

valuing the difference

TEAM MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

ROUNDAABOUT

tms roundabout



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AUSTRADE

ENHANCING BUSINESS performance OF GEOGRAPHICALLY-DISPersed TEAMS

Managing and leading a high-performing team is a challenging task, and one that needs new approaches when the team members are from globally diverse cultures and are geographically-dispersed. At a recent Team Management Systems (TMS) seminar, Kevin Jones, HR Services Manager of the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade), presented the challenges and strategies to manage a global workforce focused on producing superior business results for Australian exporters. He described how Austrade is using the Team Management Profile (TMP) and shared his experience on how the Profile has helped integrate and enhance the performance of their business units, teams and middle managers.

Background

Spread across Australia and around the globe, Austrade's team of export advisors and business development managers all share a common goal – to help Australian companies do business around the world. The challenge is to find ways to support and enhance the capabilities of 'Austraders' who are dispersed in more than 119 locations in over 60 countries.

Taking a lead role in helping Australians succeed in international business means Austraders need to adopt a 'follow-the-sun' approach with staff on the ground in multiple points of presence offering global 24/7 service. Kevin explained, "Most of Austrade's overseas staff are native speakers and country nationals. They have worked in the market, know the people and the contacts and know how business is conducted in overseas markets and in Australia." Team Management Systems is also a client of Austrade and has benefited from the market research and trade leads to make new export sales to Asia.

Kevin went on to explain that while their global network allows Austrade to service the needs of Australian exporters effectively, this type of dispersed workforce presents unique challenges: "Because team members are not co-located, building strong interpersonal relationships and fostering collaboration through face-to-face interaction is not always possible. The unique characteristics of geographically-dispersed teams can also create 'silos', making it difficult for team members to share and integrate information and ideas, develop a common understanding and coordinate work at a distance, across time zones and cultures."

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**We wish
you & your
families a
very Merry
Christmas
& a happy
New Year!**



A rare chance for this geographically-dispersed team to get together!

Achieving Austrade's Priorities (AAP) Program

"We needed a way to support the development needs of our managers. We know that the challenge in serving a dispersed workforce is for managers to better integrate and coordinate their activities in a way that will ensure effective collaboration," Kevin explained. "The support has to be in place to ensure people work in tandem and are engaged to champion Austrade's business practices and processes. This is where we made the Team Management Profile an integral part of our "Achieving Austrade's Priorities (AAP)" middle management development program. The TMS

concepts turned out to be an effective platform for not just developing managers, but developing Change Agents who are responsive to client requests and understand the value of building high quality relationships with colleagues and clients."



The Team Management Profile is an integral part of Austrade's management development program

Kevin outlined the AAP Program, comprising three stages:

Stage 1: 5-day residential program where the objectives are to build teamwork and leadership capability, accelerate leaders' understanding of Austrade's strategy, accountability and ethics, and understanding the role of change agents within Austrade. The TMP is introduced and debriefed in this program.

Stage 2: 4-month Action Learning Team Project on a strategic issue which is planned, delivered and reviewed using the TMS concepts. Each team builds a TMS Team Plot - How are we operating as a team? How should we approach the project? Helps to fast-track Forming and Norming.

Stage 3: A second 5-day residential program to further develop leadership and management capabilities, including understanding the government imperatives and Australian political process, identifying key issues impacting on clients, customers and allies, and understanding of Austrade culture, core business, planning cycles and strategy.

How does the Team Management Profile fit in?

Stage 1

Kevin described, "The Team Management Profile features strongly in Stage 1, where we introduce the managers to the TMS Framework. He explained, "We don't deviate too much from the session plans provided in the Team Management Systems Accreditation Workshop, as we find the process works! We also find the Personal Discovery Workbook a great resource – the team members are very receptive; they complete the various self-assessments in the Personal Discovery Workbook so by the time they receive their Team Management Profile, they already have a good sense of what their major role is. When the managers receive their Team Management Profile, it further promotes discussion and helps team members discover how they can communicate and work more effectively with each other."

Stage 2

"After Stage 1, the team members experience working with the knowledge of their preferences by undertaking a four-month business impact project on a strategic issue. This year, the topic was on 'Managing the Risks of International Business'. The project is planned, delivered and reviewed using the TMS concepts, and this is where participants get to experience their preferences as they play out at work."

Kevin explained, "In our experience, when things go wrong, it is usually because a team has not completed the Inspecting and Maintaining activities as well as they could have. Teams typically rush to identify and implement a solution, without really understanding what the problem is! We found that our managers needed specific training at Stage 2 and TMS worked with us on how we could better use their Profiles and get good results. The Training Team at TMS suggested using a 'snowball' technique to identify three or four critical issues that occurred during the project; and then to apply the TMS 'IICSAA' framework (see Figure 2) to identify issues and solve problems. This process is akin to a root cause analysis and the framework proved to be a key take-away for our teams. This is where participants really see the impact of their collective preferences on the project outcome. It forces the group to look at what they tend not to do well as a project team and, moreover, areas we can tend to neglect as an organisation."

Stage 3

Kevin goes on to explain, "In Stage 3, the team reunites for additional team-building activities that further examine their understanding of self and others, and the importance of team Linking. Managers also go through more specific training on Austrade's core business and will cover areas such as understanding government imperatives and the political process. They also start the process of managing their careers using a range of strategies which will continue after the program."

Outcomes

"The Team Management Profile has become a key driving force in Austrade's efforts to enhance team capabilities and business performance," said Kevin. "The TMP is integral to our AAP Program, which has been running since 1998. It is particularly important to us, because it not only gets work teams together, but focuses on developing people to their full potential."

"Austrade's entire America's region have completed the Team Management Profile and since each person is a member of multiple teams, that is, one traditional team and a member of at

TMS IICSAA FRAMEWORK

- Issues** (The broad problem)
- Instances** (Actual examples of things not working well)
- Causes** (The main reasons for ineffective team behaviour)
- Solutions** (Identify required behaviours that will reduce issues arising)
- Actions** (Steps required to implement solutions)
- Accountabilities** (Who is responsible for implementing the agreed-to solutions)