

Innovation Toolbox

Build Skills

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Implementing any innovation requires access to the right skills and capability. Whether it is researching and prototyping a new product, designing a new brand, introducing a new service or totally transforming the way you do business, there will be technical skills, creative skills, leadership and management skills that are needed to successfully innovate.

Some of these skills will be internally sourced and will be part your current business capability. Others will need to be developed or acquired through hiring new talent or forming partnerships or collaborations with other firms who have the capability you lack.

1.1 What skills do you need?

The first step is to identify the skills that are required. This means developing a clear understanding of the firm's needs now and in the future, and defining the capability that is required in order to meet those needs.

Capability planning includes the following steps:

- ➔ **Business analysis:**
 - looking at where the business is now and where you want it to be in the future, once the innovation is implemented
 - Identifying the gap and what change is required
- ➔ **Job analysis**
 - Identifying the jobs and tasks required to introduce and sustain the innovation
- ➔ **Skills analysis**
 - Identifying what skills are required for each task or job
 - Evaluating current skills
 - Identifying skills gaps.

The gap between your current skills and those required to introduce the change is the potential capability gap. Once you have identified the capability gap, there are a range of options to increase your capability including up-skilling current employees, targeted recruitment and collaborative partnering agreements. To do this most effectively, you may need the help of a specialist in training and development or human resource management.

2.0 HOW DO YOU FIND AND HIRE SKILLED PEOPLE?

If you elect to hire staff with the expertise that you require, you will need to engage in a targeted attraction, recruitment and selection process. The Queensland Government provides a fact sheet on *Hiring the Right Staff*, which you can find on the Smart Skills website under *Running a Business*. You will find the Smart Skills website at:

<http://www.sdi.qld.gov.au/virtual/index.cfm> or

http://www.business.qld.gov.au/virtual/topics/topic1_facts.cfm#733

The Australian Human Rights Commission also provides best practice guidelines for recruitment and selection. You will find them on:

http://www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_employers/best_practice/recruitment.html

3.0 HOW DO YOU DEVELOP THE SKILLS OF YOUR PEOPLE?

Up-skilling your existing staff is an essential part of building your firm's capability. This is especially true if you are introducing new products or services, new technology, processes or business models.

Building skills and knowledge is an important and valuable ongoing investment in your business that should produce better results and higher productivity. When staff value the time, money and effort your business has invested in their development, it fosters a stronger commitment and loyalty from them. Providing effective, ongoing training should lead to motivated staff that know and understand their responsibilities and are keen to develop their abilities further.

There are various types of training and development activities that can be adopted to build skills and capability. These include building knowledge through reading, listening and observing, or developing skills through demonstration, practice, review and improvement. Training and development can be conducted through on-the-job or off-the-job learning experiences, and can include peer coaching, mentoring and formal structured training sessions.

Skills development can also occur through the pairing of the right people together. Teaming right brain (imaginative, holistic framing, visualisation, etc) and left brain (rational, sequential analytic, objective, etc) people together can create an environment where their skills are enhanced. Take for example David Packard and Bill Hewlett of Hewlett-Packard. Both trained as engineers but Packard became the executive leader and Hewlett supplied the engineering spark¹. This right and left brain combination allowed for creativity to be fostered within a structured environment.

You may require the assistance of a training consultant or training organisation to help you scope and select appropriate training and development activities. Public providers such as TAFE Institutes and Universities may be able to assist or you may wish to access the

¹ Rigby D., Gruver K., Allen J., Innovation in Turbulent Times. Harvard Business Review, June 2009.

services of a private provider such as the Australian Institute of Management or a member of the Australian Council for Private Education and Training.

If formal recognition of learning is required or preferred, there are several ways to obtain accreditation. It may be necessary for formal recognition of learning to comply with industry or regulatory requirements. In this case, you can engage an accredited training provider, obtain accreditation as a training provider yourself or adopt a process to ensure staff have access to formal recognition through *recognition of prior learning* (RPL).

The Department of Education and Training has established *Skilling Solutions* centres across Queensland to provide assistance to individuals and organisations in obtaining RPL for skills learnt in the workplace.

4.0 HOW DO YOU ACCESS SKILLS EXTERNALLY?

“Innovations happen at the intersection of disciplines... Open source collaboration is a very different model for innovation and product development than most firms are used to”.

Karim R Lakhani, Harvard Business School

Another way of developing capability is by accessing skills externally through partnerships, collaborations and exchanges. Often, an innovative solution to a problem will come from those with expertise at the periphery of a problem's field. They may not have the skills that are core to your business but they may have complementary skills and be more likely to find answers from other disciplines and do so quickly.

Both the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments offer support to businesses wishing to engage a researcher to work collaboratively on a project through the Researchers in Business Program (Commonwealth) and the Researcher in Residence and Entrepreneur in Residence programs (Queensland).

5.0 CASE STUDY

Australian Aerospace

Formal qualifications have been the focus for staff development at Australian Aerospace. With a workforce of highly skilled staff, Caribou Support Manager Bob Russell wanted staff to be recognised for their current workplace experience towards the Certificate IV in Aeroskills (Avionics, Mechanical & Structures).

Skilling Solutions Queensland's mobile service IT and transport resources provided the Skills First (Recognition of Prior Learning) pre-assessment process to sixteen staff members for the Certificate IV in Aeroskills (Avionics, Mechanical & Structures), delivered on-site to the Aerospace staff.

Dozens of Australian Aerospace staff are now formally qualified after accessing the Skilling Solutions Queensland service. A mobile service, organised by the South Brisbane Customer Service Centre was provided over multiple days to Australian Aerospace staff.

Caribou Support Manager Bob Russell wanted staff to be recognised for their current workplace experience. "Australian Aerospace will benefit enormously from this program by allowing our staff to achieve personal and organisational goals in the shortest and most convenient time possible".

6.0 PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Researcher in Business <http://www.enterpriseconnect.gov.au/Manufacturing>

Smart Futures Commercialisation Fellowships (Researcher in Residence, Entrepreneur in Residence) <http://www.enterpriseconnect.gov.au/Manufacturing>

6.1 Useful links

Smart Skills www.sdi.qld.gov.au/virtual/index.cfm
Or www.business.qld.gov.au/virtual/topics/topic1_facts.cfm#733

Australian Human Rights Commission
www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_employers/best_practice/recruitment.html

TAFE Institutes www.tafe.qld.gov.au

Office of Higher Education (Universities)
www.education.qld.gov.au/office/higher-education/

Australian Institute of Management www.aimqld.com.au

Australian Council for Private Education and Training www.acpet.edu.au

Skilling Solutions www.skillingsolutions.qld.gov.au

CEED www.corptech.com.au

Commercialisation Australia www.commercialisationaustralia.gov.au