How to become
an employer of choice
in an industry of choice:

A practical guide to
workforce development
for the
Australian Meat Industry

FTH SKILLS COUNCIL

mla
MEAT & LIVESTOCK AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia
Department of Further Education,
Employment, Science and Technology

SouthAustraliaWorks
linking people, skills and jobs

Food, Tourism and Hospitality Skills Advisory Council SA Inc is one of nine Industry Skills Boards which were established by the South Australian Government to provide industry advice and develop partnership networks – and to be leaders within industry to provide workforce information and planning advice.

By working directly with industry, community and government, the Council has a role to:

- identify workforce trends and emerging skill needs

- develop industry specific workforce plans

- consider issues relating to career advice and the attraction and retention of a skilled workforce.

A Project Manager and an Industry Change Agent have been appointed to specifically support the South Australian Meat Industry as it enters a period of significant growth. Through a series of consultations and forums, a framework has been developed which will specifically assist the attraction and retention of an appropriate workforce to support that growth. This booklet has been developed as part of that strategic framework.

Meat and Livestock Australia is a producer-owned company that provides services to livestock producers, processors, exporters, food service operators and retailers.

With a mission to develop world leadership for the Australian red meat and livestock industry, core activities include building demand for Australian red meat; improving access for products; and conducting Research & Development to provide competitive advantages for the industry.

The two organisations have worked collaboratively to develop this resource for the Australian Meat Industry. It has been prepared with funding support from Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and the South Australian Government through the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST).

Contents

Introduction

Labour shortages and skills shortages can occur for a number of reasons.

General shortages can occur when the economy is strong and there are low rates of unemployment – or through demographic pressures such as an ageing population.

Specific industry shortages can occur when there is significant growth within an industry – or when there is growth in other industries which are more attractive to jobseekers.

Sometimes technological changes within an industry can bring pressures, because workforce training has not kept pace with developments.

At other times, shortages will be felt more within a specific business because it is not an 'employer of choice' for the people it is seeking to engage – jobseekers don't apply for vacancies and don't stay with the company for long – or the business has been so busy focussing on day-to-day operations that it has failed to plan for its future needs.

The Australian Meat Industry is currently facing skills and labour shortages for all these reasons – but it is not alone. Mining, Health, Retail, Construction, Transport (and many others) are struggling to recruit and retain a workforce which is appropriate for their current and future needs. These industries are actively planning and implementing a range of strategies to overcome their workforce challenges.

The South Australian Meat Industry also has developed strategies – many of them based on recommendations contained in a report commissioned by Food Training SA in mid 2003.

The Food, Tourism and Hospitality Skills Advisory Council SA Inc (FTH Skills Council) has been particularly active in this regard – through the *Attraction and Retention of Labour in the SA Meat Industry Workforce Development Project.* The project has a governance structure which includes a high level task force and state-wide steering groups – but is flexible to include localised activities at a regional level.

This booklet has been produced for you as part of that project.

It supports other activities such as the development of a school-based New Apprenticeships program; a collaborative model for workforce attraction; and a series of locally based workforce development workshops.

A practical guide

'How to become an Employer of Choice in an Industry of Choice' is a practical guide to workforce development in the Australian Meat Industry. It has been designed to help your business achieve the benefits of being able to recruit, develop and retain the people you want to employ.

It is not prescriptive – there are no hard and fast rules you must follow. Appropriate workforce development for each business will vary.

The strategies you use and the activities you undertake will depend on a number of things – the size and shape of your business; the size and shape of your workforce pool; the current culture of your organisation; and your potential for growth and new employment.

However, the one certainty is that workforce planning and workforce development is a critical key for you to survive and prosper in the Meat Industry.

The following pages therefore offer some of the building blocks you will need to plan for your survival and develop your workforce for prosperity.

Sometimes the booklet will simply pose the questions you will need to answer for yourself in order to develop your plan and implement your activities.

However, you will also find some possible solutions – activities that have proven successful for other businesses and strategies which have been developed following research in the Meat Industry and in other industries faced by similar challenges.

This is not an academic report and it is not intended to be. It is a practical, easy-to-read guide that supports the practicalities of running a business and is intended to be useful to small, medium and large businesses; processors and retailers; owners and operators; HR Managers and Plant Managers.

As you read, it is important that you don't view workforce development as an onerous stand-alone project – but as a process which is integrated with the successful operation of your business.

**Becoming
an employer of choice
in an industry of choice**

| Understanding workforce development | Basic analysis and planning | What you can do | Where you can find help |

| Recruitment | Retention | Workplace Culture | Migrant Recruitment | Building Capability | Community Perceptions |
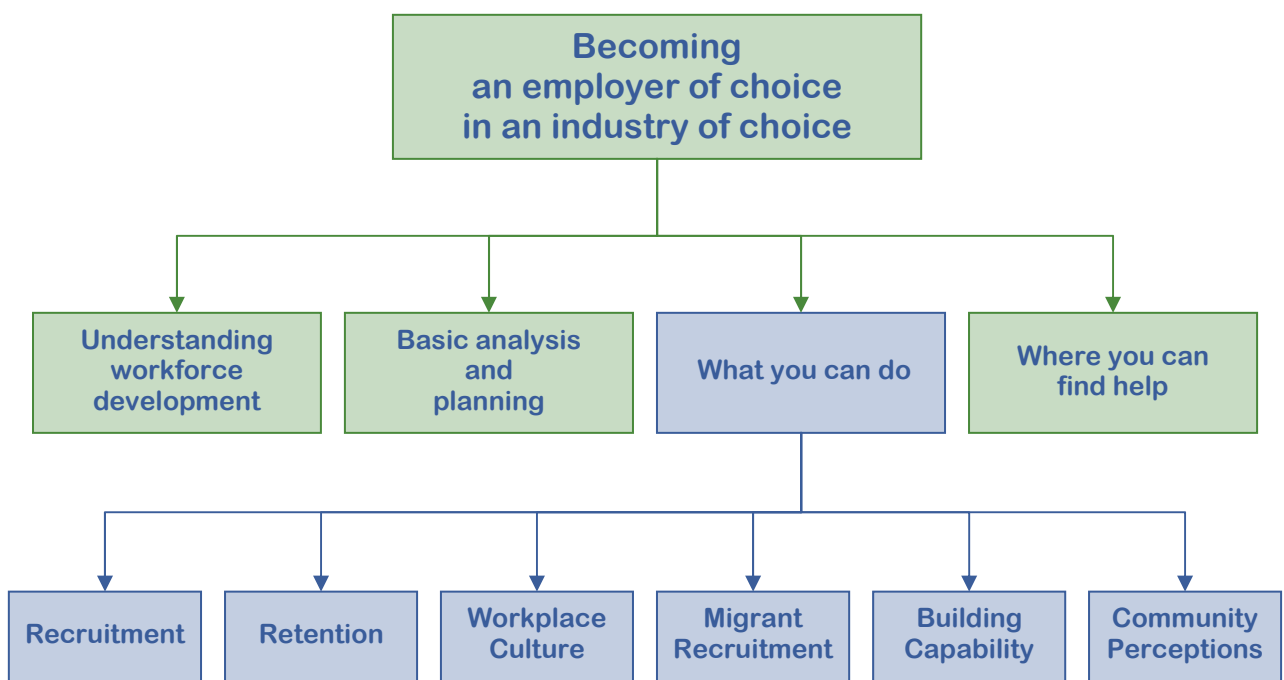
Workforce Development: Why would you do it?

An ageing population is reducing the workforce

Australia, like most developed countries, has an ageing population. This is not just about the number of older people – but about the ratio of older people to other age groups. The ageing of our population has been occurring ever since people started to acquire influence over fertility and mortality.

This influence and its impacts have been accelerating – and will continue to do so. The proportion of Australian people aged 65 years and over is expected to more than double in the next few decades.

South Australia and Tasmania already have a higher representation of older people than other Australian States – and the tendency for migration patterns to disproportionately remove their young presents additional challenges for the future.

The economic implications of an ageing population are far-reaching, but the most important impact for you is likely to be continually reducing labour force participation rates.

Governments at every level are planning how they will address the gap between taxation revenue and service demand. So too, you must plan how you can address the gap between the workforce you will want and the workforce that will be readily available to you – how you will grow or even maintain your business with an ever reducing pool of employees and potential employees.

The industry is approaching crisis point

Processing plants are spending a disproportionate amount of time and resources advertising, recruiting and training – only to experience the 'revolving door of turnover'.

Production, safety, morale and indeed the long term sustainability of the industry are all suffering.

**Kerrie Abba,
People & Systems Programs Manager
Meat and Livestock Australia**

This issue is approaching crisis point for the Australian Meat Industry. Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) has already identified significant impacts on businesses that have been unable to attract and retain skilled effective workers.

Together with the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council Limited (MINTRAC), MLA has been attempting to analyse the extent and impacts of recruitment and retention issues – but has been hampered by the lack of available data.

Anecdotally, however, almost 40% of companies are reporting turnover rates of around 20%. Specific data about traineeship completion rates can be more easily validated.

This shows that almost two-thirds of trainees leave before completing their traineeship – of 5,000 trainees that enter the industry each year, only 1700 remain for 12 months!

Automation has consistently been raised within the industry as a solution to workforce difficulties. While it is true emerging technologies are influencing the dynamics of the value chain, it is clear that this is one issue that simply cannot be 'engineered out'.

Free trade agreements are approaching – and will bring with them pressures on exporters to compete effectively against countries which have lower cost structures (significantly impacted by lower staff turnover rates). Unless the industry is able to effectively address staffing issues, cost-price pressures will render the industry uncompetitive in export markets.

To compound these issues, the Australian Meat Industry is challenged by changing community expectations about meat production systems – with pressures for more attention to environmental considerations, animal welfare and product traceability. These pressures impact on the community profile of the industry – and its ability to attract new employees.

Workforce development, therefore, is essential for the sustainability of the industry at every level. The *'why you would do it'* is not only for future growth – but for survival.

Invest now to save future costs

Some business owners claim they can't afford the time or the costs associated with workforce development – including implementing workforce retention strategies.

Have you ever really stopped to consider how much it costs when you lose an employee or need to recruit a replacement? There are the easy-to-find costs such as payments for advertisements or to a recruitment agency – but have you calculated the hidden costs?

How much time was spent developing the advertisement, screening replies, interviewing applicants, deciding on the new employee, and advising applicants of your decision?

Calculate the costs using hourly rates for yourself, your managers, and other people who might have been involved – right down to the administration personnel who may have been typing!

Now multiply by three – this is the commonly accepted true value of employees' time to your business if you account for overheads and other productivity losses!

There are also opportunity costs to include.

How long will it take for your newly recruited employee to get up to speed? This will range according to the level of the position in your business. Most employers agree that even at entry level it can take six months – but at higher levels, it can take up to two years! What opportunities will be lost to your business during this time?

If you're worried you'll go through the process of developing people's skills,

only to see them leave to work for someone else…

stop and think what would happen if you didn't …

and they didn't!

What other activities could Human Resources personnel have been planning and implementing to increase productivity across the workforce?

And don't forget to consider the loyalty factor. Again, dependent on the position, your lost employee may actually lose you customers! The relationship between customers and frontline employees should never be underestimated.

The loyalty factor can also have an impact on other staff. Losing one staff member can take you right back to the top of the calculation table for 'a mate'; or a valued employee who has just lost a trusted supervisor; or a supervisor who has just lost one team member too many!

Continual recruitment
Lost productivity
Lost opportunities
Lost loyalty
Lost customers

Investment in Workforce Development

Most of these costs are applicable to all industries, but when the specific costs of the Meat Industry are taken into account – such as screening, vaccinations, fitting new employees out with kit and personal protective equipment – the bill begins to mount alarmingly.

And high turnover is self-perpetuating. The added stress it places on other team members leads to low morale, impacts on productivity and quality control – and spiralling safety issues, injury rates and absenteeism.

When you consider the real costs of losing or replacing an employee, the investment in retention strategies and workforce development seems small – and makes absolute sense!

Workforce Development: How would you do it?

First, what is it?

Some employers believe workforce development is just about offering training opportunities to employees – and there is even a perception in some quarters that *"you're really only training someone up for someone else"*. (Without appropriate workforce retention strategies, that may even be true!) However, workforce development is much more than 'training'.

There have been many attempts to deliver a precise definition of 'workforce development' – to create one statement which exactly defines what is actually a broad and interlinking process. This booklet could have drawn on any number of them – with precise, technical phrases and carefully selected multi-syllabic words. However, as a busy employer, you're probably really only interested in what it means to you.

In a nutshell…

Workforce development in your workplace is about an overarching program with a series of activities that will help you to:

- **get the right people**

- **grow the right people**

- **keep the right people**

needed for the successful operation of your business now and in the future.

It's about creating a match between your workforce and your business – and taking account of what's happening outside your business that might impact on that 'perfect match'.
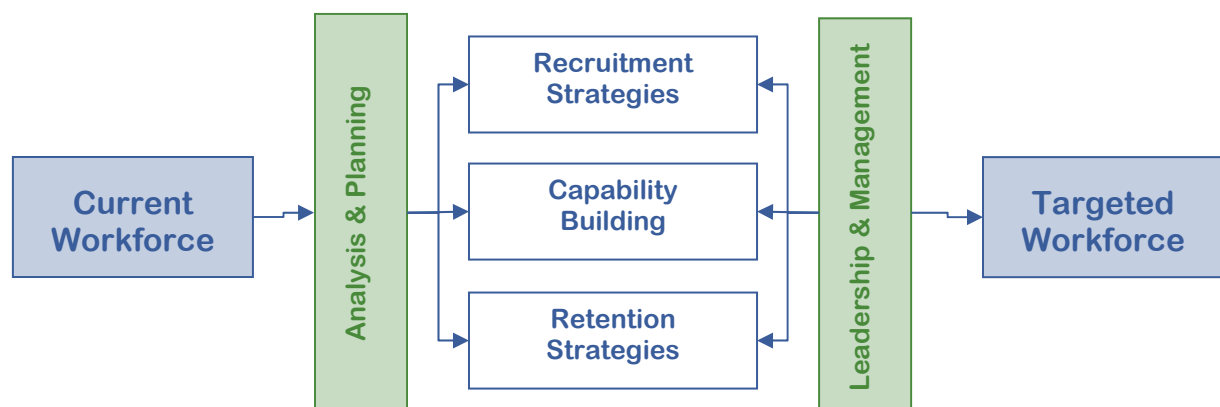
Building blocks for planning Workforce Development

Workforce development planning cannot occur as a stand-alone process, isolated from your other business practices.

It needs to be integrated to incorporate both your current and future operating contexts – and that includes on-going monitoring of the environment, arising workforce issues and emerging business strategies.

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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Review the      │     │ Consider what   │     │ Identify the    │
│ workforce that  │ ──> │ your ideal      │ ──> │ workforce that  │
│ you have now    │     │ current         │     │ you will want   │
│                 │     │ workforce would │     │ in the future   │
│                 │     │ look like       │     │                 │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
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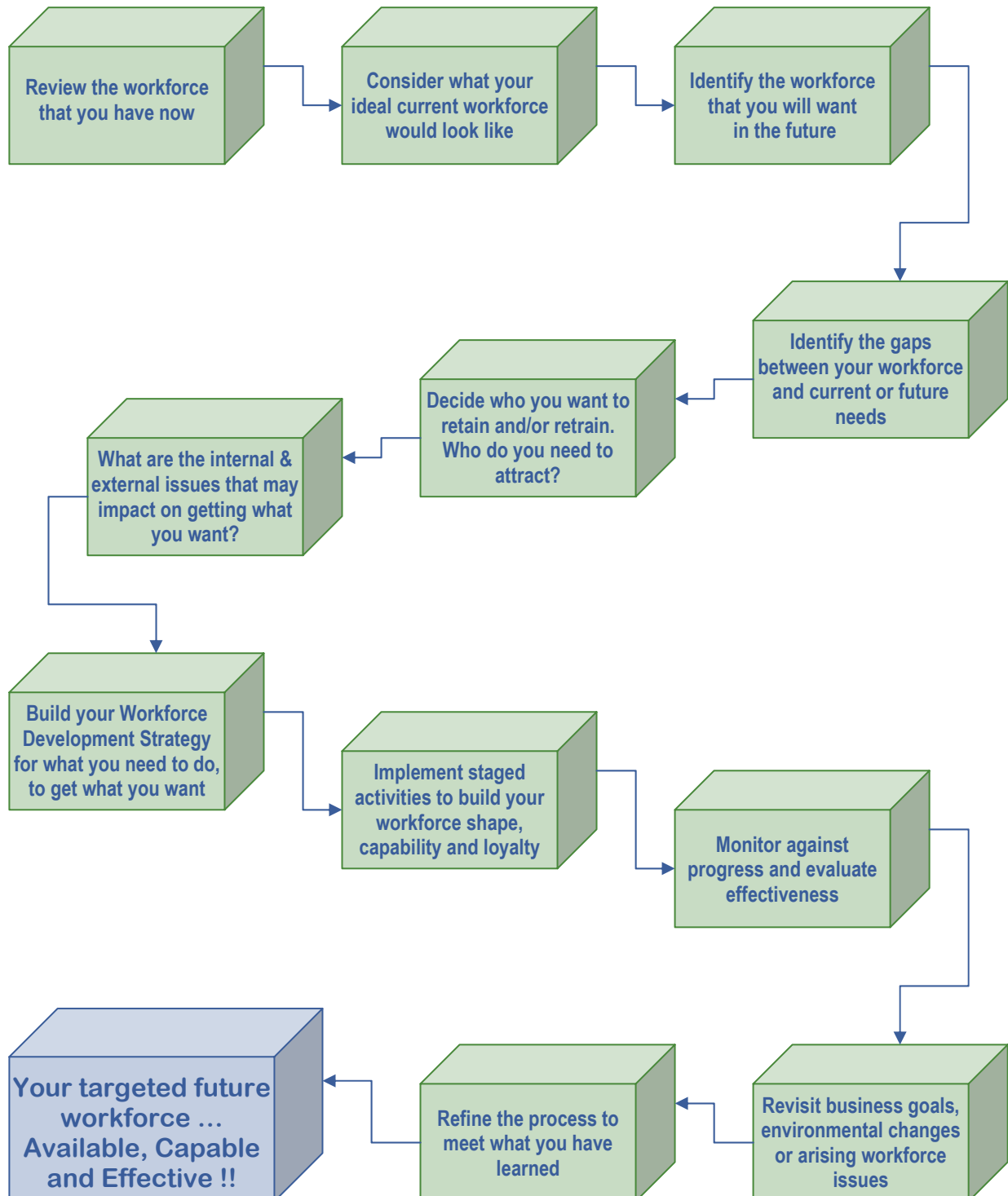
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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ What are the    │     │ Decide who you  │     │ Identify the    │
│ internal &      │ <── │ want to retain  │ <── │ gaps between    │
│ external issues │     │ and/or retrain. │     │ your workforce  │
│ that may impact │     │ Who do you need │     │ and current or  │
│ on getting what │     │ to attract?     │     │ future needs    │
│ you want?       │     │                 │     │                 │
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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Build your      │     │ Implement       │     │ Monitor against │
│ Workforce       │ ──> │ staged          │ ──> │ progress and    │
│ Development     │     │ activities to   │     │ evaluate        │
│ Strategy for    │     │ build your      │     │ effectiveness   │
│ what you need   │     │ workforce       │     │                 │
│ to do, to get   │     │ shape,          │     │                 │
│ what you want   │     │ capability and  │     │                 │
│                 │     │ loyalty         │     │                 │
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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Your targeted   │     │ Refine the      │     │ Revisit         │
│ future          │ <── │ process to meet │ <── │ business goals, │
│ workforce …     │     │ what you have   │     │ environmental   │
│ Available,      │     │ learned         │     │ changes or      │
│ Capable and     │     │                 │     │ arising         │
│ Effective !!    │     │                 │     │ workforce       │
│                 │     │                 │     │ issues          │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
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Where are you now?

Develop a clear understanding of your current workforce

Taking a good hard look at your current workforce is a critical first step in any form of workforce development.

You may think you know what you've got – but sometimes everyday pressures can allow a workforce to develop 'out-of-sync' with where a business is headed and what is happening in the marketplace.

Developing a clear picture of your workforce is more than just a head count – and also extends beyond an organisational chart that plots your employees according to the work they do.

A really useful workforce profile will show you:

- **the age distribution** – so you can anticipate what's about to happen before it does

- **turnover or retention rates** – in general and in specific departments or work areas

- **education levels and qualifications** – not just the ones they were hired for

- **specific skills, competencies and knowledge** – not just those that apply to the work they do in their current job

- **geographic locations** – how far will they travel to you if opportunities open closer?

- **gender, cultural needs** and **work/life balance** requirements

- **how many are reaching a 'trigger point'** to contemplate leaving (such as completing an apprenticeship or traineeship).

Although some of this information may be available on employee records, much of it will require specific data gathering.

You may like to consider a tailored employee survey but – depending on your organisational culture – you and your employees may find it less invasive to accumulate this information during other activities suggested in this booklet.

Whatever approach you take, you should ensure your initial review of the workforce includes both qualitative and quantitative information.

It's also important at this stage to be very clear about the nature of any shortages you're experiencing now – before you start to predict those that may develop in the future.

> **As soon as you employ someone, you immediately move from a recruitment phase to a retention phase.**
>
> **You need to focus on moving people through induction, mentoring, buddying and settling –**
>
> **or you'll move straight back to recruitment!**
>
> **Kerryn Smith,
> Project Manager
> Food Tourism & Hospitality**

Skill shortages versus labour shortages

Developing a workforce profile in this way will also help you to differentiate between labour shortages and skill shortages.

Assuming the pay and conditions you are offering are typical and your location is not a significant factor (in terms of being remote or difficult to access) gaps across all job families in your workplace (or difficulties in filling them) are likely to be caused by a general labour shortage – which is typical in a strong economic climate and period of high employment.

However, if other industries or your industry competitors are not experiencing the same difficulties, you would need to consider the image being presented by your industry and your business.

Consistent unfilled vacancies in a specific occupation – or a specialist area within an occupation – are more correctly termed skill shortages. Skill shortages can coexist with relatively high unemployment. There may be plenty of people looking to work for you – but they don't have the specific skills or experience for the roles you have available.

As you develop your workforce development strategy, activities will differ according to whether you have a labour shortage or a skill shortage – so it is important that your initial review of your current workforce develops a profile of the skills you need as well as the number of employees.

Other shortages

Shortage has many dimensions. Your current workforce may have the number of people you require – with the appropriate skills – but they may not want to work the hours you need. When planning future growth, you may be incorrectly assuming part-time workers will willingly increase their hours to accommodate that growth.

So too, workers approaching retirement age may not necessarily be resolute on moving from full-time to zero hours. They may be interested in part-time or part-year work – or a less demanding job. Understanding the work/life balance needs and goals of your employees can therefore provide a clearer picture of where your workforce shortages are now and where they are likely to develop.

Shortages can be even more obscure than that. A 'quality' shortage can develop when there is a narrow workforce pool. If you have been forced over a period of time to accept and/or promote people with values, behaviours and attitudes not aligned to your business goals, this 'lack of quality' may not support going where you want to go.

An understanding of your current workforce therefore doesn't just mean that you know you are short 'one boner, two packers and extra hours in admin support' – you need a clear picture of the currents operating within that workforce that can blow existing issues into major obstacles.

It's critical that you know 'where you are now' before you can begin to consider where you're headed!

Where are you headed?

Production needs include people and skills

Research suggests employers rarely collect the information they need – or use it strategically – to make informed decisions about their future labour and skill needs.

These same businesses, however, maintain detailed inventories of the products and equipment they currently hold – and use quite complex forecasting methods to decide what they will need in the future – to accommodate what they predict will be the future level of client demands.

If they become aware that a shortage is looming in one of their physical production needs, or that there will be an increased demand for their end-product, they will begin to stockpile or develop other strategies to be sure they are prepared.

Forecasting 'people needs', however, is often neglected – even though the same principles of 'being prepared' apply.

Whether or not businesses are anticipating significant future growth, an early understanding of where the workforce is headed is critical to being able to maintain or increase production as required.

Predicting future workforce needs

Predicting future workforce needs is basically about looking at what you have now, considering what is going to continue to be available to you and identifying what you will need in the future – in order to expose exactly where the 'gaps' will lie.

Predicting the shape of your future workforce needs – and the impacts that are likely to change that – will help you to identify where the imbalances and pressures are likely to occur.

This includes an analysis of what's happening inside your business – such as technological changes; employee capabilities; and evolving Human Resource practices and policies.

What's happening outside your business – such as competitor growth; changes within suppliers or contractors; and changing community expectations – will also impact on where you may find difficulty attracting and retaining the workers you will need.

Given there are reasonably long lead times for training in some areas, it makes sense to be aware of this as early as possible – so you can develop appropriate recruitment or retention strategies and capability building.

Planning 'where you're heading' will help to avoid the common pitfalls in these areas – that can have you end up with a full complement of staff, but not trained in the areas you need them.
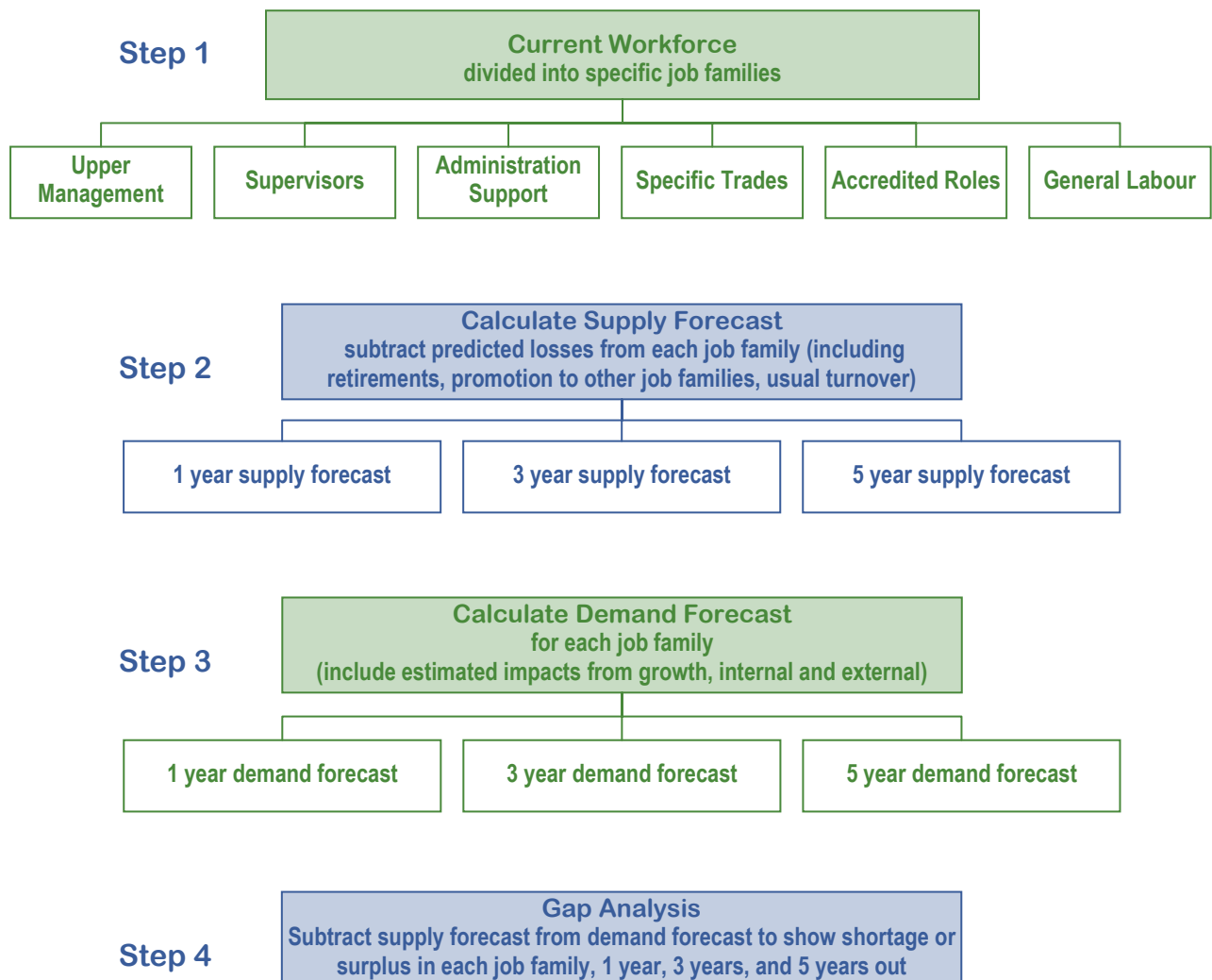
Basic workforce gap analysis

Basic gap analysis begins with a breakdown of your existing workforce. Some people choose to do this by departments, but it's more appropriate to use 'job families' because appropriate workforce development should allow some flexibility in interchanges.

Use the job families to forecast your on-going supply. How many people in one group are heading toward retirement? Are you likely to have a higher turnover rate in a specific area? Are you in the process of training a number of accredited employees for supervisory roles? Is there a new competitor likely to head-hunt from your management team? Is there a new business in the region likely to attract your administration staff? Forecast workforce supply for the short, medium and longer terms.

Now consider what your demand is likely to be over the same periods. Are you expecting to be able to attract new customers? Are you planning to add another link in the value-adding chain? Will you need more supervisors if your labour pool is expected to expand?

Calculating the specific gaps between forecast supply and forecast demand will let you identify specific targets for employee recruitment, development and retention.

Step 1

Current Workforce
divided into specific job families

| Upper Management | Supervisors | Administration Support | Specific Trades | Accredited Roles | General Labour |

Step 2

Calculate Supply Forecast
subtract predicted losses from each job family (including retirements, promotion to other job families, usual turnover)

| 1 year supply forecast | 3 year supply forecast | 5 year supply forecast |

Step 3

Calculate Demand Forecast
for each job family
(include estimated impacts from growth, internal and external)

| 1 year demand forecast | 3 year demand forecast | 5 year demand forecast |

Step 4

Gap Analysis
Subtract supply forecast from demand forecast to show shortage or surplus in each job family, 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years out

What you can do: Recruitment

Avoid the common pitfalls

Recruitment is costly – recruitment errors, even more so. The most common recruitment mistakes to avoid are:

1. **Recruiting 'in a hurry':** Workforce development and business planning should mean you can approach recruitment in a methodical and strategic manner – so that you have time to make the most appropriate selection for your business needs, rather than simply 'plug the gap'.

2. **Recruiting for now, rather than later:** Again, appropriate workforce development and business planning should mean you don't have to recruit just 'to get the job done now' – but can also align your selection to your future needs.

3. **Failing to match values:** Especially in a period of labour and skill shortages, it can be tempting to grab what's available rather than consider the 'fit' with your business. There is much truth in the adage which says, *'It's easier to teach skills than change attitude'*.

4. **Failing to clearly define what you need:** Clarity about the available position is not just important for you in your selection process, but also for your potential new employee. 'Failed expectations' is a key contributor to many workforce short-term resignations.

Target the right people

In order to recruit the right people, you first need to know who the right people are. This sounds incredibly basic, but you need to define in detail exactly what you're looking for so you can appropriately match your marketing and selection processes.

Apart from a clear job description including required specific skills and qualifications, this is also about the competency sets and core values you want.

For example:

*   a focus on team work, hygiene and safety coupled with excellent hand-eye coordination may be paramount for a boner and slicer

*   attention to detail and quality assurance will be high priorities when recruiting a packer

*   higher level communication abilities and a customer service focus will be required of front-line personnel.

Attract the right people

Once you're sure of what you're looking for, you can appropriately tailor the way you advertise the position. Aligning the personal goals of potential applicants to those of your business is important, so it makes sense to promote the values of your business in your vacancy advertising or in discussion with recruitment agencies.

With so much current competition from other industries for available skilled and unskilled labour, employers in the Australian Meat Industry need to work on changing commonly held misconceptions about their sector in order to become an employer of choice.

Marketing your business and industry by reinforcing values such as safety and career pathway opportunities can help you to stand out from the crowd.

Some tips to get you started

- Scan the advertisements of other companies and industries to discover what they're offering as values to new employees.

- Try to get a feel for the changing needs and expectations of your target group. Communicating with relevant employees in your current workforce will help – as will visiting or participating in Career Field Days.

- If you have an age group in mind, choose triggers appropriate to the generation. For example:

  ⇒ Generation Y people (born 1984—2002) commonly have a greater interest in environmental and animal welfare issues and will be delighted if *'prior experience is not required'*

  ⇒ Generation X (born 1965—1983) generally value variety or stimulation and are more self-reliant and accepting of responsibility

  ⇒ Baby Boomers (born 1946—1964) can be more focused on status or position and may be looking for flexibility in the approach to retirement.

- Store information gained during recruitment interviews (about what attracted people to apply) for use in your next call for applications.

- If a number of vacancies have been created because of business growth through customer demand for your product, say so. (It stops potential applicants wondering why so many people are leaving you.)

- Organisations such as MLA and MINTRAC have developed a number of mechanisms to promote the industry which you will find helpful. In particular, printed resources from MINTRAC and MLA's undergraduate program will help you to develop stronger linkages with schools that will attract young people to the industry.

Know the factors that will attract the right applicants

Applicants are attracted to a role because of the opportunities it offers to meet their own personal needs. For some people, this can be salary – others may seek flexibility to accommodate other responsibilities or interests. However, for most people it is a combination of a number of key factors.

Knowing more about the needs of the people you want to attract will help you to decide which of the key factors to highlight in advertisements or in your briefings with recruitment agencies.

To some extent, all the key factors in the diagram above will have some influence in attracting a jobseeker to apply for a specific job.

Part of your workforce development strategy will be to decide what emphasis you need to place on which factors.

Select the right people

Once you have the right people applying for your vacancies, the right selection processes will help to ensure they're the ones who will end up working for you.

An entire industry has built up around specialist workforce recruitment and selection, but if you don't want to call in external expertise, you can at least use some of their techniques that have proven successful.

Don't just accept claims of skill competencies and experience:

- **Test skills** as they will be applied in your workplace. Less than high performances may not necessarily preclude an applicant, but will at least expose areas for early training.

- **Use simulations and scenarios** to test the behaviours and attitudes you will be introducing to your workplace team.

- **Ask for examples** of how applicants have used skills or behaviours in the past. Asking people to demonstrate how they have applied their competencies and values in real life situations exposes those who are parroting what they've been told you will want to hear.

- **Use the same questions for all applicants** so that you have the opportunity to truly compare responses.

- **Use a scoring system** based on the most important aspects of the job. If some aspects are more important to you than others, you can 'weight' those requirements so they actually score more.

Where you can find new people

Good recruitment practices only have benefit of course if you have a pool of applicants looking for work. Given the traditional pool of potential employees has significantly reduced – and that workforce diversity is an important component of long term sustainability – it is important to 'take a fresh look' at groups which have previously not seemed attractive to the Meat Industry.

These groups include:

- People over 40
- Women
- People with disabilities
- Migrants
- Indigenous people
- Under-employed people.

Suggestions as to how you might access these groups of people are provided overleaf and there is more detailed comment about migrant job seekers later.

Ask any employer in the meat industry about the applicants they're looking for and they'll say, "18 to 25 year old fit & healthy males".

Well, realistically, there are only so many of them – and certainly not enough to please everyone.

People need to broaden their view of the workforce pool.

Graeme Elliott,
Industry Change Agent
Food Tourism & Hospitality Industry
Skills Advisory Council

Tips for recruiting mature age people

Advertisements

- In most cases, anti-discrimination laws prevent you from advertising for particular age groups. However, you can say, *'People of all ages are encouraged to apply'* or *'All people with the appropriate skills and/or qualifications will be considered'*.

- Be selective about the words you use. For example *'eager'* and *'energetic'* might suggest you are looking for a young person, even though mature age workers are commonly both. Words such as *'responsible'* and *'reliable'* give a different feel – as do phrases such as *'able to work without supervision'* and *'experienced in working independently'*.

- Highlight the key attraction factors you know are likely to appeal such as *'flexible hours'*; *'part-time if preferred'*; and any non-salary rewards that might be attractive.

- Promote the values and good corporate reputation of your business.

Placement

- If you use a recruitment agency, consider whether it is one that is likely to appeal to mature people.

- If you usually use the internet to advertise vacancies, consider an alternative (or at least additional) placement. Not all mature age people are comfortable with computer technology.

- If you regularly use newspaper advertising, consider whether a different newspaper might be more appropriate. National newspapers are more commonly read by people seeking management positions – your local community or regional newspaper may appeal to more mature people than younger people.

Interview and selection

- Make sure people involved in short-listing applicants (whether that's internal staff or a recruitment agency) know that you want to focus on competencies and/or experience, not age.

- It's important that pre-conceived ideas about mature age people aren't allowed to remove applicants without an opportunity to counteract those ideas during interview. If necessary, you could ensure age information is excluded from the initial assessment process.

- During interviews, still use the same questions for all applicants – but make sure they focus on abilities.

- Include interpersonal skills in your scoring system – depending on the actual job, you may even weight them more highly than other aspects. Attributes such as whether they are team players and team builders may be especially important to you.

Flow-on benefits from making the effort

Apart from 'the steadying influence' introducing more mature age people to your workforce will have on younger team members, there are some less obvious benefits from making the initial effort.

If your workforce has an 'under 30's' image in the community, it may be difficult at first to attract more mature applicants. However, once your targeted advertising and assessment processes take effect, word will soon get around that you have multi-generational new employees in your workforce – and this in turn will be an effective draw card for others.

Having a workforce that better reflects your customer base brings additional benefits in the security and confidence those customers will have in your business and your products – and it will also enhance your reputation in the community as a good corporate citizen.

An increased role for women

While women have traditionally had a strong role to play in 'packing' roles in the meat industry, some companies have yet to embrace the concept of women as a key target for the broader workforce.

Stereotyping women as being unable to fit in with the 'blokey' culture in other sections of the industry; that they will be unable to cope with physically demanding work; and that they will not be able to balance work and childcare commitments; is counterproductive. The mining industry (which might be considered to have had similar doubts) has successfully 're-thought' its approach in the light of skill shortages and is finding women integrate well, with only minor workplace adjustments.

In the current environment women can spend up to 40 years at work – in stark contrast to their grandmothers – and present a viable opportunity for the Meat Industry. Overcoming barriers by providing (or supporting) appropriate childcare opportunities; offering some flexibility with work hours; and re-designing tasks; will help attract women to a variety of roles in your workforce. Increasing their visibility across a range of jobs (including in supervisory positions) and introducing EEO training supported by 'Advocacy Personnel' will help to overcome the 'blokey' culture.

'Welfare to Work' reforms

The Australian Government's 'Welfare to Work' reforms introduced on 1 July 2006 focus on four priority groups – people with disabilities, principal carer parents, mature age job seekers and people who have been unemployed for a long time.

They are designed to overcome barriers on both sides of the labour market – including barriers that employers need to overcome if they are to create more flexible jobs and create a more diverse workforce. You may be entitled to wage subsidies and support for any workplace modifications to help you tap into this new pool of potential employees. Contact details to obtain more information are provided in the final section of this booklet.

Help to employ Indigenous people

In order to attract, recruit and retain more Indigenous people, you may need to make some slight adjustments to your standard practices.

There are a number of significant initiatives under the Australian Government's Indigenous Employment Policy that will support you through the process of developing an Indigenous Employment Strategy.

One of these – the Structured Training and Employment Programme (STEP) – provides specific support to employers who are able to employ more than five Indigenous staff. STEP funding is flexible, but can include:

- Support to develop an Indigenous employment strategy that matches your business needs

- Pre-employment, cross-cultural awareness and accredited training

- Wage assistance

- Mentoring of participants and coordination of the strategy

- Marketing and other initiatives that facilitate the supply of suitable applicants.

Contact details are provided at the end of this booklet for you to obtain more information about what you can do within the parameters of your existing business needs.

Under-employed people

Under-employed people are often overlooked as a real opportunity for you to address skill and labour shortages. These people may not be registered at Centrelink or Job Network agencies because they already have some work – but they may have time available to match the hours you have vacant.

Under-employed people may be:

- Working part-time in the industry for someone else

- Working part-time in another industry but with transferable skills matched to your vacancies

- Working full-time in seasonal work that would have them available at your peak periods

- Students looking to supplement their income while studying (sometimes a complete work area can be staffed by students on meshed rosters)

- Farmers, or their dependents, who need to supplement their income (and may already have some of the skills you want).

Accessing these people can be as simple as advertising your part-time vacancies in the right place – recruitment agencies that specialise in part-time work; through Student or Farmers' Associations; Sporting or Community Organisations – or even by developing cooperative arrangements with allied industries that are experiencing the same difficulties. In other circumstances you may be able to help these people overcome barriers to more employment hours – such as providing or subsidising childcare.

What you can do: Retention

Why do people leave their jobs?

Only one third of the people who leave their job in Australia each year have the job loss imposed on them (through retrenchment or other reasons) – an alarming two-thirds leave their job voluntarily.

In any discussion about workforce retention it needs to be recognised that different people at different levels in an organisation will want different things from their job – and therefore have different reasons for leaving it.

For some people, work is about lifestyle – a means to an end which is their family and personal interests or commitments. (This doesn't make them a less valuable employee – it just means their reason for being there is different.)

Others are looking for their work to be fulfilling – to be interesting and challenging and something they can feel passionate about – or as a means to advancement through training and development so they can 'get ahead in life'.

Whatever their reasons for working in the job, one of the key reasons for leaving it is that their *expectations* of what the job will provide for them are not being met.

The *catalyst* that causes them to make the move can be any one of a number of things:

- **Change** in the workplace structure, the job structure or management style can prompt movement – although the same changes can equally have positive impacts on improving retention rates.

- **A lack of change** impacts when employees feel they are stagnating in the job – they are not moving forward in the business or there have been few opportunities for personal development and training.

- **A sense of being treated unfairly** is a major factor – and has no positive flip-side. The perceived 'unfair treatment' can relate to a failure to be acknowledged for good work (formally or informally); being overlooked for promotion; a perception that they are 'not listened to'; or a sense of 'bullying' by either management or peers.

- **Staff movements** can have impact when valued close contacts leave or new-comers bring a negative effect with them.

- **Insecurity** about the business, or their role within it, can motivate people to 'jump ship' before it sinks.

- **External impacts** such as a competitor headhunting or spouse changing jobs and locations can cause a move when it had not been previously considered.

Why do people stay in their jobs?

Understanding why people *stay* in their jobs is critical in managing the reasons they leave. If their needs and expectations are being met, they are much more likely to resist any catalyst to leave.

Factors that affect staff retention can be grouped according to job, culture, personal and external factors.

Factors that affect staff retention

Job	Culture	Personal	External
Challenging, interesting, meaningful work	Management perceived as competent	Match with personal & family commitments	Economic climate – how readily other jobs are available
Meets expectations in terms of salary and conditions	Supportive management style	Geographic mobility (governs ability to relocate)	Competition from industry growth & other industries
Offers training to upgrade skills in the work	Meets expectations in terms of co-workers	Confidence in own marketable skills and experience	Past employment experiences (good and bad)
Offers career development opportunities	Provides recognition and rewards for good work	Age (fit with workforce & mature less mobile)	Community view of industry, business, job
Good work can be identified and recognised	Gives a sense of security about the company	Health (impacts on and from the job)	
Status of the position (more mgt and senior roles)	Company values match with personal values		
Long service leave and Super benefits (more mgt / mature)			

The degree of influence any of these factors has over a specific employee can vary.

Managers, for example, are more highly affected by the business's corporate reputation and values; young people are less concerned about Long Service Leave arrangements and additional Superannuation benefits – but most of the key factors will have at least some affect across the board.

Tips for retaining mature age people

Why make the effort?

There are approximately 4 million baby boomers (born 1946—1964) scheduled to leave the Australian workforce in the next 20 years. Given the ever reducing number of young people entering, retention strategies that specifically target the mature age employees in your workplace make good sense.

Apart from the obvious benefits in terms of workforce numbers, there are a number of additional benefits for your business:

- Mature age employees are often the members of your workforce who have the most experience and competencies.

- You are likely to have invested training and development in these employees that will provide a better return if they remain employed longer.

- It is commonly believed that more mature workers are more loyal to their company and contribute a more consistent work effort.

- As in any sporting organisation, the whole team benefits by having a mix of stabilising experience (to pass on tricks of the trade) and youthful vigour (to inject new energy and perhaps new technological know-how).

Key retention factors for mature age people

Money is often not the prime motivator for more mature workers to stay in their jobs. Many will have been planning for retirement for some time and have a range of recreational or family-oriented goals in mind.

Once they get too far into their plans, it can be difficult to change their minds – so it's important to start early if you want them to modify objectives. Your goal is to delay and then extend the transition period to retirement as long as possible.

Businesses that make an effort to understand the needs of their employees often find it is relatively easy to tailor the work environment for win-win situations.

In the case of mature-age workers, this is likely to involve less hours so they can have the time to do some of those things they've been planning on.

Depending on your business needs, this could involve less hours per day; less days per week; or less work months per year. Job-sharing is one way you could accommodate this – or you may find that the employee's needs actually suit you because of natural peaks and troughs in workflow.

Work hours may not always be the issue, however.

Some employees, especially those in higher level positions, may just be looking for something less demanding. Floor workers may need something less physically demanding or simply need a change from something they have been doing for a long time.

Being flexible, while continuing to address the needs of the business, is the key. Perhaps this employee has existing skills you don't know about – and training in one or two areas might help you to fill a gap somewhere else in the workplace.

It's important to remember, however, that you may also need to be flexible in the type of training you offer. A younger employee may embrace being able to self-regulate training through an internet based course, while you may need a different method for a mature employee.

Stereotyping mature employees, though, is not helpful. A processor may in fact have great computer skills learned from teenage children and may be able to move easily into the data entry position you've found difficult to fill.

The clear need in determining the way forward is communication. These are generally experienced, competent employees. Do they want to move up (or down) the workplace ladder? What 'extra-curricular' skills do they have? What new skills would they like to learn? Is semi-retirement actually a better option for them?

Businesses that make an effort to understand the needs of all their employees – and tailor the work environment to suit them and the business – will attract better employees and keep them longer.

What you can do: Workplace Culture

If you have been successful in the past at recruiting the employees you want, only to lose them later – or if they have stayed, but haven't lived up to your earlier expectations – the reason could be that your workplace culture is not as positive as it should be.

What is workplace culture?

Entire books (and series of books) have been written about workplace culture. For the purpose of this booklet, the examination will be extremely basic:

> **A culture consists of a set of norms, beliefs, stories, symbols, languages, rituals, expectations and values that are held commonly by a group.**

In the Australian Meat Industry, a workplace culture might be considered to be the assumptions shared by the workforce about what behaviours can be 'expected' in the workplace and 'accepted' by the rest of the team – by both management and co-workers.

Those beliefs about expected and accepted behaviours will be reinforced by what other people tell them has happened previously (the stories); the way people communicate with each other, both verbally and non-verbally (the languages); and what they see about *'how it's done around here'* (the symbols and rituals).

Symbols, for example, could be as simple as uniform style or clear job descriptions that show you respect employees – rituals might include the fact that everyone downs tools half an hour before knock-off in case it takes an extra five minutes to 'clean-up'.

To get a feel for what your own company culture might be, think how you would answer a prospective employee who asked the question, *'Why would I want to come and work for you?'*

Would you be able to include words and phrases such as: *'family-friendly'; 'flexible to your needs'; 'happy team environment'; 'will be a valued member of our team'; 'professional development support'; 'individually based training'; 'well respected company'* or other phrases that show a positive work culture?

Even if you could confidently use those terms to describe your workplace, try the checklist on the opposite page. It will let you know whether those claims are legitimate – and identify areas that need work in order to attract new employees and keep the good employees you already have.

Be honest about whether your response should be in the 'sometimes' checkbox. In many instances, they will be the tasks you should address first, because you already have the systems and processes in place to move into 'yes' – and you're in danger of slipping into a 'no'.

Do you have the basics for a positive workplace culture?

	Yes	No	Some-times
Role Clarity			
Do you have an organisation chart so people know who to report to?	❑	❑	❑
Do you have clear written terms and conditions for each work site?	❑	❑	❑
Do people have written down job descriptions?	❑	❑	❑
Do you have written down duty statements?	❑	❑	❑
Leadership			
Do you recognise and reward people for extra effort?	❑	❑	❑
Do you have opportunities for two-way communication?	❑	❑	❑
Do you welcome and encourage new ideas about work processes?	❑	❑	❑
Do people feel they are able to make some decisions on their own?	❑	❑	❑
Do people feel they are treated 'fairly' by management and supervisors?	❑	❑	❑
Opportunities			
Can people improve their conditions or position with good work?	❑	❑	❑
Are there clear, known pathways to do this?	❑	❑	❑
Do you view training as an investment rather than a cost?	❑	❑	❑
Flexibility			
Do people have flexibility to balance life commitments?	❑	❑	❑
Are there opportunities for flexible salary packages for personal needs?	❑	❑	❑
Do you know the changing needs and expectations of your people?	❑	❑	❑
Do you try to find out?	❑	❑	❑
Security			
Do people feel your company is a good solid business with a future?	❑	❑	❑
Do people feel that their jobs are secure?	❑	❑	❑
Team environment			
Do people have the opportunity to understand the jobs of others?	❑	❑	❑
Do people have the opportunity to interact socially at work?	❑	❑	❑
Do people feel they are treated 'fairly' by co-workers?	❑	❑	❑
Respect			
Are pay rates comparative with experience and qualifications?	❑	❑	❑
Do people know they are not expected to work when sick or injured?	❑	❑	❑
Have you provided a clean and safe work environment?	❑	❑	❑
Do you offer respite from tedious work through role rotation?	❑	❑	❑

Supervisors' impact on culture

Groups of employees will have the ability to impact on workplace culture in different ways depending on:

- Personal characteristics (how long they've been employed there, age, knowledge/skills/qualifications etc)

- Role specification (where they 'fit' in the organisation – how much authority they have to influence the experience of others).

Supervisors, therefore, are obviously an important influence on workplace culture because they are likely to have both the personal characteristics and authority through their role specification. Ensuring they have the right attitudes and behaviours, coupled with the right training and skills in areas such as communication and leadership, is therefore critical.

Promoting 'good workers' to supervisory positions (just because they *are* good workers) may mean you lose good workers and gain poor supervisors.

There is an adage in human resource circles which says, *'People join companies and leave managers'.* For the majority of your workforce, supervisors are the closest line of your management structure.

Other impacts

Although the preceding checklist provides very important clues as to how you might improve your workplace culture, it's also relevant to understand the dynamics of culture so that you can adapt to specific issues.
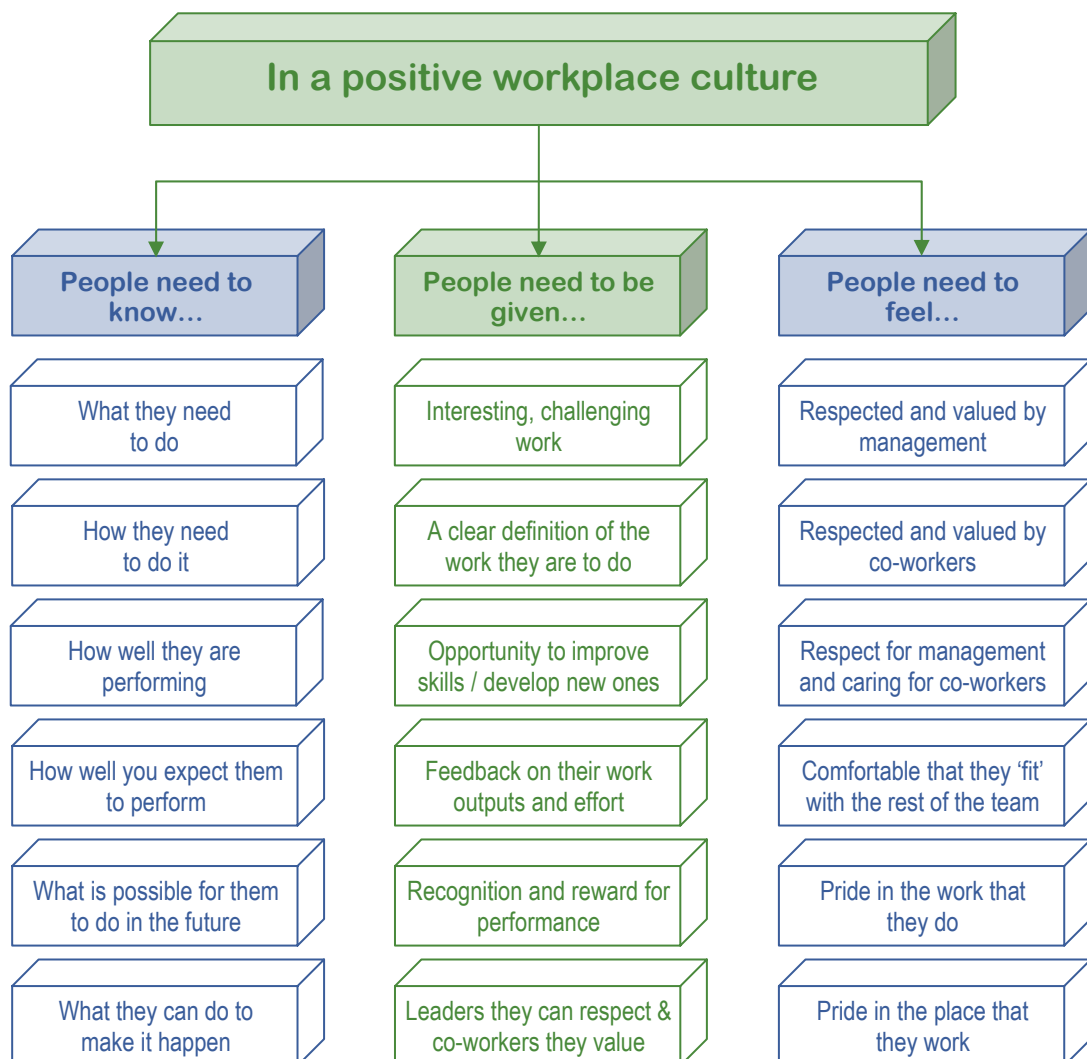
People participate in their working life from a certain position – and this position comes from influences such as:

- Societal norms and values (what the community as a whole would judge to be appropriate or reasonable behaviour)

- Like groups (what other people in the same role would consider was reasonable)

- Past employment experiences (if a past employer has been particularly generous, your efforts may be considered mean even though they comply with industry standards)

- Specific contractual terms and conditions (what they were told at interview; is in the job description; is on the duty statement).

These influences give rise to certain *expectations.* If these expectations are not met, employees become dissatisfied and view the workplace as 'unreasonable' or 'unfair' – and this will spread rapidly through a workforce and influence the overall workplace culture.

For this reason, management tools which help to create, reveal and meet employee expectations are critical to creating and maintaining a positive workforce culture – a team environment.

- **Induction processes** help employees to understand the workplace culture they're entering – so they know what to expect and what is expected of them.

- **Satisfaction surveys** or **climate surveys** reveal how happy employees are in the workplace and what they think should change to improve the overall organisational culture. If they are conducted annually (or even quarterly during a period of significant change) they will be an excellent gauge of whether culture is improving or worsening. They can also be important opportunities to reveal conflicts within the team or bullying.

- **Performance reviews** should be a two-way communication vehicle. Use them as an opportunity for employees to tell you what could help them to perform better on the job.

- **Exit surveys** are most useful when the participant 'has nothing to lose'. Employees may not always tell you what you need to know if they need a reference from you (on leaving or in the future). Some companies find it useful to use external consultants to conduct exit interviews and provide collective feedback.

In a positive workplace culture

| People need to know…	People need to be given…	People need to feel…
What they need to do	Interesting, challenging work	Respected and valued by management
How they need to do it	A clear definition of the work they are to do	Respected and valued by co-workers
How well they are performing	Opportunity to improve skills / develop new ones	Respect for management and caring for co-workers
How well you expect them to perform	Feedback on their work outputs and effort	Comfortable that they 'fit' with the rest of the team
What is possible for them to do in the future	Recognition and reward for performance	Pride in the work that they do
What they can do to make it happen	Leaders they can respect & co-workers they value	Pride in the place that they work

What you can do: Migrant Recruitment

Initiating or facilitating migration to broaden your workforce pool may provide short-term relief to workforce issues and – with appropriate planning – can even be a component in your long-term workforce development strategies.

However, it's important not to only think of other countries when you consider importing employees. The diagram below describes a multi-level migrant recruitment strategy at local, regional, national and international levels. Generally, the degree of additional support you will need to provide to your new employees increases significantly as you move through each level.

For example, importing employees from surrounding communities may require providing or subsidising transport between their home and workplace. Employees imported from other South Australian regions may need assistance with accommodation and perhaps flexibility with work rosters to return home regularly – while employees sourced from interstate may require assistance with relocation expenses.

International migrants are an option if certain criteria can be met. However, migrants from overseas will require significant assistance with settlement – and you will need to engage the rest of your workforce and the community – if the strategy is to prove successful.
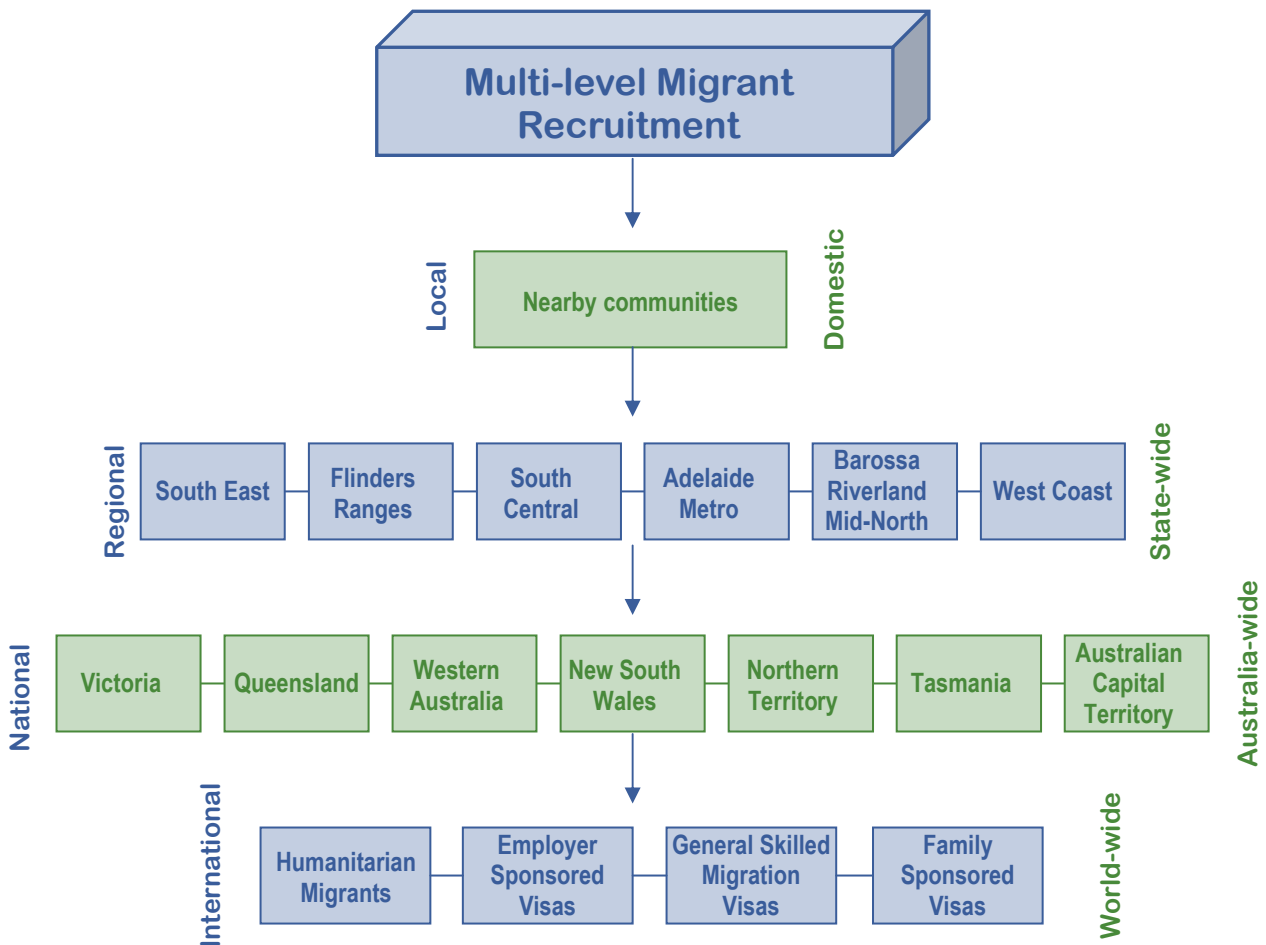
International migration initiatives

Under the Australian Government's Migration (Non-Humanitarian) Programme, migrants are selected for entry under three streams – Skill, Family and Special Eligibility. It is not the intention of this booklet to give a detailed understanding of the program. Prior to undertaking any recruitment of skilled migrants from overseas, you should contact Immigration SA or the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) to be sure your recruitment plans meet with eligibility criteria.

However, it is relevant to note that businesses in South Australia may have additional access to migrant employees under a range of State-Specific and Regional Migration (SSRM) initiatives which have been developed to assist in addressing skill shortages.

The South Australian Government, through Immigration SA, participates in a number of skilled migration programs. These include:

- The **Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS)** is a permanent visa that assists employers to fill skilled full-time vacancies that they cannot fill from the local labour market. Under the scheme, employers may nominate skilled migrants from overseas to fill skilled positions that are available for a minimum of two years.

- The **Regional 457 Temporary Visa** allows employers to nominate skilled migrants from overseas to work in skilled full-time positions that they have been unable to fill from the local labour market. This visa allows the migrant to work in Australia for up to four years.

- The **State/Territory Nominated Independent Scheme** allows the SA Government to nominate applicants who meet the *Department of Immigration and Cultural Affairs* criteria and have an occupation listed on the *Occupations for State Nominations List—South Australia*.

- The **Skilled Independent Regional (SIR) Visa** is a provisional visa.

There are a number of tools to assist employers to source skilled migrants from overseas. These include the **Skill Matching Database**, which contains the educational, employment and work details of skilled people in more than 300 different occupations. The database can be accessed from the DIMA website at www.immi.gov.au/skills/index.htm

Immigration SA also offers an online facility that enables South Australian employers to lodge their vacancies on the website. This service is designed to link employers who have skilled vacancies that they cannot fill from the local labour market with skilled overseas jobseekers. It can be accessed on the Immigration SA website at jobs.freshstartsa.com/

Further information about issues covered in this section can be found at www.immigration.sa.gov.au

Tips for settling international migrants

Apart from the usual induction, orientation and settling processes you use for all new employees, a few extra services for your new international employees can help to ensure the transition to your workplace is smooth – and leads to long-term successful relationships.

Before they come

Meeting expectations is just as important with migrant employees as it is with the rest of your workforce. Indications about the cost of living in Australia and/or your region should be a legitimate component in your initial contract negotiations – later surprises which belittle seemingly enormous wages won't help anyone! Information about Australian lifestyle and culture will more than likely already have been made available, but specifics about your region will be helpful.

Preparing both your workforce and your community for the new arrivals is critical. Their reactions will have a significant impact on whether the recruitment proves successful and they need to understand the reasons behind the appointments and the value in them.

Learn as much as you can about the culture of the country of origin. Find out what on-going support Governments might offer to facilitate settlement. Where does their role finish and yours begin?

When they arrive

Is someone meeting them at the airport? Is temporary accommodation organised? How do they get to you? If you haven't already, provide specific information about your region. Present a Welcome Kit which includes information from the local tourism centre plus day-to-day living necessities such as where to shop; how to get there; what community and health services are available; how to find them; where to find schools, libraries, childcare facilities, banking facilities and agencies for electricity and gas. (These kits are useful even if your new employee has come from an adjacent region!) Immigration SA and DIMA have examples of Welcome Kits which may be a starting point.

If there are relevant cultural groups in your region or food outlets that cater to the employee's country of origin, this information would be particularly well received. Perhaps there is someone in the local community who could mentor the new arrival (in much the same way as you will have arranged a 'buddy' at work) – and may be able to offer a tour of the area.

If the new employees are going to organise their own rental accommodation, assistance from either you or the community mentor will help to see that they are appropriately settled.

Before they start work

The key to induction processes for international migrants is – *Do not assume anything!* You need to be specific about your workplace culture, about the behaviours and attitudes that are expected and accepted. You may need to tailor this program according to the employee's country of origin. Remember, all cultures are different and behaviours which are considered 'the norm' in Australia may not be so elsewhere – and vice versa.

Instructions about work tasks also need to be very specific and clearly articulated. At this point you may identify any communication or language difficulties and whether you will need to organise *English as a Second Language* training or interpreters in the workplace. While most OH&S symbols are now set to international standards, it will be relevant to check that the symbols and colours mean the same to new employees as they do to the rest of the workforce.

The induction process should also be used to verify that employees have the level of expertise you're expecting and whether additional training may be required in specific areas to ensure a better 'fit' with the role and functions you have planned.

When they start work

You may have a 'buddy' system in place for all new employees. It is critical that the right person is chosen to support migrant recruits. The support person should be able to communicate well with them to discover their expectations and identify any mismatches, while also being able to identify any cultural racism evident in the rest of the workplace – and deal with it (either directly or by appropriately reporting the need for cultural awareness training).

On-going support is important, and some suggestions as to how this might be provided are included in the next section on managing a multi-cultural workplace.

Engaging the community

Engaging the community to support your migrant recruits and other multicultural employees is just as important as gaining the support of your workforce.

Employees may feel accepted at work, but they (or their families) may feel rejected by the community – which can have the same negative impacts as an inhospitable workforce.

The section on Migrant Recruitment discussed preparing a community for the new arrivals and using community 'buddies' to introduce and settle them in the area.

Other steps you can take include:

- Using the local media both before and after the arrivals to explain the reason for the recruitment program and the economic value to the region

- Raising awareness of the issues faced by migrants when settling in a new community – through the local media or through service groups such as Rotary, Lions or sporting clubs

- Facilitating access to these organisations for the employees and their families

- Introducing new arrivals to the Community and Neighbourhood Houses network – centres are located across South Australia and can be an excellent referral resource for other community services

- Working with Volunteer Resource Centres to identify opportunities for the new arrivals to contribute to the community

- Encouraging displays within the community (such as the local Council offices or libraries) that promote the cultural background of your new arrivals

- Promoting successes –'good-news' stories to demonstrate benefits to the whole community.

There are a number of government and community organisations which can help you with specific activities you can undertake to facilitate social inclusion for specific cultural backgrounds. Contact Immigration SA for more information.

Managing a Multi-cultural Workplace

If you don't have a multi-cultural workforce already, certainly the application of some of the suggestions in this booklet will mean that you soon do. Appropriate workforce development is likely to see you with a broader mix of generations and nationalities working together – with groups of people owning very different perceptions about expected and accepted behaviours at work, at home and in the community.

The key to successfully managing a diverse workforce is communication – between you and your workforce and between the members of your workforce.

Cross-cultural communication

Successful cross-cultural communication is based on:

- mutual broad understanding of the cultures and their differences

- knowledge about the communication barriers that exist because of the differing cultures (including language; non-verbal communication; preconceptions and stereotypes; evaluative behaviour; stress; and organisational constraints)

- skills to integrate the understanding and knowledge to facilitate interaction.

> **It is not necessary to change your own culture, embrace the different culture, completely understand it – or even 'like' it. It is critical, however, that you and other members of the workforce accept that other cultures are valid (even if only for their members) – and to respect that.**

The elements of communication influenced by culture include:

- **Body language** – how we use our faces and bodies to communicate

- **Address systems** – what we call one another

- **Conversations** – how we start or finish the conversation; what we talk about; and how we manage whose turn it is to speak

- **Presenting information** – how we go about offering help or advice; or give instruction

- **Politeness and respect** – how we show that we are listening; using good manners; considering the other person's feelings; paying compliments or apologising

- **Negotiating** – how we get what we want, while considering all the other elements.

All of these communication elements are likely to differ between cultures. Getting information about those differences (from Government departments or cultural groups) is a first step in effective cross-cultural communication.

Taking action

- Conduct a cultural audit of your existing workforce to identify and use existing cultural and linguistic skills in settling newcomers. (If this is not available internally, seek external support from the community or government departments.)

- Balance work teams so that people are not isolated out-of-group by their culture. (This applies equally well to gender, age and position.)

- Provide cross-cultural awareness training for the workforce. (Benefits will extend across the business as employees learn to accept new perspectives as valid, even if different to personal views.)

- Provide training in communication skills. (Again, the benefits will be wide-reaching for the business.)

- Be flexible in work arrangements to accommodate cultural events or religious events – even those that have no relevance for you. (Articles about these festivals and events in the company newsletter will assist your cultural awareness training.)

- Encourage diversity on workplace committees – OH&S, social, etc. (Apart from encouraging interaction, this also helps to generate fresh ideas.)

- Organise opportunities for social interaction. This can be as simple as a staff barbecue lunch once a month, or extend to family picnic days, or an after-hours multi-cultural function serving different foods. (This will also help organisational team building, as people from different shifts or work areas have the opportunity to interact.)

- Reflect your workforce diversity in your management structure (admin, supervisors) where appropriate skills are available.

Multicultural Workforce Teams

Well managed

Balanced
Supported
Culturally aware
Valuing difference
Team identity
Communication skills
Social interaction
Conflict resolution

Job satisfaction
Productivity
Quality outcomes
Retention
Receptive to training
Attracts new recruits

Poorly managed

Isolated members
Left to 'sort it out'
Culturally unaware
Ridiculing difference
'Like-group' identity
Poor communication
Work only interaction
Unresolved conflict

Low job satisfaction
Low productivity
Poor performance
High turnover
No personal development
Unattractive to jobseekers

What you can do: Building Capability

Building capability in a new employee – and therefore across your workforce – is not just about jumping into 'training'. The process begins with establishing a strong connection between the employee and the company from the first day – and sustaining that throughout a career pathway.

Orientation

Orientation can often take place prior to employment. It makes sense to ensure potential employees know and understand what you do – and believe that they can make a contribution to it – before they actually move onto the payroll.

Site and product tours not only give potential newcomers an understanding of the work they can expect to do, but where their role would 'fit' and how their productivity would impact on others. The experience is both visual and sensory – participants gain an understanding of what it looks like, what it smells like and even what it feels like (through an early exposure to the culture of the organisation).

There are benefits to both you and the employee to discover at the earliest possible opportunity if initial understandings about 'a match' have been misguided – and if the match is confirmed, the new employee will be more grounded moving into the induction stage.

Induction

Induction is the process that gives recruits clarity about their job – security about what they should be doing and how they should be doing it. Managed well, the induction process will provide a solid foundation for future training – but if induction is poorly executed, unrealised expectations will lead to dissatisfied (and perhaps departing) employees.

Although the role should have been explained at interview, the induction process should clearly restate it and allow for questions that were perhaps not asked when under pressure. The explanation should provide details of responsibilities and accountabilities, together with clear descriptions of training that will be provided in specific work tasks and how performance reviews will be conducted. Personal development opportunities are an important part of the induction process – even if some of them may not be able to be realised for some time. Mapping out a career pathway at an early stage, together with relevant training and accreditation requirements, will help to sustain initial enthusiasm. It's important to do this even if the pathway could be considered 'sideways', rather than upward.

Topics should also include an organisational structure and information not only about what you do now, but also a history of the company (how you got to where you are) and where you plan to go in the future. Include information about entitlements, facilities and administration processes – and arrange introductions to as many people as possible in these functions and in their new work areas. Company policies (and systems and processes) should be discussed as well as provided in writing – together with consequences that apply when they are not followed.

Settling

Settling periods and activities will differ according to variables such as age, experience, skills, cultural background etc – but it is important that it occurs at least to some extent across all classifications.

Appropriate mechanisms to ensure the new employee settles well include appointing a co-worker to 'buddy' the newcomer for six to twelve months. Mentoring and coaching can be the responsibility of someone more senior, but it's important that the mentor or coach has time for one-on-one interactions.

One South Australian employer is currently using a **collaborative employment program** with Job Network agencies in the region to recruit Trainees which is very much based on 'settling' concepts. Potential trainees first participate in a two-day Industry Taster course (including a site visit) to promote awareness about the industry, with appropriate applicants then moving to a two-week Pre-Skilling Workshop which provides 'hands-on' learning. This is followed (again for suitable participants) by a four week probationary period before formal commencement of a Traineeship – which will then be individually case managed.

Training

Training is about investment in human capital. While 'training' has really commenced during day one of the orientation process, some employers feel it ends with the completion of the induction process – especially for floor workers – because of the risk of losing the training investment if the employee leaves.

However, providing training and personal development opportunities at every level of the workforce increases:

- productivity and profitability
- attractiveness to jobseekers
- staff morale (which reduces absenteeism)
- flexibility to accommodate changing needs
- the ability to value add
- competitiveness on quality and service
- opportunities for multi-skilling/job rotation.

So, even though career pathways have been claimed to be limited in the Meat Industry due to a finite number of management and supervisory positions, continuous skilling of the workforce through various Certificates II, III & IV and even Diploma or Advanced Diploma can have long term benefits for the business.

Training and personal development reinforces a job's purpose, meaningfulness and value – all key requirements for employee retention – and, by promoting training opportunities to all staff, you convey the message that you expect them to keep up to date and strive for improvement.

This can also be one way of ensuring that all your future Supervisors will have Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment.

A key aspect of retaining your workforce capability is to ensure exiting employees – through retirement, resignations or even internal promotions – have the opportunity to pass on their knowledge and skills to replacement employees, whether they are to be drawn from the existing workforce or from new recruits.
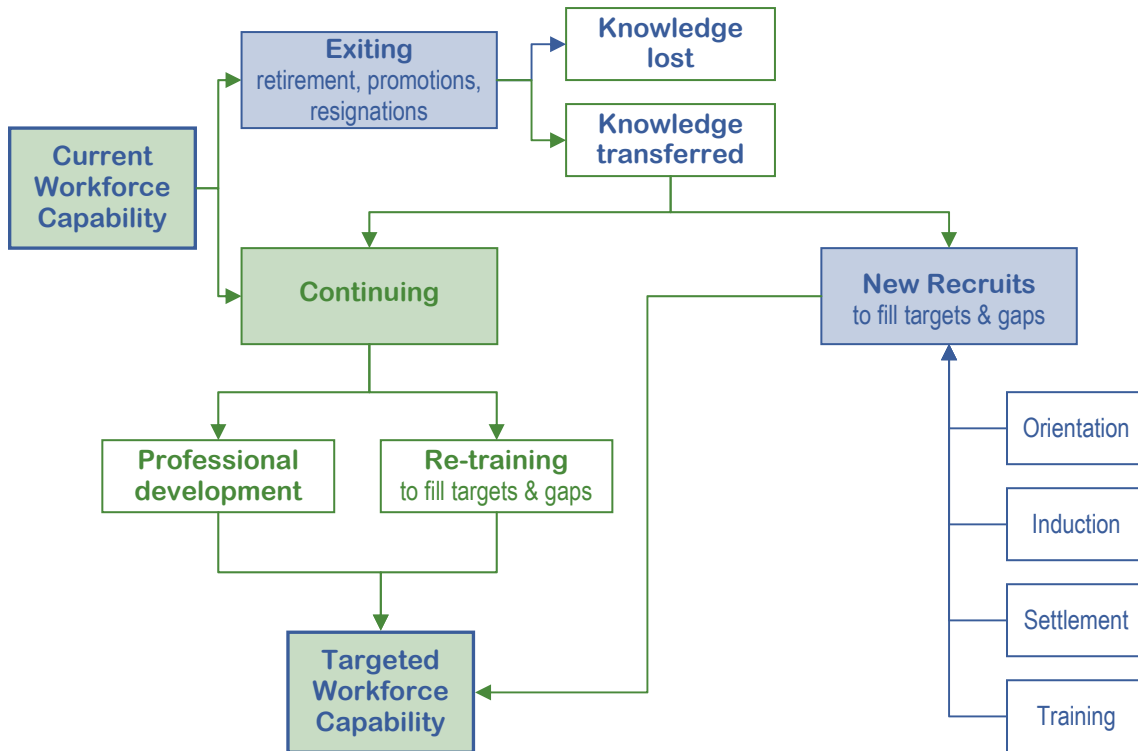
It is important to recognise that not all training and development activities need to be directly linked to the Meat Industry – courses in Leadership, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Team Building, Cultural Awareness, Human Resource Management, etc, all have a role in your workplace – and not all training needs to be workplace-based.

Dependent on the needs of your business and your employee's preference, there are opportunities in self-paced distance learning programs, on-line learning and discussion groups, project based learning, conferences and workshops. Some of these can also form part of your incentive and reward program.

The National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council (MINTRAC) can provide a product catalogue with training resources specific to the Australian Meat Industry and financial support packages are available from various government departments for some groups of existing employees as well as new recruits. Contact details are provided at the end of this booklet.

Orientation ➜ Induction ➜ Settlement ➜ Training ➜ Retention

What you can do: Community Perceptions

Throughout this booklet, community perceptions have been shown to influence recruitment, retention and organisational culture. A positive community view of the Australian Meat Industry and your company is therefore an important component of your workforce development strategy.

Unfortunately, the image of the Australian Meat Industry held by many sections of the general community has failed to keep pace with improvements within the industry. Issues such as environmental impacts, health issues and animal welfare continue to dominate media articles – and the more positive flip-side (if promoted at all) receives secondary attention.

Many jobseekers do not yet see the Meat Industry as an employer of choice – and if they do, they are influenced by parents, schools and friends to consider other options.

The community needs to be exposed to the concept of work in the Meat Industry being a global job that will allow flexible career choices. Community members need to recognise the industry for the value it holds for South Australia and the nation.

Improving Public Relations for your company and the industry in general is not a 'feel good' exercise – it's about enhancing your access to labour.

How to affect community perceptions

1. Develop key messages about your industry and your company

Consider the positive words and phrases that can truthfully be applied to what you do and how you work – and then use them consistently in literature, brochures and even verbal communications.

Examples you might choose include:

- Progressive, innovative, technologically advanced, diverse

- Significant economic value and multiplier benefits for the community

- Focus on employee health and safety

- Focus on quality assurance and customer service

- Focus on environmental and animal welfare management

- Flexible, family-friendly workplace with clear career pathways.

You should also find appropriate opportunities to consistently highlight the total number of people employed directly and indirectly because of your company's presence in the community. Capture the numbers not only employed in production and processing enterprises, but also in supporting capacities.

2. Promote the positives of the industry through local media.

It's true that many journalists will go to extraordinary efforts to expose a negative story, but need to be led to a positive article. So, take the lead!

If the community has a 'right-to-know' about stories exposed through investigative journalism, it has an equal 'right-to-know' about industry or company events, processing developments, market news, safety records, employee milestones, sponsorships etc.

Your Media Release doesn't have to be perfectly written – it just needs a news angle and the Who, What, When, Where, Why and How. (Don't forget to work in one or more of your key messages.)

Building relationships with local journalists will keep them interested in what you have to say. Could you consider a tour of your facilities? Or sections?

3. Develop your community presence

Some industries have the luxury of being able to invite the community on-site through open days etc. That may not be logistically possible for you, but you can develop your presence in other ways.

Sponsoring sporting teams with uniforms etc is usually relatively inexpensive; taking part in Career Field Days showcases you to the broader community as well as potential applicants; scholarships for young people to undertake relevant qualifications will develop loyalty in the recipients and the community.

4. Develop your corporate reputation

Corporate reputation is about the respect of your customers, competitors, suppliers and staff – as well as the community.

When you succeed or excel in any one of these areas, make sure the community knows about it. Prominent signage on your site which is visible to passing traffic and promotes the number of 'injury-free-days' is not just an employee safety tool – it also lets others know of your focus and your success.

The goal is to influence key motivators such as parents, teachers and friends that the Australian Meat Industry is a good place to work, so that jobseekers are not dissuaded from applying.

Where you can find help

The following web addresses will provide useful information and helpful advice:

Meat Industry Organisations:

Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC)
www.amic.org.au

Australian Meat Industry Employees Union (AMIEU)
sa.amieu.asn.au

Department of Primary Industries and Resources, South Australia (PIRSA)
www.pir.sa.gov.au

Food, Tourism & Hospitality Industry Skills Advisory Council (FTHSC)
www.fthskillscouncil.com.au

Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA)
www.mla.com.au

Meat Industry National Training Resources Advisory Council (MINTRAC)
www.mintrac.com.au

Employment and Training Support Agencies:

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)
www.dewr.gov.au

English Language Services
els.sa.edu.au

Group Training Schemes
www.employment.sa.gov.au/employ/a8_publish/modules/publish/content.asp?id=13838&navgrp=110

Job Network Agencies
www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/SchemesInitiatives/JobNetwork

New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs)
www.training.com.au

Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)
www.ntis.gov.au

VET Quality Branch
www.training.sa.gov.au

Business Pathways:

Area Consultative Committees
www.acc.gov.au/contact_us/sa.aspx

Regional Development Boards
www.ora.sa.gov.au/boards.shtml

Staffing Matters Website
www.fthskillscouncil.com.au/hosp/Hospitality_Site_Final/default.htm

Workforce Development and Planning
www.employment.sa.gov.au/employ/pages/workforceinfo/WorkforceDevelopment/

Acknowledgements

Contact details

For further information please contact:

Food, Tourism and Hospitality Industry Skills Advisory Council Inc

Telephone: 08 8362 6012
Facsimile: 08 8362 1455
Email: info@fthskillscouncil.com.au
Web: www.fthskillscouncil.com.au

Meat & Livestock Australia

Telephone: 02 9463 9106
Facsimile: 02 9463 9182
Email: kabba@mla.com.au
Web: www.mla.com.au