

Skilling Australians: Workforce Development Case Study

Worldwide Printing Solutions



What can workforce development and planning do for your business?

"My sales growth improved over 10% and our customer relationships are the best you can get. When I go away on holidays my business runs like clockwork. The team are confident, empowered, and highly skilled."

Eileen Mellor, WPS Bundall, Qld

Worldwide Printing Solutions (WPS) originated in Western Australia in 1995. Twenty years on, it has grown into a company with more than 45 design and print centres across Australia.

Its centres have won Franchise of the Year awards at state and national level.

WPS franchises are typically small businesses providing services which include graphic design and printing, customer relations and sales. They are part of an industry undergoing transformation from a manufacturing 'ink on paper' focus to an industry providing printing and related products and services barely imagined twenty years ago. WPS's "total services" package encompasses all stages of document production from creation to distribution, together with specialised products such as web design and merchandise.

WPS regards workforce planning and development as fundamental to its continued success and recognition. Critical to relevant, successful workforce development at the franchise level are the leadership, skills and commitment of the franchise owners. The franchise owners are the ones to encourage and support their employees in developing management and supervisory skills, product innovations, heightened customer service and online technology capability.

As WPS managing director Rob Dallimore explains,

"We firmly believe that a successful franchise owner needs to develop successful team members and that we as franchisor need to be adept at developing successful franchise owners."



Sustaining workforce development

The success of a government funded workforce development program for franchise owners together with positive franchise responses prompted WPS to investigate continued support for this group.

WPS decided on a three part strategy:

- The first part involved ensuring WPS state support managers were equipped to be effective coaches, mentors and internal resources for the franchise owners.
- The second resulted in a program addressing continuous business improvement practices at the franchise level.
- The third component focused on ensuring that operating standards and skill requirements were standardised across all the businesses around the country.

The result was the WPS 5 Star Business Boost Program. More than 100 WPS staff have undertaken the Diploma of Management or the Certificate IV in Business as part of the program.

WPS financially supported all levels of its executive team and franchise owners enrolling in the Diploma of Management. Many franchise owners did the same for their own employees completing a business qualification.



Distinctive features

WPS built several features into the program.

First, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was used as a tool. Franchise owners' skills and experience were "RPL'd" against the diploma's competencies for whole of business operating consistency. RPL will continue to be used to identify skill gaps and opportunities for continuous improvement.

Secondly, flexible training delivery arrangements were devised. For example, monthly early morning in-centre sessions minimised down time in the local business and meant a whole team could attend training.

Thirdly, training was customised to incorporate elective units to meet identified training needs of the franchises. Sales skills, to develop proactive selling skills and identify new prospects, secure customers and create strong business relationships. Technical skills, to develop new products and services which could introduce additional income streams.

Finally, WPS as franchisor took a proactive role. The company upgraded its franchise operations manual and developed a full training curriculum to support the 5 Star Business Boost Program. It also partnered with Get Smart

Services, a training consultant, in devising a program that mapped WPS's enterprise specific content against nationally recognised training qualifications.

Positive outcomes

Positive endorsements from WPS franchise owners around the country have shown the positive impact of the 5 Star Business Boost Program on staff motivation, sales and profitability.

Comments from WPS franchise owners are:

"The program has motivated my team members and resulted in greater employee satisfaction" (Alan Fletcher, WPS Southport, Qld)

"WPS North Sydney had a growth rate of 42.3% after we introduced exceptional customer service standards" (Mark Denning, WPS Chatswood, NSW)

"My telemarketing initiative brought in \$20 000 of additional business" (Tim Whitehill, WPS Milton, Qld).

The WPS executive team has also benefited from the customised Diploma of Management. Improved customer service standards, operational efficiencies, time management and

people management are among the areas addressed in the quest for better business outcomes. According to Neil Zaltsman, operations manager at the WPS Production Hub, "as well as helping with skills development, the program has been good for team cohesiveness."

WPS now showcases its "Shining Stars" participants at the company's annual conference.

Managing director Rob Dallimore is delighted with the success of the workforce development program:

"Two key results we wanted were an exceptional standard of customer service and the introduction of proactive selling skills. Our 'Shining Stars' franchise owners have achieved that with improved quote to job conversion rates, increased average invoice values and increased number of jobs per month. For many franchise businesses sales growth went up because the owners implemented what they had learned."

WPS is considering expansion of the 5 Star Business Boost Program by including an introductory training program for new employees and making many of the training materials available online.



For more information please visit
<http://www.worldwide.com.au>



For more information please visit
<http://www.getsmartservices.com.au>

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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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