

National Disability Workforce Project

Pilot Site Report — part 1 of 4

Staff Incentives

Somerville Community Services

Workforce issues targeted:

- Retention of staff
- Investment in effective retention strategies

We want to ensure that we retain staff members. We have invested in a number of retention strategies and this project gave us an opportunity to closely examine our staff incentive scheme. The incentive scheme included recognition of special days and dates throughout the year, regular staff social events, raffles, monthly meat trays and Christmas bonuses.

Our assumptions:

- Staff enjoy our incentive scheme
- Staff remain in our employ longer due to flexible working arrangements, staff incentive scheme, caring and supportive work environment, stable infrastructure

We assumed from anecdotal evidence that staff enjoyed the incentive scheme and that staff stay with Somerville because of the incentives and the flexible working arrangements, the caring and supportive work environment and stable infrastructure.

Strategies trialled:

- Open communication
- Family friendly work place

We undertook open communication with staff to identify the value of the incentives and the link to retention.

Current strategy of a family friendly work place had commenced and there was a desire by management to nurture staff as individuals.

How we measured the impact of our strategies:

- Staff survey
- Verbal feedback
- Results from statistical data long term
- 2 year and 5 year salary increments

The results of the staff survey indicated that staff members did enjoy the incentives. Some staff members also provided verbal feedback. The impact of the staff incentive scheme will be monitored long term to identify its effectiveness.

While undertaking this project it was recognised that while the incentive scheme appeared to be successful it was also important for our organisation to acknowledge loyalty through our salary structure with the introduction of 2 year and 5 year salary increments.

Conclusions:

- Staff incentive program is successful
- Additional staff incentives were developed due to success of program
- Some staff reported they remained employed due to staff incentive program
- Increased staff morale

There were many benefits to undertaking this project including confirmation that our staff incentive program is working – the benefits in terms of retaining staff will be measured long term.

We identified new staff incentives as a result of the survey including monthly draws for fuel vouchers and we introduced salary increments for long term staff members.

Staff reported satisfaction with the way that management had sought their views.

Implications:

We have a heightened awareness about the value of incentives therefore the organisation has taken upon itself a more formalized role in researching, developing and implementing such programs which is time consuming. The consequences are that we will have a better incentive program borne out of the views of staff, other bodies which will deliver better results all round.

National Disability Workforce Project

Pilot Site Report — part 2 of 4

Job Sharing (International Students)

Somerville Community Services

Workforce issues targeted:

- Long term vacancies
- Frequent use of casual staff
- Impact on quality of service

We were finding it difficult to fill a permanent full time position in one of our houses. The frequent use of casual staff members was unsatisfactory, particularly in terms of providing reliable and consistent support.

Our assumptions:

- Roster would suit all international students
- Easy to implement
- Not long term employment due to other career paths
- Duplication

We had recruited several international students who were studying nursing at the Royal Darwin Hospital as casual employees. Students were on 20 hours paid employment visa restrictions during the school term. Our assumption was that we could create two part time positions within the 20 hour visa limitations to fill one permanent position within the current roster system. We believed that there would be a rotation of students through these positions as their career paths would take them in another direction. We also assumed that this initiative could be duplicated across our other houses if necessary.

Strategies trialled:

- Created roster to meet service needs and employee visa restrictions
- Employed existing casual staff with visa restrictions and relevant skills

We worked to create a roster to meet the needs of the house and meet the employee visa restrictions.

Employment of two existing casual staff members was undertaken.

How we measured the impact of our strategies:

- Vacancy filled
- Probationary period
- Quality of service
- Nursing skills useful
- Regular working hours
- Less casual usage

Vacancy was filled. Probationary periods for casual workers successful. Quality of support service improved. Nursing skills proved useful. International students now have regular working hours and we have less need for casuals in this house.

Conclusions:

- Visa restrictions are different for individuals
- Job sharing is doable
- Thinking more outside the square e.g. part-time position roster adjusted

Visa restrictions are different for individuals and it is not simply a matter of splitting a full time job in half and expecting that two casual workers can fill the rostered hour.

It can work but you need to think outside the square in developing your roster.

Implications:

- Job share roster does not always suit a potential employee depending on their study or other commitments
- The roster is inflexible otherwise other staff's programmed days off would be affected especially their weekends off.
- Some flexibility can occur but only on a shift by shift basis as with all other staff.
- When the job share is filled with two staff it works well. The quality of the program is enhanced because both staff are trained.
- If half the job share is not filled then the hours casual staff are employed is less than for a full time position.

National Disability Workforce Project

Pilot Site Report — part 3 of 4

Staff Training (Partnerships with VET Provider and Support for Students)

SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Workforce issues targeted:

Key workforce issues addressed by this project were:

- Somerville requires a skilled, and ideally qualified, workforce; and,
- two employees on traineeships were unable to complete their studies. This situation provided an opportunity for the project to explore the relationship between Somerville and the VET provider (Charles Darwin University) and consider issues associated with the completion of certificate level studies by the trainees/students.

Our assumptions:

Our initial assumptions were that:

- Charles Darwin University (CDU) may have been too inflexible in the delivery of its VET course;
- trainees lacked motivation and confidence to complete their studies; and,
- course costs for those staff not under traineeships was prohibitive to them taking up study in the disability field.

Strategies trialled:

- The first strategy was to develop a sound working relationship with CDU. Meetings were convened with the CDU Disability Course Co-ordinator which facilitated an understanding of the requirements of both parties. The development of flexible learning options was the key objective of these initial discussions.
- The second strategy was to identify those barriers that prevent students from completing certificate level courses. The development of the relationship with CDU included formal and informal meetings with the two trainees to discuss the difficulties that they faced in the completion of their studies. The progress of another staff member completing certificate level study through CDU was also considered at this stage as that student was successfully completing her studies without the financial assistance available through a traineeship.

How we measured the impact of our strategies:

Measurement of the strategies was undertaken through the following means:

- during the life of the project Somerville commenced the development of a learning structure for new students. CDU and Somerville identified that you 'need to start off on the right foot', that is students require a sound understanding of what is involved in the commencement and completion of VET courses and where to access assistance along the way;
- agreement was reached to develop a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Somerville and CDU. The learning structure will be formalised within the MOU and the document will have a strong practical focus on outcomes for students;
- CDU changed the way in which they will deliver their disability studies course in the future through a stronger focus on their staff working in the field to deliver training and assessment. While the project is not solely responsible for this CDU initiative, our discussions informed CDU of the requirement of students who are employed in full time shift work positions to have access to more accessible study options;
- CDU agreed to waiver fees for trainees during 2009. Again the project did not directly result in this decision but the relationship with Somerville informed CDU of the issues faced by trainees in the field; and,
- one trainee completed the certificate level course and the other trainee completed further units but was unable to finalise her studies due to personal reasons. The staff member, not under a traineeship successfully completed her study and won the Chancellors Medal for VET student of the year in the community services study field.

Conclusions:

- Tertiary institutions and community based organisations can be flexible and achieve excellent results if they are willing to take a 'what is possible?' approach;
- support and encouragement by employers of staff willing to undertake further study is particularly important in an environment where qualifications are not mandatory;
- personal motivation is the primary element for success in all of life's endeavours, including success with study;
- course costs are not always a barrier, particularly where motivation is high; and,
- relationship building with both the VET provider (CDU) and the students was a critical and essential element of this project.

Implications:

- The implications for Somerville is that as an organisation we are now on a partnership journey with CDU to consolidate our relationship and increase the number of employees who commence and complete certificate level courses in disability studies;

- Somerville has just secured another three traineeships, two in Darwin and one in Katherine and we will be trialling the lessons we have learnt from the project with the aim to increase both the number of trainees in 2010 and the number of existing employees who will take up study;
- the project also identified some of the barriers that students face in the completion of study requirements. While there are many opportunities for employers and training providers to provide more structured support we acknowledge that personal motivation, often in the face of adversity, plays a key role in students successfully completing their studies.

National Disability Workforce Project

Pilot Site Report — part 4 of 4

Job Redesign (Client Brokerage)

Somerville Community Services

Workforce issues targeted:

- Addressing long term vacancy
- Community access (brokerage) for clients
- Mentoring/promotion of long term employee

The position of rotating supervisor had been unfilled for sometime. This position had been created to backfill supervisors who were on leave.

We had a number of clients who had brokerage hours for community access authorised by guardians.

A long term employee was identified for promotion but could not meet the more rigorous selection criteria for a supervisor position.

Our assumptions:

- Creating a career path
- Meaningful community access for clients

The creation of the Senior Support Officer position would provide a career path within the organisation for employees to move beyond a level 2 support worker position.

Meaningful community access for clients would be achieved through individually focussed and more flexible options for community access.

Strategies trialled:

- Job description - Senior Support Officer (SSO)
- Community access schedule
- Supervisors' leave schedule
- Meetings

Job Description created which had a dual focus – backfilling supervisor positions and community access for clients.

Community access schedule was designed to assist the Senior Support Officer provide this service to the clients effectively.

Forward planning is vital to ensure the Senior Support Officer is doing his contracted hours so the Manager regularly monitors supervisors leave applications.

The Senior Support Officer had regular meetings with the Manager to discuss the position and was also invited to attend Leadership Team meetings as part of his professional development.

How we measured the impact of our strategies:

- No recruitment necessary for Acting Supervisor positions
- Regular meetings between SSO and Manager to discuss positives and negatives of the job
- Questionnaire given out seeking new ideas for community access
- Feedback from Supervisors

During the period we had an Acting Supervisor available to relieve supervisors on leave.

There were regular meetings between the Senior Support Officer and Manager to discuss positives and negatives of the job.

We have given out questionnaires seeking new ideas for community access for clients.

Discussions at Individual Support Action Plan (ISAP) meeting regarding the skill development of clients.

We also received feedback from Supervisors regarding the project.

Conclusions:

- Dual roles didn't match
- Positive impact on the skill development of clients
- Community access is intermittent due to dual focus of the job
- Identified need for external services to provide some community access

The number of people on community access brokerage doubled from 7 to 15 and it was impossible to meet the dual role of the position.

Community access provided in this way is a powerful tool in the skill development of people. However, the community access became intermittent because of the overriding core business of the supported accommodation service – ie, the backfilling of the supervisor position.

We identified a need for external services to provide some community access to offer a greater range of experiences and ensure that the authorised community access hours are utilised for everyone.

Implications:

We have a better understanding of the role of the Client Support Officer and a review of the duties and responsibilities is underway. Casual staff are employed for the continuous provision of community access to clients.

Job Redesign is achievable but the key elements to a successful Job Redesign are:

- **Review organisation structure**
Where does this position sit within the organisation? Do you need to change the hierarchy of the organisation?
- **Identify skills and knowledge**
Is there anybody within the organisation who has the skills and knowledge who can do the job?
- **Define reporting lines and accountabilities**
Who should this person report to?
- **Write selection criteria, position description and/or performance plans for the individual**
It is vital to have a job description and that the person meets the selection criteria.