

Developing Social Leadership



A medium sized company invested in social leadership development in order to establish a leadership language and culture and to more effectively and efficiently achieve its strategic objectives. Previous efforts had focused on external development options which were seen as a reward, an entitlement, a 'right of passage'. This was costing in excess of \$.5m annually with little to show.

This was a CEO initiative, driven by the Board.

The challenge was to overcome resistance from all who were of the opinion that this was "an operational environment where there is no place for leadership" – this belief was also shared within the executive leadership team.

The solution was a suite of workshops, flexible in delivery and appealing to several factors:

- the community feel within the business – the sense of tribe
- the sense of status and autonomy that was important to all managers and supervisors
- the need for certainty of desired outcomes - what needed to be done differently within the business and what was in it for me?

- not taking people out of the business for long periods of time to attend workshops and complete activities
- how the initiative would be assessed/measured and how this would be communicated
- confidentiality of conversations during development sessions/workshops
- who would deliver, support and evaluate the initiative
- influencing an executive leadership team to take ownership when there was fear of being 'exposed'
- allaying the fear that outcomes would be related to performance and therefore reward

The critical objectives of the program were:

- less focus on the operational and more focus on people and strategy
- increased accountability for actions
- more proactivity and less reactivity
- increase in employee engagement

Key outcomes from this program over a two year period included:

- behavioural shifts in every leader over 3, 6 and 9 month time-frames (as identified by manager, self, direct reports and peers) – some shifts were slight, some were revolutionary
- the language of leadership was embedded to the extent that a) lower levels were asking for leadership development, based on the premise that "everyone's a leader" and b) the executive team agreed that they should undertake the development program
- leadership behaviours were agreed and were aligned with recruitment, position descriptions, targeted development, performance systems, succession and talent.



It was also acknowledged that there was a correlation between this development and a 7.5% increase in financial results, a 16% increase in overall customer satisfaction and a 22% increase engagement.