indicated they may be moving towards a model which integrates the whole facilities management model to incorporate the maintenance and cleaning of buildings by the one organisation.

In order to prepare the staff for possible future changes, ISS consulted with UNE Partnerships to develop a Professional Development Workshop, outlining the functions and inter-relationships of a

Facilities Management Unit. According to Len Benson "We wanted to give our staff a better understanding of how a Facilities Management Unit operates as a whole. We felt it was important for them to see how the unit functions and how various aspects correlate".

The workshop outlined the various aspects of facilities management, including the traditional structures and practices of a Facilities Management Unit. The workshop was designed around generic techniques, and based upon the specific contract under which ISS individuals may later work. In this way, the workshop was customised to the real work ISS currently undertakes, and may undertake in the future.

Workshop participants experienced key planning techniques for the management of their facilities, including clarifying the extent of responsibility under the contract. The participants defined maintenance activities and identified risks to the maintenance function. Through these activities and discussions, individuals were encouraged to think more broadly about their role, and methods of fulfilling that role. Participants also realised their current work and planning

experiences were useful and applicable for future facilities management work.

Also of significance was the presence (within the workshop) of key ISS client representatives. The representatives found value in gaining understanding of the ISS perspective, and in explaining and discussing the position and perspective of the client or facility owner.

Developing a consistent approach across a Facilities Management Unit is a strong focus in this type of workshop and allows those involved to understand the benefits of a united approach to all systems. For large organisations, and particularly those spread over a large geographic area, developing a consistent approach to the Facilities Management Unit, how it functions and integrates with other sections is vital to its success.

ISS is keen to develop a strong framework within its Cleaning Division to enable it to handle the potential new work. "We know we can't move forward until we get further indication from our client, but we hope that we will be sufficiently prepared to be able to make it happen quickly" said Len. ■

UNE Partnerships' presenters are experts in their field with a wealth of relevant industry experience, providing helpful advice and support to their students. Networking is a key benefit of the workshops allowing the exchange of ideas, suggestions and support within the group. In addition, the Division has established a student study group that offers additional support via telephone, email and a face-to-face evening meeting once a month. For rural students a teleconference has also been setup for the monthly meetings so they can actively participate.

The Mackay Division of General Practice is very active, and particularly values the long-term benefits of ongoing professional development and opportunities for staff in the region. Together with UNE Partnerships, the Division provides a fantastic example of how 'together we can make it happen'. ■



*Mackay Workshop Group*

# Five practical steps to become 'recovery-ready'

"Are we there yet?" "Is it really happening?" Any good manager should be asking these questions right now. Although Australia avoided a technical recession, business and consumer sentiment has not been strong for over a year now. That alone represents a major challenge to business owners, or to managers employed in business or government.

Whatever your views about these first two questions, this next one is even more important: "Are we 'recovery-ready'?" Here are some practical steps you can take to be ready to benefit whenever the up-swing starts. Think about how these steps could be adapted and applied to your situation.

## Assess your markets

Which customers or which markets have proved more resilient to the recent slowdown? Which markets or customers are starting to ease the constraints? Which markets are the 'easier' sells or the natural users of your products or services? In which markets do you have weaker competitors, or a product/service advantage? Your answers will help you to re-direct your energies into the most promising markets.

## Assess your products

Check current gross profit margins, and sales volumes, and working capital consumed for each product, service, or group. Determine the 'stars' in your range as well as the 'dogs'. Promote the 'stars', because they are more valuable to you and meet a customer need too. Re-engineer the 'dogs'. Examples might include: increase prices; eliminate unnecessary features to achieve lower sales prices or higher volume; work out if they be produced differently; try to make them more attractive products.

## On-sell your 'fries'

Many firms provide valuable advice or support in the name of 'good service'. Yet few realise this advice could be packaged and sold when bundled with a related product. Generate more revenue for virtually no extra cost, since your people are already doing the work!

## Review your structure

Having decided the key markets and the key products you intend to focus on, put the resources where they are needed to support those strategies. Move people into the right business units or the right roles. Re-focus advertising and promotional spending into those key areas. Engage with the core customers.

It will help if you can align the skills and interests of your people with the functions they work in. That way, time and energy are not wasted in 'wheel-spinning' when the focus should be on your customers' needs. Effectiveness and morale should lift.

## Keep investing in the 'business'

Give yourself or your colleagues some time to focus on the reviews listed above. That investment should pay off, through revenue and margin improvements, or cost savings, or enhanced morale. Test the feasibility of capital investments which can improve output or save cost or save working capital.

See whether your key people need their skills to be enhanced in areas like project management or frontline staff supervision or business/administrative skills.

Hopefully, your business or work group will already be doing well for many of these measures ... but there's often scope to lift performance in at least a few of them. Whether a recovery has started, or whether it is a little time away, act now to make your business recovery-ready. You'll be more effective, more profitable, and happier when you do!

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