

# Business Solutions

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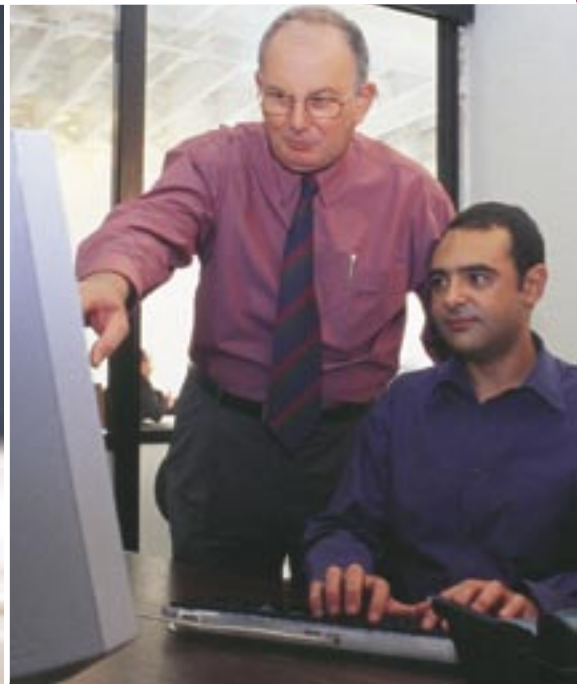
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## this issue

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The implementation of new technologies and other changes within organisations mean managers in any industry are expected to have a wide range of leadership and trouble-shooting skills. Some of these skills are learned on the job, while others need to be learnt in a more formal setting.

In this issue we look at a number of training programs, including Project and Frontline Management, which are emerging as training priorities for large Government and private organisations alike.

Certificate IV in Business (Frontline Management) aims to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to achieve better performance and increase productivity. The NSW Attorney General's Department approached TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute to deliver Frontline Management training to staff around the state, and were attracted in particular by the option for online delivery.

The organisation has found that staff who had been promoted to management positions because of technical skills now have the management and leadership skills needed to perform their job more effectively, thanks to the course.

While dealing with internal issues is important for all businesses, it is equally crucial to know how to deal with customers.

In this issue, we look at a number of courses in the area of Customer Service, including Tourism Certificate III, which is recognised around the world. TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute has been delivering the course in response to a skills shortage on the 'Sapphire Coast', a NSW tourism area which is expecting steady growth in visitor numbers over the next few years.

The AussieHost customer service training program has been delivered to Shoalhaven City Council through TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute in a bid to bring excellence in customer service to the Shoalhaven district.

Excellence in customer service is also the aim of the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) course which is a legal requirement for NSW workers in the hospitality sector who sell, supply or serve alcohol.

With this in mind, Charles Sturt University recently approached TAFE NSW – Riverina Institute to provide skills-gap training to their catering staff. Customised to suit the venue, Institute staff delivered three modules, including RSA, and featured many practical components which participants could then implement on their return to work.

### Janet Stewart

Director, Corporate Marketing

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# Project management alliance promotes business success

Project Management is emerging as a training priority for large Government and private organisations alike, as the implementation of new technology and changes to business represent major projects where outcomes are critical to the success of the business.

A strategic alliance between TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute and Living Planit Pty Ltd to deliver customised training programs has seen the launch of an innovative approach to training in the area.

Organisations or individuals can now take advantage of a three-day program, *Manage Projects*, which can be delivered in-house or at a TAFE NSW location. It can be fully contextualised to meet specific organisational requirements and provides the foundation for higher qualifications.

This fresh approach to Project Management training has been specifically designed to develop the skills known to be essential for successful management within the administrative, commercial, business and/or operational sections of business.

The training targets both knowledge and behaviours that are essential for project success in a complex organisational environment, and incorporates the nine elements of project management across the project life cycle, including Human Resources, Risk, Quality, Procurement and Integration.

'Project Management is increasingly being recognised as a practice that companies and governments must embrace to keep up with today's changing business environment,' National Vice President of the Australian Institute of Project Management (AIPM), Lesley Bentley said. 'In fact, it provides a framework for managing change in an organisation.'

'Our partnership has gained national endorsement from AIPM for the Project Management courses and has also negotiated membership agreements with AIPM for our students,' Ms Bentley said.

Catherine Dunkerley, Trade Commissioner, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, who has completed the TAFE Diploma of Project Management, said she had been seeking training that met all her criteria and objectives.

'It was essential the training was business focused and work-based so I could put the learned 'theory' into practice in my everyday working environment,' Ms Dunkerley said.

'I am happy to say the TAFE NSW training met all my needs and was a positive experience. It has given me a functional structure and tools with which to build on and undertake my projects more efficiently and effectively,' she said.

The programs are suitable for staff at all levels who are involved in managing projects. After obtaining the Manage Projects qualification, participants have the opportunity to undertake a Certificate IV or Diploma in Project Management.

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Project Management is increasingly recognised as a necessary skill in business.

## Games-time training program basis for local government initiative



**From left: Di Laver, senior head teacher, Tourism & Hospitality, TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute; John Wells, Director, Community & Operations, Shoalhaven City Council; Virginia Mitchell, AussieHost Coordinator and Bruno Corletto, training consultant, Illawarra Institute at the presentation of an 'AussieHost Gold Business' Certificate to the Council.**

Delivering great customer service is not an aim confined to commercial enterprises – government and community organisations also have stakeholders to whom they are accountable.

The AussieHost customer service Games-time training program was delivered by TAFE NSW around the state in the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Based on an award-winning program originally developed in Canada, AussieHost is accredited by the Vocational, Educational and Training Accreditation Board (VETAB) and also has industry recognition, at the level of Statement of Competency, for the transport, hospitality, tourism sectors.

Now, Shoalhaven City Council and TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute have joined forces to bring excellence in customer service to the Shoalhaven district through the AussieHost program.

For the past decade the Illawarra Institute has been closely associated with Shoalhaven City Council by providing specialised training to staff. In that time, Council has taken serious steps to improve the customer service culture within the organisation, leading to the launch of the '2005 Year of the Customer' customer service improvement initiative.

'The training provided by TAFE NSW was designed to enhance employee pride and a sense of responsibility within the organisation, with greater awareness of customer needs and expectations,' said Shoalhaven City Council's Director, Community and Operations, John Wells, who coordinated the training at the Council and also undertook the course himself.

'The aim of the project is to provide ratepayers of the Shoalhaven with an improved level of customer service across Council's operations,' he said.

During 2005, 160 staff from Council's libraries, tourist parks, aquatic & leisure operations, cemeteries, community services, arts centre, tourist parks, visitor centres and building services have participated in the 'Year of the Customer' and the AussieHost training program.

According to Illawarra Institute's Nowra-based Training Consultant, Bruno Corletto, the AussieHost training program is based on the principle that a positive attitude to service, combined with improved skills, will result in a powerful improvement in business development and the job satisfaction of staff as well as improved service for customers.

'AussieHost also promotes the importance of providing effective and professional levels of 'internal' service. In simple terms, it's for anyone who deals with customer concerns and who needs to know how to handle them constructively,' Mr Corletto said.

'The outcomes have been excellent,' said Mr Wells. 'We have well-trained and qualified staff, the training is spot-on, and we're enjoying excellent feedback from the community.'

Paul Goodwin, Relieving Manager of District Operations South Coast says the AussieHost training with Council is one example of the flexibility that TAFE NSW can offer as a corporate training provider.

'TAFE is not just about on-campus training. We have the ability to deliver on-site training programs and customer service audits that are designed specifically for any organisation, regardless of the topic and mode of delivery.'

The AussieHost program delivered by Illawarra Institute, through the Tourism & Hospitality section, and sponsored locally by the Shoalhaven Tourism Board, has been rated No 1 in Australia by the Retailers Association of NSW for training the most AussieHosts throughout Australia.

### Quick response to handle rise in complaints calls

Sometimes organisations need to act quickly to respond to changes which could affect worker productivity or even health and safety. This was the impetus behind a one-day training program developed for the Department of Lands in response to a very specific problem.

The rules for use of Crown Land had recently changed and the Department was receiving many angry phone calls which were distressing and time-consuming for their staff. TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute delivered a workshop *Dealing with Difficult Telephone Customers* to all staff affected.

Some of the staff had been brought into a telephone customer service role without much prior experience in the area, only to find that due to a change in policy they were dealing with a massive increase in 'difficult customer' calls.

Each participant received a training manual specially developed for the program. The group dealt with theories of communication relevant to the workshop such as assertiveness and active listening, and completed activities outlined in the manual.

They then discussed case studies and participated in role plays specifically designed to replicate the issues they were dealing with at the time.

'The success of the Department of Lands program was due in no small way to the open and collaborative approach by Lands staff which allowed us to produce meaningful case studies and scenarios,' said Bronwyn McCallum, Coordinator Learning & Development, TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute.

'We were able to develop a program that was truly relevant and useful to the participants, because we were provided with any policies and documentation requested.'

'We were able to relieve some of the tension surrounding continual conflict,' Ms McCallum said.

'Each of the interactive sessions involved activities based on sound theories and actual experiences. We finished the day with a stress relief activity that was welcomed by all. The evaluation sheets indicated that the students found it very useful.'

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**TAFE NSW tailored a one-day course to help staff deal with a sudden rise in customer complaints.**

## Managers on the 'frontline' find roles easier

These days, managers at the 'frontline' of a business are expected to have a range of skills including the ability to develop and implement operational plans, promote team effectiveness, and assess and combat occupational health and safety risks.

According to Michael Broad, Leadership Development Manager in Corporate Human Resources at the Attorney General's Department of New South Wales, many people are in management positions in the organisation because of their technical expertise, rather than their management experience.

In order to address this gap, the NSW Attorney General's Department approached TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute to deliver Frontline Management training to staff around the state. The Certificate IV in Business (Frontline Management) course aims to provide participants with the knowledge and skills to achieve better performance in increasing productivity at an operational level.

'We were looking to address some issues in the leadership area at all levels in organisation, and felt it was important to provide frontline management training to middle managers in the first instance,' Mr Broad said.

'The response from people about content and the relevance of the material to their workplaces has been positive,' he said. 'They are finding it helps them out in their role as managers. We've done an evaluation midway through the one-year course for each of the groups, and we're really pleased with how it's going.'

Mr Broad said the ability of TAFE NSW to deliver the course online was a major drawcard.

'Our offices are scattered throughout NSW, and some offices have only one staff member, so we were particularly interested in the online option,' he said.

There are plans to expand training within the NSW Attorney General's Department to other staff from this year.

'We will be doing a full evaluation at the end of the Diploma course in June, but at this stage we are planning to get all of our managers who work in the local courts to go through to at least Certificate IV level.'

Throughout 2005, TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute has also conducted a workplace training program on frontline management for 18 employees of Port Kembla Coal Terminal (PKCT). Once again, TAFE NSW ability to be flexible was of major benefit to the organisation.

'PKCT is pleased with TAFE NSW in tailoring the program to the various skill levels of employees,' said General Manager John Brannon. 'There were a lot of project-based assignments which staff could implement in the workplace, and TAFE NSW delivered worthwhile analysis and recommendations in reports following the training.'

The learners carried out small group activities and competencies were assessed in the context of workplace design. They included portfolio development, workplace action learning projects and reporting on major work-based improvement programs.

Overall, the training program has been highly successful and has given employees a new and more flexible way of learning important workplace competencies, according to Mr Brannon.

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## Flexible training benefits tourism sector

Tourism is a big employer for the State of New South Wales – with an estimated 5.8%\* of the state's workforce employed in the industry – and training to meet demand for quality staff is always a priority.

With both domestic and international visitor numbers increasing across the state, tourism operators on the south coast have experienced an influx of visitors cruising into Eden from November last year.

Australian and international cruise ships have added the Port of Eden on the NSW far south coast to their itineraries and the community has been gearing up to make the most of new-found opportunities in tourism. TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute, Bega Campus has played a major role in preparing individuals for job opportunities expected to accompany the growth in tourism in the area known as the 'Sapphire Coast'.

In response to a regional skills shortage in the industry, Illawarra Institute has taken its Tourism Certificate III course to Eden, giving students the chance to pursue future employment options locally, nationally or internationally. The Certificate III qualification is transferable and recognised around the world.

Michelle Robinson, Tourism Promotion Manager for the Sapphire Coast said the program will go a long way towards meeting the needs of cruise ships coming to port in Eden.

'Upwards of 40 tour guides may be required with each landing, ensuring that local guides will be keenly sought,' Ms Robinson said.

Teachers from varied backgrounds have each brought their particular expertise to the course. The team includes Jacqui Vincent, who has worked for over 20 years in the travel sales industry both locally and abroad, and Debbie Meers, who has been involved in coordinating the tours and assisting the Volunteer Guides for Sapphire Coast Tourism.

Tourists spend over \$180 million each year in the local area, which makes tourism revenue the largest income source in the Bega Shire – and it is increasing each year. International tourism has recently increased by 17% and international tourists are more likely to want the services of a tour guide for specialty tours in areas such as eco-tourism, Aboriginal culture, wilderness discovery and coastal exploration.

Local tourism attractions such as the Marine Discovery Project and tourist information offices are likely to require staff to possess a Tourism Certificate II level qualification or above.

\* Tourism NSW report, Sept 2005

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A team of volunteers, who have all completed the Tourism Certificate III, waits for passengers coming off the cruise ships at the Port of Eden.

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## Short course brings hospitality staff up to speed

Keeping up to date with industry requirements is a must for workers in the hospitality sector to enhance employment prospects – and employers also benefit from training their staff to meet current industry standards and, in some cases, legal requirements.

The laws in NSW pertaining to the Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) require those involved in the sale, supply or service of alcohol in the State to hold a NSW approved certificate.

RSA is an interventionist program, requiring action by a licensed venue to implement and maintain responsible serving measures. RSA requires licensees, club secretaries and staff to intervene in situations where intoxication is detected and to prevent minors accessing alcohol on or from the venue.

Most liquor licensees and club secretaries have to complete a Liquor Administration Board-approved RSA course or an approved course of training that includes a Responsible Service of Alcohol component.

With this in mind, Charles Sturt University recently approached TAFE NSW – Riverina Institute to provide skills-gap training to their catering staff. Customised to suit the venue, Institute staff delivered three modules: Hygiene for Food Handlers, Wine and Beverage Service (including Responsible Service of Alcohol), and Function Service.

'The catering manager at the University stipulated that certain skills were to be addressed which we incorporated into the course,' said Jim Creed, teacher in charge, Tourism and Hospitality, Riverina Institute.

'This included skills such as customer service, dining and wine service etiquette and communicating effectively with guests,' he said.

Mr Creed said participants represented a diverse group, both young and old, male and female, some with many years of experience and others new to their role.

'Some were reluctant to participate because they had been doing it for years,' said Mr Creed. 'This was a real challenge for the teacher.'

The course was delivered in December 2005 while the University was on holidays, with training conducted in the Institute's On Course restaurant, located at Wagga Wagga Campus.

The course features many practical components which participants implemented on their return to work.

Participants learnt about responsible service strategies; the legal obligations of bar staff; and the strengths and effects of alcoholic beverages and standard drinks. They also learnt about smoking regulations and the benefits of responsible service strategies.

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**The course features many practical components which participants can implement on their return to work.**