

A MODEL TO COMBINE APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING WITH SENIOR SECONDARY OR TERTIARY EDUCATION.

Background

In August 2000 the state training authority in Victoria (then referred to as the State Training Board) hosted a seminar following the Review of the Quality of Training in Victoria's Apprenticeship and Traineeship System conducted by Ms Kaye Schofield.

Mr Eberhard Weiss, who was then Group Manager, Technical Functions, Robert Bosch (Australia), was a keynote speaker at the seminar.

Mr Weiss expressed concern in relation to tertiary institutions', notably TAFE organisations, capacity to assist in the development of appropriate employees to support the productivity of Robert Bosch Australia. This circumstance obviously reflected on the prospect of offshore development and lost employment in the manufacturing sector with large companies like Bosch or other prominent manufacturing companies.

The RMIT Manager of Apprenticeships and Traineeships and VET in Schools, Alan Montague, requested a meeting with Mr Weiss. The first meeting occurred in September 2000 where Bosch representatives, including Messrs Eberhard Weiss and Christian Klopfer, Manager Continuous Improvement Bosch, met with Mr. Montague and the Associate Director of TAFE at RMIT, Mr Allan Ballagh.

The Model

The model involved completing Year 12 VCE over two years, and beginning an apprenticeship at the same time. Those recruits who had passed VCE (Year 12) with good passes in English, Mathematics and Physics were to be given the opportunity to undertake an engineering diploma part-time while they completed their apprenticeship.

The opportunity exists to progress to degrees and further study and research was possible given the articulation or pathway between engineering diplomas and degrees at RMIT being a dual sector University.

The model addresses a need within the company to provide a coherent pathway from trades through to professional engineer.

Not all recruits were expected to complete an engineering degree - not all may wish to do so. However, for some the opportunity was available. The model simply allowed work and study at the same time in the workplace. The Advanced Diploma in Engineering can be credited to an Engineering Degree and is the equivalent of the first two years of a degree full time degree.

The two PowerPoint attachments provide an overview of the development and main features of the Model:

Development of Our Model (16 slides)
Project Brief (9 slides)

Progress

There have been a number of positive spin-offs to date.

- The model has been a catalyst for rebuilding the Bosch training infrastructure.
- The training facilities have tripled in size over the last two years and additional extensions are planned.
- The project was a trigger for rethinking the implementation of the national curriculum in the Bosch workplace. It taught Bosch that the national training system was more flexible than initially perceived allowing the inclusion of specific technology and soft skill development.
- The model was used effectively as a targeted recruitment tool to explain the benefits of this vocational and educational pathway to potential and their parents. Additionally the model attracted applicants with a higher level of IT and mathematical skills. Consequently the current recruitment assumes that applicants possess intermediate PC skills.
- A higher level of automation and technology demands specific skill development ideally from within the company. Bosch management has recognised the need to develop its own future leaders through a pathway that stems from the trade.
- The model provides individuals with an understanding of the benefits of commencing an engineering career from a trade beginning.

Constraints

- Global conditions in the last quarter of 2001 restricted infrastructure of investment.
- Recruiting targets were reduced and hence the critical mass in 2002/03 was not achieved.
- There is unrealised potential to extend this model to the Bosch supply chain and other major companies in the automotive/manufacturing sector.

RMIT would like to extend its role in developing this model in partnership with industry and government. Appropriate incentives for innovation and the ability to report innovation outcomes, as well as student contact hours, would strengthen the capacity of TAFE providers to play a broader role.

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