



An Australian Government Initiative



CASE STUDY:

BUSINESS REVIEW – Unique Modular Buildings, Campbellfield, Victoria

Unique Modular Buildings manufactures modular and prefabricated buildings for a wide range of industries, from hire and industrial to commercial and education. Established in 1994, the business has a core staff of 17, with up to 10 casuals brought in as orders demand.

After hitting a peak producing more than 800 modular buildings for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, Unique Modular Buildings needed to rebuild, review production practices and investigate new growth markets. So Steve Thompson, General Manager, welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Business Review program.

“Being in the job for a relatively short time, I was just beginning a program to cut overheads and look at where the business was going. The Business Review provided us with a great opportunity.

Our adviser Paul Smarrelli, Business Adviser for Partner Organisation NORTH Link, was excellent. On the first day he was here for four or five hours and when he left I was exhausted! It seemed no way we could get there. But it was also exciting. Having someone with so much expertise asking probing questions made me think about the business in a completely different way and re-prioritise some of the things I was doing. For example, he asked how many of our 2007 customers were repeat business. I had been aware that repeat business was not strong but I'd never asked that question and when I realised it was less than 20%, I knew we had to think this through. The nature of our work is that there isn't a lot of repeat business in the short term, but we began to contact clients from four years ago to see if we could help again.

I was concerned about the time the program would take up, but it worked out well. Paul staged visits so there was plenty of time to absorb the information and



collect data before our next appointment. The best thing for me was the specific, one-on-one contact.

I wasn't listening to an academic in a lecture theatre. I was speaking with an experienced manufacturing professional who understood what I was saying about our business and its issues.

The challenge was thinking deeper and in different directions. The Business Review gave me a baseline of where we are against world best practice. That also gave me an understanding of where we could be. Having a plan is great. It gives us clear direction of where to go next and we know we are moving in the right direction, not backwards.

We're currently developing an action plan and have already made a few improvements. I've introduced an interactive budget spreadsheet that's instantly updated, so we always have accurate figures available. I've identified staff skills and developed a skills matrix so that we know how to allocate tasks and where to focus training. Work method statements are being written for all tasks, so that all staff know exactly what our standards and methods are. Next we are planning to streamline the production process further, introducing some elements of lean manufacturing.

The benefits of the Business Review for us were that we developed a much better understanding of what our business needs, and what best practice is in our industry sector. The report will help us to set achievable goals that will help us to grow profits and our customer base.”

Unique Modular Buildings was provided with a Business Review during 2008 by Enterprise Connect Partner Organisation NORTH Link and Business Adviser Paul Smarrelli.