



CONTEXT

Programme Title

TeamWorks.

Employer and Training Provider

Downer EDI Works and The Learning Wave¹ respectively.

Location

A national programme in 28 Downer EDI Works branches.

Funding

Tertiary Education Commission's Embedded Industry Training Organisation Literacy and Numeracy Project, InfraTrain², and Downer EDI Works.

Programme Description

The programme comprised of eight modules focusing on leadership, communication skills, problem-solving, task planning, work roles, and team work. Foundation skills were embedded in each module. There were two courses over two days, with six weeks 'coaching' and individual project work in between.

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa

This case study highlights a workforce literacy and numeracy initiative identified as achieving positive outcomes for Māori. The programme operates nationally in 28 branches.

"Māori concepts and values underpin practice work."

Provider: Downer EDI Works TeamWorks course.

In total, Te Puni Kōkiri undertook four case studies of workforce literacy and numeracy initiatives. These case studies were undertaken between March and June 2008, and were current at that date.

The case study provides practical illustrations of good practice features that relate to:

- Programme design;
- Programme delivery; and
- Programme results.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

Consideration of Māori Needs and Aspirations

As a result of Te Puni Kōkiri's case study interviews, the training provider has plans to instigate facilitator training around how to maximise the potential of Māori employees. This is likely to add value to future training opportunities.

Consideration of Barriers to Access by Māori

Eight-hundred front-line supervisors and crew level staff were selected by Downer EDI Works branch managers – on the basis of suitable leadership material, as well as the potential to improve their literacy and communication skills.

Māori participants were motivated to enrol in the programme for a variety of reasons, including the desire to be able to have the confidence to discuss problems with their manager, wanting to get more involved with company decision making and having the confidence to put forward ideas in meetings.

CASE STUDIES METHODOLOGY

Case studies were chosen based on recommendations from State sector agencies, and the availability/accessibility of participants. Te Puni Kōkiri liaised with the respective providers to seek permission to conduct on-site focus groups, or one-to-one interviews, with:

- Māori learners;
- Their tutor/s; and
- The provider and /or employer.

In addition, Te Puni Kōkiri requested any relevant documentation that would be useful as background information to our on-site visits.

Others did the course because they were simply told to by managers.

Consideration of Barriers to Māori Retention and Achievement

The lack of foundation skills was hampering Downer EDI Works employees' progress. Moreover, there were issues around paperwork completion, staff retention, manager-worker communication, on-site accidents, and the need for 're-work'. In 2006, a training needs analysis of Downer EDI Works employees confirmed the need for employee support in foundation skills. Thereafter, in 2007, the intervention began – in the form of the TeamWorks course, with its emphasis on leadership.



Barriers to enrolling in the TeamWorks programme included a lack of confidence and self-belief, for example being able to speak to groups and a 'fear' of paperwork. It was often a challenge for facilitators to build up learners' self-esteem and confidence, especially those in lower level jobs or those who had failed at school and felt they would never be good enough for promotion. Such employees had low expectations of themselves – and others of them – which led to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Some employees had strong reservations about coming on the course if the paperwork component was high. Many had developed clever 'avoidance' strategies, such as getting their peers or their partners to do paperwork tasks. They were reportedly more motivated to participate in training if it was 'hands-on'.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Responsive to Māori Culture

A Māori facilitator was well-placed to validate the knowledge that learners bring from the Māori world, as exemplified in:

Manaakitanga – Keeping intact the mana of the learners – and expecting them to do the same with each other; showing hospitality. In the words of the facilitator, "The backbone of what I do lies in manaaki."

Whakapapa – Taking the time to establish links and connections (tutor-learner and learner-learner).



Shane Te Maru, Associate and Trainer for The Learning Wave.

Ako – Learning something from each person in the class and acknowledging what they bring, thus validating their experiences and recognising that they have their own mana.

Pono – Being truthful and doing the right thing. 'Walking the talk' when claiming to be a team player and a good leader, by listening and being open to other people's ideas.

Aroha – Caring for each other irrespective of differences, watching out for each other.

Whakawhanaungatanga – Encouraging participants to operate like a whānau, in the classroom and at work, with their respective roles and responsibilities.

Tuakana-teina – Acknowledging that the less experienced employees will learn from the older ones and the converse too.

The natural integration of te reo Māori helped to validate Māori participants' language and culture. It also helped to convey content, for example using Māori proverbs to succinctly illustrate a teaching point. Some non-Māori facilitators who recognise the importance of whakapapa and connectedness as a basis for building relationships with Māori learners have been successful in bridging the cultural gap and breaking down barriers by relating their own genealogy.

Some branches have 'key' Māori people with mana who value learning and have been able, through their influence and their effectiveness in relationship-building, to encourage fellow Māori to embrace the TeamWorks programme, instead of resisting it. These people are instrumental for getting people on board with training.

Providers and Tutors Are Skilled and Capable

Tutors were described as facilitators. This classification was used to avoid the traditional stereotype of the tutor being the source of all knowledge. The main pre-requisite for facilitator selection was to be a good communicator, with the ability to build relationships.

There were 11 regional facilitators, who were employees of The Learning Wave. Each had two weeks training about the Downer EDI Works company, unit standards, how to teach foundation skills, and how to administer the initial pre-course assessment tool. The facilitators had diverse backgrounds and held a range of qualifications.

Professional development occurred through the Tertiary Education Commission's Learning for Living programme. Some

tutors are now working towards the National Certificate in Adult Literacy Education.

The teaching model was flexible enough to accommodate different styles of delivery and teaching strategies. 'Changes of state' in the classroom were encouraged, to maintain interest, for example working with a visual chart, moving to aural/oral work, and then to role play. Learner numbers were kept small – a group of six with one facilitator. This allowed for personalised learning and individual support.

There is flexibility in the delivery of the content. As expressed by the tutor, "The destination is the same but the flight plan is flexible." As a result, he has been able to integrate stories of different Māori leaders to whom Māori employees can easily relate.

Contextualised Learning and Resources

To accommodate different learning preferences, a foundation skills assessment was conducted for potential participants to highlight individual areas of need. This assessment included working with numbers, reading comprehension (using Downer EDI Works texts), writing, critical thinking and oral communication. The pre-course assessment resulted in an individual learning plan being drawn up for each participant based on the skills needed for their workplace roles. These individual learning plans were set out in the form of individual study, to be undertaken in the six week gap between the first two day course and the second two day course. During that period, varying degrees of support were provided for the participants by way of 'coaching' and appraisals by superiors.

The learning is contextualised. For example, Downer EDI Works written material is used in class so that the learning is immediately applicable to the job. Similarly, the individual learning plans are tailored to workplace needs, and learning is 'hands-on'.

RESULTS

Success is Identified and Replicated

In the final two days of the programme, a post-assessment was conducted to measure shifts against the individual learning plans. Feedback sessions were, ideally, co-constructed – with the facilitator providing constructive critique, followed by both learner and tutor working on the next learning steps.



Lessons had been learnt from previous training. Formerly, there had been a 'top-down', reactive approach to employee training. With the inception of TeamWorks came a more collaborative approach between training provider and Downer EDI Works staff, to ensure that the planning and content was relevant and that employee needs were met. Moreover, best efforts were made to match the demographics of the learner participants with the facilitator, for example ethnicity matching.

Employer buy-in, from the CEO down, augurs well for such training programmes. The challenge will be for employees to sustain their newly-acquired communication skills and not revert to old ways. Workers will be looking to management to take a lead in this.

Programme Contributes to Improved Māori Literacy and Numeracy

The teaching of foundation skills, including literacy and numeracy, is embedded into the different modules of learning that form the TeamWorks course.

Māori Access the Programme

The majority of participants were male, aged 30-59 (which mirrors the construction industry profile). One third were crew operators; others were leading hands, foremen, and supervisors. Their average time at Downer EDI Works was 6.4 years. There was strong representation of Māori employees, especially in Rotorua and Gisborne.

Skills Learnt Assist Māori to Enter the Workforce Or Improve Their Current Employment Position

One of the major benefits for participants was the potential for increased income commensurate with their increased





skills/ knowledge. Moreover, they had more confidence and self-belief to suggest solutions to problems, identify career pathways, and pursue further learning. Job satisfaction was higher and participants were now more able to tackle their own paperwork. Their communication skills had improved, such that they could now speak more confidently to their work groups and bosses. In addition, they were more ready to give others due recognition for a job well done.

Due to improved conflict resolution skills, teams are working more harmoniously. Employees are able to communicate better with the public, for example those irritated by road works delays, and with their peers. In the words of one longstanding employee, "We've been taught different ways to communicate with the guys, compared with what we're used to." From their own experiences as learners, employees can see the value of 'coaching' others to do things the right way, for example using gloves and putting up signs before commencing work.

Flow-on Effects

The Downer EDI Works company was interested in there being a flow-on effect to the community, not just the workplace. There was significant buy-in from Downer EDI Works management, who realised that the building of foundation skills was critical to the success of the business specifically, and to New Zealand's economy generally.

There were also 'softer' outcomes and flow-on effects to other areas of life – in particular, participating in their children's education and communicating more constructively with their partner and children. One employee proudly reported that he was now able to "... take a deep breath, walk away from a confrontation, and think about what to say – rather than getting angry." Another stated, "Me and the missus get the book out and talk about the tools – it's been good for us."

As a result of the TeamWorks programme, there has been a positive spin-off in terms of the Downer EDI Works company's training culture. Learning is now more valued and encouraged, which is congruent with the lifelong learning culture that Downer EDI Works is trying to develop. In the words of the provider, there is no longer the ethos of employing people "from the neck down." Learners themselves report openness to learning new skills – and to persevering with new ways of working.

Ultimately, the company benefits from enhanced performance, increased productivity, and improved staff retention.

- 1 The Learning Wave is a private provider that delivers learning programmes in different organisations.
- 2 Industry Training Organisation for the infrastructure industries.

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