

CASE STUDY
Downer Sets New Industry Standards for Workforce Planning, Talent Development and Project Management with Award-winning 'Project Plus' Initiative

PM-Partners creates and delivers a customised project management capability uplift program designed for Downer

BACKGROUND

Project management capability is the lifeblood of Downer and it puts safety at the forefront of all operations. Downer identified an opportunity to increase the capability of its employees by upskilling key roles working and leading across projects to have an increased level of accredited project management skills. The award-winning initiative 'Project Plus' now helps to set new benchmarks in project management for the construction industry. Downer undertook to upskill its employees, and to date, it has trained over 1,200 employees in the region. The wholly customised program has been designed and built by management consultancy PM-Partners for Downer.

ABOUT

Downer is firmly committed to hiring and developing the best project managers. It engaged PM-Partners to create a customised program, branded as Project Plus, developed in line with industry standards and aligned to the Certificate IV in Project Management Practice. Project Plus has been designed to equip project management practitioners with the critical skills and knowledge to deliver successful project results for Downer and its customers across Australia and New Zealand. Downer is committed to four Pillars: Safety, Relationships, Delivery and Thought Leadership and this drove the customised approach. This commitment meant that the course content needed to draw on current best practice in Australia and New Zealand.

Candice Mesecke, Executive Manager Organisational Development and Change states:

“ PM-Partners was well placed to help us design and deliver a program that was current, interesting and 100% focused on our business and our drivers for successful project execution. ”

A number of trainer attributes were non-negotiable for Downer. As an organisation acutely sensitive to the environments in which it operates, the trainer's experience had to be aligned with the people they were training - hands-on industry experience, with a demonstrated track record of successful project delivery.

BENEFITS

“ PM-Partners’ work in delivering a customised workforce development program meant that we were delivering something closely aligned to our Pillars, that delivered to Board-level vision and provided immense benefit to our employees and customers. That’s not to be underestimated. ”

For those working at Downer, or considering employment with the company, Project Plus sends a clear signal of sustained investment in people and opportunities for career development. This was recognised in 2015 when the initiative won AITD Excellence Award for Best Talent Development Program and similarly in 2014 when it won the Chairman’s award for excellence with Skills DMC. Indeed, Ms Mesecke directly attributes improved talent retention to Project Plus by awarding recognised, career-building qualifications, and ensuring people have the opportunity and support to reach their full potential. Downer sets new standards in global Project Management Best Practice and enjoys one of the most highly skilled, safe workforces in the industry.

FUTURE

As the company continues to grow and change, it now has a blueprint for workforce development excellence.

“ This is not a one-off course, this is about an entire framework of development to continually create one of the largest and most advanced project management workforces in the world, ”
concluded Ms Mesecke.

More importantly it raises the bar on project management and delivery in the construction industry, where risk mitigation, safety and on time on budget delivery are key to success.