



**Skilling Australians:  
Workforce Development Case Study**  
**SCU Study and Rewards Program**



Through the Australian Government's National Workforce Development Fund, IBSA works with organisations like SCU (Sydney Credit Union) to motivate, develop and upskill staff to increase their performance and ultimately contribute to the profitability of the organisation and the productivity of the Australian workforce.

In 2013 SCU celebrates 50 years of operation, and like other financial institutions dealing with the impacts of the global financial crisis, they had to look at their future to ensure ongoing relevance, profitability and growth.

SCU has 19 branches located around Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Central West NSW. The credit union services nearly 50,000 members and employs over 130 staff. SCU provides a range of financial services to members in the Sydney and Greater Western Sydney area and they provide exceptional service to their members while employing local staff and supporting local communities, clubs and special activity groups.

### **People before profit**

Operating in a highly competitive marketplace and working within a strict licensing regime present ongoing challenges. SCU knew that skilling and training their employees would be an effective strategy in improving competitiveness. A specific response to addressing employee retention at key levels and raising the bar in providing the services their members expected was to support employees to gain a financial services qualification. This approach was aligned to SCU's business philosophy of 'people before profit' – both for their members and their people.

SCU initiated a *Study and Rewards Program* to support staff financially, giving them time for study at home and work, providing access to materials and, most importantly, formal recognition via presentations and in the SCU Staff Newsletter.

This program became an extension of the existing human resources policy that encourages professional development linked to a career path at SCU.

### **Workforce Development through Vocational Education and Training**

With a clear philosophy and the *Study and Rewards Program* in place, SCU looked for training that would best develop the skills of their target groups, the Customer Services teams and managers.

SCU had a direct line of sight on what they saw as the benefits from this training.

"What is your motivation to do this training?" was a question put to staff during the process. SCU wanted full commitment to the demands of training and to have people who, after achieving their qualifications, could inspire others to do the same. Outcomes from SCU's workforce development planning allowed the managers to sit with selected staff and together choose the units that would best fit business needs, in particular new licensing and compliance requirements.

The Diploma of Management with its units on leadership and planning was perfect for SCU's middle and senior business managers; it offered a way of attaining a management qualification for staff working in key frontline positions. Because most managers also managed teams they selected the 'Provide Personal Leadership' and 'Manage Workplace Teams' units to hit the target skills. SCU also wanted the 'Operational Planning' unit to sharpen managers' skills in budget and income management – another key part of their roles.



***"The most important ingredient to our success and differentiation compared with other providers has always been our people. It is an element that our members continue to remind us is critical as we are rated highly compared to the banks and other financial service providers."***

Ashley Jennings,  
CEO



As coaching skills of their managers are so critical to performance outcomes, SCU was keen to improve this capacity. The Diploma's 'Manage People Performance' unit would give managers skills in providing informal feedback, conducting structured formal feedback as well as monitoring and coaching individuals to improve performance.

At the team level the nationally recognised Certificate programs were seen as the vehicle to most efficiently bring SCU's existing employees to a level where they could better understand their role in contributing to the organisation's profitability. Training would give them a business focus and get them talking business from the mailroom to the loans desk!

Since the *Study and Rewards Program* was implemented there has been 100% retention of those undertaking the training, addressing one of SCU's key workforce planning priorities. There have also been 'light bulb moments' for learners, for example when one staff member acknowledged that her Certificate IV studies directly contributed to her work on a security register project, as well as better positioned her for a promotion.

### **Vocational Education and Training and the National Workforce Development Fund**

The National Workforce Development Fund (NWDF) is a new approach to skills training that focuses on meeting business training needs. It is an innovative, industry-driven model that enables businesses to work through an Industry Skills Council and co-invest with the Government to train, reskill and upskill workers in areas of skills need.

SCU has previously shown its commitment to skilling its staff and has experienced the power of VET to successfully train its people through the use of Traineeships. This time, working with IBSA

*"Our leaders will consider new ways of doing things and therefore improve efficiencies. With improved leadership and planning skills the leadership team will be more organised in their approach to achieving our goals and targets, and the teams will embrace the company vision in a way that will have our members using more of our products and services..."*

*With more members doing this our profitability increases; with improved people management we can retain and grow our employer of choice status in the community."*

*Joanna Vella, Member and Staff Relations Manager*

to identify the priority skills and access the National Workforce Development Fund, and in partnership with the Australian College of Commerce and Management, SCU enrolled 19 team members and managers across a number of qualifications: Certificates III in Business and Financial Services, Certificate IV in Banking Services and in the Diploma of Management.

As anticipated, the rewards for the company and its people have been many. The study ethic is strong within SCU and continues to pay dividends for business productivity. The skilling program has proven to be a cost-effective strategy for the company. SCU front line staff are better able to provide member services and promote products and importantly all staff and managers are now 'firmly focussed on business'.



### 'More generous banking'

SCU is a financial institution offering a wide range of more generous banking products and services with a focus on people before profit.

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#### More information about Australian Government programs

<http://skillsconnect.gov.au/>

### Innovation & Business Skills Australia Ltd

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) is one of eleven Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) funded by the Australian Government to provide integrated industry intelligence and advice to governments on workforce development and skills needs; maintain and improve training materials and supporting products and services; and provide advice on skills, training and workforce development to enterprises. IBSA is committed to building the capability of businesses and to ensuring

individuals have contemporary skills through the vocational education and training system in ICT, telecommunications, education and training, small business administration, printing, finance and the cultural and creative industries. IBSA is an expert intermediary on qualifications, skills needs and workforce planning and works as a central coordination point for the Australian Government's workforce development programs.

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