

Teamwork Energy

Acting Chief Financial Officer, Richard Van Breda, had more to think about than just the financials when he and his colleague Jane McDonald, Group Manager of Finance and Commercial, were appointed to lead the Business and Financial Services team at Tarong Energy.

Tarong Energy is a Queensland Government owned electricity generator with the capacity to supply one-quarter of Queensland's energy needs. Speaking at a Team Management Systems (TMS) breakfast seminar, Richard said that like much of the energy sector, Tarong Energy had gone through a period of massive change.

"A couple of years ago we were severely affected by drought, and that meant that we had to pull back on power generation. For an engineering type of business, this was difficult. Then at one stage, we were concerned about running out of fuel. We needed to look at a number of options in terms of maintaining our fuel supply for the future," Richard said.

Joining the organisation in the middle of 2008, Richard teamed with Jane McDonald, another new recruit at the time, to head the Business and Financial Services unit. The unit consisted of 100 people with diverse backgrounds, ranging from energy risk specialists to accountants.

Coming from outside the organisation gave both Richard and Jane a fresh perspective on what was required in order to operate successfully in a fast-changing industry. They agreed that a key priority was to change their inwardly-focused team, used to working in silos, to one that was outward-looking and responsive to changing client needs.

"As new managers coming into an existing group, we were concerned that the team would see us as having a particular agenda to impose and that we were going to be regimented in how we dealt with things. So we needed to step back from that and get the team to understand what our motives were, to take them along the change journey and to better understand how each of us works within a team," Richard said.

To instil this culture into their unit and ensure the team had clarity around

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the new direction, Richard and Jane engaged the help of Pat Evatt, a director of Livingstones Australia and accredited TMS Network Member.

"I met Pat when I was working at Stanwell Corporation, another Queensland Government owned electricity generator. She introduced me to the Team Management Profile (TMP) and we

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found it very powerful in terms of breaking down barriers, getting people to talk and raising self-awareness. That is why we decided to use the Profile to support our change journey at Tarong Energy," Richard explained.

Pat has been using the TMS Profiles for more than a decade with great success. As an organisational psychologist predominantly working with clients in the power and manufacturing industries, she favours the TMS Profiles over other psychometric instruments because as she puts it, "The TMS Profiles sell themselves. I always love the group of accountants or engineers that say I can't stand this fluffy stuff; it's a load of rubbish! Because I always know at the end of the day, they are going to be my greatest converts."

So how were the Profiles used at Tarong Energy? To fast-track understanding and gain maximum impact in a short space of time, Pat used three tools from the TMS suite - the Team Management Profile, Opportunities-Obstacles (QO₂TM) Profile and the Window on Work Values Profile (WoWV). These three form the TMS Pyramid of Workplace BehaviourTM tools, building a complete picture of the different ways that people approach work and, making it easier to interact with, manage and lead colleagues.

Pat explained that the Team Management Profile was initially used in a planning session for the senior management team.

"They found the insights from the Profiles so useful that they decided to roll it out to the executive team, who found similar benefit. From the executive team level, it was further rolled out to the team member level. The programme gained even further momentum when we decided to incorporate the use of the Pyramid of Workplace BehaviourTM tools," she said.

"The results of the three instruments were used as part of a two day team session. I knew we were asking a group of people, primarily accountants, working in an engineering environment,

to spend two full days together with a fairly high level of self-disclosure, which is probably not their normal mode of operating. I decided to stick to basics, stick to a process that I know has worked over the years and to use the Profiles that I trusted."

And what is the team makeup of Tarong Energy's Business and Financial Services unit?





Tarong Power Station at night

Pat recalls her first encounter working with Tarong Energy: "I first worked with Tarong more than 10 years ago. At the time, the whole organisation completed the Team Management Profile and there was only one Creator-Innovator in the organisation. More than 90% of the organisation had their major role preference on the Eastern side of the Margerison-McCann Team Management Wheel and they thought that was great. They were all about producing a reliable service so they thought they were a fantastic team," she said.

"The organisation today is vastly different. We found the Business and Financial Services team to be still strong on the Eastern side of the Wheel but they also had representation in the Creator-Innovator and Explorer-Promoter segments of the Wheel. It's great to see there is more balance in the team in terms of role preferences as research by Team Management Systems indicates that high-performing teams need to cover off nine critical activities to achieve outstanding teamwork. The critical tasks of *Advising*

and *Innovating* are going to be important to ensure Tarong Energy's competitiveness in the industry.

"The Opportunities-Obstacles Profile tells us how people approach risk-whether they focus their energy on opportunities or obstacles. It measures an individual's level of optimism, fault-finding, moving towards goals energy, multi-pathways and time focus.

"There was a revelatory moment when I lined up the team with the highest QO₂TM score to the lowest score. This dramatically demonstrated how people approach risk differently. Overall, the team had a median score of 3.6. Compared to the global median score of 2.2, this is a highly optimistic team that is highly goal-oriented and future-focused, and while this is a positive attribute, it could be problematic if obstacles are being overlooked."

On day two, the focus shifted to another profiling instrument from the TMS suite.

"We chose to use the Window on Work Values Profile because it gives the team more clarity around the important values that drive individuals at work and it makes it easy to develop a team charter from the results," Pat said.

"The Window on Work Values Profile led to a significant finding that the TMP and QO₂TM had not revealed. Reflecting on the results from the Window on Work Values Profile, the group realised that they had enormous commonality in terms of the values they felt were important in their work. Every team member shared at least the same two top values and it was only after reading and reflecting on their Profiles that they realised the fundamentals amongst them were more similar than they were different. Seeing the similarity of values really helped to build relationships within the team and help the existing team accept these two new and 'bossy' leaders."

Outcomes

When asked about the outcomes of the project, Richard and Jane were excited about the progress they have made.

"We have started our culture journey and it's reassuring to know that we have a strong foundation in place. We have a much better understanding of individual and team strengths, blind spots and our values and individual drivers. We have been able to use this knowledge to have deeper level conversations with our staff," Jane said.

"What's more important is we know how to channel these strengths to the betterment of the organisation. We have action plans developed from the two-day workshop and we have been able to move forward on these. Richard and I also have plans to set up some coaching and mentoring initiatives for the team."

A final comment from Pat: "I wouldn't hesitate to use the three instruments again in the one package. It was very powerful in terms of learning a lot about people in a short space of time."

Further information

Tarong Energy: www.tarongenergy.com.au
Livingstones Australia: www.livingstones.com.au

Power of three

Combining the Team Management Profile, Opportunities-Obstacles (QO₂TM) Profile and Window on Work Values Profile proved to provide deep understanding of behaviours in the Tarong Energy workplace.

Pat's comments on using the three Pyramid of Workplace BehaviourTM instruments:

Team Management Profile

"I used the Team Management Profile to achieve greater awareness in the team and greater awareness of others and how each impacts on the team."

Opportunities-Obstacles Profile

"I like the deep insights that come with using an additional instrument such as the Opportunities-Obstacles Profile that looks at people's approach to risk."

Window on Work Values Profile

"We wanted to discuss values as a basic driver of behaviour and to check the assumption that there were differing values operating in this team. It turned out there weren't; it was more a difference in style. Seeing the similarity of values really helped to build relationships within the team and help the existing team accept these two new and 'bossy' leaders."