

Skilling Australians: Workforce Development Case Study

Meme Partners supported by the Australian Institute of Management



What can workforce development and planning do for your business?

“Everything a team member learns can only improve our business performance.”

*Kate Messenger, Managing Director,
Meme Partners*

Micro businesses are a vital part of Australia's economy. Meme Partners, a business with only a handful of employees, recognises the positive impact skilled employees have on its business performance and actively commits time and resources to training and the professional development of staff. Keen to maximise the effectiveness of their training commitment, Meme Partners recognised that it would need support to access funding opportunities as well as successfully navigate the national training and education system.

The solution? The microbusiness participated in a Australian Institute of Management (AIM) application for government funding which focussed on workforce development – this reflected Meme Partner's commitment to its employees' skills.

AIM is Australia's largest training organisation for managers which supports and promotes management and leadership at all levels. AIM's commitment to developing the profession of management and leadership made the approach to Meme Partners ideal.

Micro businesses know that sending even one employee for training can mean a

quarter of the workforce is temporarily “off-line”. Partnering with AIM, who offers flexible delivery arrangements for its programs, assisted Meme Partners to balance training with the everyday pressures of running a business.

The immediate impact? The effect on Meme as a business has been apparent from the start.

“I brought all my learning back into the business,” says Hettie Dearn a Senior Manager and Engagement Strategist at Meme who undertook the Advanced Diploma in Management. “I used what I was learning to fuel conversations in the management team throughout the year, and this has led to a number of significant improvements in the way we work.”



Hettie was particularly able to add value to the business by bringing forward more sophisticated strategic planning models to assist with business continuity and growth.

The team also used Hettie's knowledge and skills to review and improve Meme's client engagement model. Learning from the advanced diploma on innovation, continuous improvement, and change management have proven extremely valuable in its specialised work helping large corporations stay well connected with their several thousand employees.

Workforce development: more than a plan

Meme Partners are employee engagement specialists, designing and delivering programs to help employees understand their organisation's business, brand or customer service strategies, as well as their role in making the business successful. Traditional methods such as workshops and toolkits are used, as are innovative approaches such as social media and digital games.

“We cultivate productive and positive behaviours in teams. That is the core of what we do,” says Hettie Dearn. “Our philosophy is ‘collaborative ambition’,



which means aligning individual employee needs and ambitions with the goals of the business. When people get more out of work they'll put more in," she adds.

Meme knew that it too must have a strong workforce development culture, no matter how busy and successful their business was. It already had a formal workforce planning and development process in place with staff KPIs and quarterly "check-ins". As someone who thrives on learning Hettie was also keen to contribute more to Meme's future directions. Managing director, Kate Messenger, encouraged Hettie to undertake the Advanced Diploma in Management. Having this training cofunded by the government meant Meme could extend other training opportunities to their employees.

For Hettie, the course was just what she was looking for.

"The advanced diploma sets you up to manage every aspect of the business," she says. "I chose it because it is so flexible in subject choice, structure and assessment. This meant I could fit it in with my business commitments. I loved the fact that it provided the perfect opportunity to learn from others

in the class and benefit from the industry expertise of the facilitators."

Hettie focused on management skills and business operations, and selected electives specifically relevant to her work at Meme and Meme's future direction.

In addition to the advanced diploma, Hettie also undertook AIM's "Coaching and Mentoring" short course,

"In the advanced diploma I learnt how to view the business through an academic framework but also felt it was important to learn how to manage yourself and build resilience skills. The coaching and mentoring program encouraged me to look at my management style, my behaviours and how to manage my emotions to become more resilient."

"You need both," Hettie reflects.

The results? Workforce development has not stopped for Hettie or at Meme Partners. As a state finalist in the Young Manager category of the 2014 AIM Excellence Awards, Hettie won twelve months free training from AIM, part of AIM's ongoing commitment to management development among its members.

Hettie's role at Meme Partners has grown to now include business development, risk assessment and management of financial reporting. She and Kate are now considering the next program of learning for her career and for Meme Partners' continued growth and prosperity. On the agenda, for both Hettie and the business, is an enhanced skills set in managing intellectual property and new business opportunities.

Meme's work has also expanded; repeat business, word of mouth recommendations and profitability have all increased.

As managing director Kate Messenger says emphatically, "everything a team member learns can only improve our business performance."



Meme

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

For more information please visit
<http://meme-partners.com>



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Management

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<http://www.aim.com.au>

Innovation & Business Skills Australia Ltd

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- provide integrated industry intelligence and advice to governments on workforce development and skills needs,
- maintain and improve training materials and supporting products and services, and
- provide advice on skills, training and workforce development to enterprises.

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