



CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

FINDING FUTURES

SITUATION

Finding Futures experienced 110% staff turnover for three consecutive years, was rated in the bottom 10% of Disability Employment Services in Australia and was losing money every month.

SOLUTION

The Leading Teams Performance Improvement Program was implemented across the whole organisation to drive improvements in leadership and company culture.

RESULT

Staff turnover is now less than 10% per annum, the organisation is rated in the top 10% of Disability Employment Services and put simply, people now enjoy working at Finding Futures.

FINDING FUTURES



SITUATION

Back in 2010, Finding Futures was experiencing extremely poor performance rating in the bottom 10% of Disability Employment Services (DES) in Australia. The organisation's reported revenue was around \$2.2 million per annum and it was losing \$10,000 a month.

An impact of being rated near the bottom of DES providers meant the Federal Government rated Finding Futures 'One star'. A one star rating placed it at risk of having its core employment business placed into administration. This poor performance coupled with staff turnover of 110% annually for three consecutive years led to low staff morale. Finding Futures exists to get people in employment and have them stay there, its own high staff turnover was restricting this and was also costing the business as they were constantly hiring and training people.

"It was clear that we needed to make some big changes," said CEO Bryan McCormick. The Board decided that the prolonged poor performance of the organisation required a change in leadership, a management team restructure and a focus to improve both the leadership and culture of the company.

"After acting as a volunteer for 16 years I was invited to take on the CEO's role and drive the necessary changes," Bryan said.

"Having worked with Leading Teams, I knew the Performance Improvement Program was what we needed, and we made the decision to implement the program across the whole organisation."

Leading Teams facilitator Martine Harkin said, *"The Leading Teams program was ideal to drive the necessary improvements in leadership and culture that Finding Futures so desperately required. When an organisation experiences ongoing poor performance and unacceptably high staff turnover, they need expert outside assistance for managing people issues."*

SOLUTION

The Performance Improvement Program commenced in November 2010 and has run continuously since then, with sessions held across the whole organisation on a quarterly basis. More recently, separate sessions with the management team have been introduced.

The program kicked off with a weekend away where the first day was just with Martine, so staff could openly vent and air their reservations. Afterward, the Board joined the group to close the gap between the Board and the staff. *"During the weekend, we aligned the organisation in terms of coming up with an agreed set of behaviours, and commenced the relationship building process,"* said Martine.

Though Finding Futures has lost a couple of staff members because of the program, Bryan believes they have lost the "right" people, because they were not a good fit with the new direction of the organisation. *"Activities such as recruitment and performance management have become so much clearer for Finding Futures,"* added Martine, *"they now know straight away when people will not fit."*

Finding Futures is working to achieve a situation where all staff members are engaged in creating a great workplace. After the introduction of the Leading Teams Performance Improvement Program, it wasn't long before the organisation experienced a significant increase in its key performance measures.

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Martine said, *“The key to success is getting the whole organisation involved and having a centre of influence driving the program from the top. Bryan is constantly driving it, and there are now others in the group who drive it too.”*

Though the program has been implemented with all staff, the peer review has only been undertaken for the CEO and General Managers. Bryan said, *“The group find the feedback sessions challenging, but they get a lot out of them.”*

Martine said there is a lot of scope to improve the leadership at the middle management level, *“There’s a big gap in terms of the leadership experience of the GMs compared with the rest of the staff members. A number of people have been put into positions of leadership, but they don’t know how to lead. They are great in their roles but simply lack experience with leading people- this represents a great opportunity for Finding Futures.”*

RESULT

The figures are one way to tell the Finding Futures story. The changes achieved in the organisation’s key metrics since the Leading Teams program commenced in November 2010 are:

- From being rated by the Federal Government in the bottom 10% to the **top 10%** of the 205 Disability Employment Services in Australia;
- 110% annual staff turnover down to **less than 10% annual staff turnover;**
- Losing \$10,000/month to a **profit of \$10,000/month;**
- Turnover of \$2.2million annually

to over **\$4million of turnover** per annum;

- Placing 60 people with disabilities into employment annually, to placing **260 people** with disabilities into employment annually;
- 23 FTE staff to **41 FTE staff.**

The other changes in the organisation cannot be captured by a number.

“Put simply, our people enjoy working at Finding Futures and ongoing professional development is now the norm. Potential staff now approach Finding Futures almost weekly wanting to work for us, where previously positions went unfilled for months, as we could not attract staff.”

Other organisations are now regularly approaching Finding Futures with contract offers, as they are aware of the high levels of performance the organisation is achieving. These organisations include high profile employers such as Sovereign Hill, Ballarat City Council and Alstom just to name a few. *“This has driven the increase in turnover and profitability,”* said Bryan.

Martine said that there is still work to be done at Finding Futures, especially after very busy work periods. *“It’s good to review behaviour after a busy period, because when teams get busy they often put their learning aside. More often than not, unproductive behaviours show through when people are under the pump, and they revert to type unless you have a very strong culture.”*

Everything in the Finding Futures organisation now revolves around building and maintaining great relationships with employees and employers. The team decided at that first Leading Teams session they wanted to be seen as respected, effective and supportive. A set of behaviours was agreed to achieve this outcome and those behaviours are now included in everything Finding Futures does, right down to individual reviews of staff.

“We do what we do because we love to see people thrive in the workplace and get the most out of their employment.” Bryan concluded.

ABOUT FINDING FUTURES

Finding Futures help people with disabilities or significant disadvantage find employment in the Ballarat and Bendigo regions. CEO Bryan McCormick said, *“At any one time we work with around 350 people and their families to make the dream of employment a reality. In addition to our core employment business we run three social enterprises, Futures Café, Futures Property Services and our newest addition, Futures Xmas Tree Farm.”*

Finding and securing a job should be an exciting and rewarding experience. Finding Futures aim to ensure this is true for the entire employment experience. The organisation believes everyone deserves the same opportunities when entering the workforce and enables this by supporting workers with a disability. Because workers with a disability often find it hard to obtain employment, once they find a job they are among some of the most loyal, hard working and productive employees in the workforce.

All figures have been obtained from the official Disability Employment Services annual reports.



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