



# CLIENT SUCCESSES

**INDUSTRY:**  
**ENGINEERING/  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

## ABOUT

### PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF

Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB)

Ltd is one of the world's leading planning, engineering, and program and construction management organisations, with offices in over 28 countries. Locally, its Australia operation was at a significant point in its growth trajectory, with a number of pressing strategic issues firmly on the agenda of the Management Team.

## TALENT OPTIMISATION

# PARSONS BRINCKERHOFF

## THE NEED

To identify, diagnose and grow key talent within PB in line with the business' current drivers, enabling realisation of current and future strategic and cultural objectives.

With continuing shortages of key talent across the industry, focusing efforts on attracting and retaining key talent in the advisory, technical, operational and business development functions had become a business imperative.

The question—how could PB align their Talent Management strategies to meet the demands of the business' strategic and cultural priorities?

## THE SOLUTION

In April 2006, PB began partnering with DDI in the development and subsequent implementation of a new Talent Management Strategy, which was to be rolled out to the Australian business. Recognising the expertise and capacity that existed in the organisation along with the continuing shortage of talent across the industry, it was important that PB “look within”, developing current and future leaders through a robust and credible approach.

Through several months of consultation with their Senior DDI Consultant and Account Manager, PB decided on an approach to Talent Management that addressed the issue of talent from a holistic view point, rather than a transactional, piecemeal approach.

In choosing to partner with DDI, Dr Sylvie Vanasse, Director of People said *“We chose to partner with DDI because of their credibility and reputation in the industry. DDI had also worked with PB before quite successfully and they know what they are doing”*.

## One Body, Many Parts

It has been said that *“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts”*. In the case of PB, this is particularly true. In developing their strategy, PB and DDI partnered to create a system that utilised a number of DDI tools and processes.

## Business Drivers

Through a synthesis of a range of information sources (interviews, reports, strategic direction documents), DDI presented PB with four key business drivers for their General Manager/Management Team member level. These drivers were bottom line issues and challenges against which senior executives, regardless of their key functional role, would need to execute to help PB achieve its current and future strategic and cultural objectives. The business drivers encapsulated the priorities for the General Management/Management Team member level.

*“The Business Drivers are very accurate, and are very closely aligned to our 5 strategic priorities. These drivers are embedded into all of our success profiles, and are especially beneficial for senior roles”* Dr Sylvie Vanasse, Director of People.

### **Success Profiles**

In translating the four key business drivers into the types of behaviour, personal attributes, job experience and organisational knowledge needed to deliver PB’s strategic priorities, DDI partnered with PB in the development of success profiles for its key roles. These success profiles drilled down into the day to day success factors of individuals at key levels and how these success factors contribute to the overall drivers of the business.

Creating success profiles for key roles was just the beginning, with PB expanding the number of roles with success profiles to ten. The intention was to not only align everyone in the organisation to a success profile, but to take the success profile approach and roll it out to other regions of the company (internationally). Speaking of the Success Profiles relevance and usability within PB, Sylvie Vanasse says that *“The light went on!”*

### **Leadership Potential Inventory (LPI)**

Placing associates into people management roles without considering their personal motivations and leadership readiness can have catastrophic consequences, and it is critical organisations do not mistake technical excellence for leadership ability. Recognising this, PB used the Leadership Potential Inventory to identify those individuals with the Leadership Promise, Personal Development Orientation, Balance of Values and Results and Master of Complexity that

would take PB forward during its growth trajectory. Through the use of the LPI, PB identified a number of leaders and potential leaders who would form a key group of high potentials that would participate in targeted development. Consistent feedback from these individuals’ peers suggests that PB and DDI very accurately identified the right PB associates, validating the process and adding enormous credibility and buy-in to the strategy.

### **DDI Acceleration Centres**

With Business Drivers in place, success profiles created for key roles and high potentials identified, it was time to accelerate associate development, by having individuals participate in DDI’s “Day in the Life” Acceleration Centre (AC). The acceleration centres were designed specifically for each level of PB Management, where activities required associates to demonstrate key behaviours as defined by the success profiles. In using the success profiles to design the day, DDI and PB were able to use the results to target and highlight both strengths and development opportunities that mattered to the overall success of both the individual and organisation.

*“People in the High Potential group were very positive about the experience, especially the AC. The AC was extremely successful—very challenging, but people thought it was done seriously, and done to a high level of leadership assessment, which certainly brought credibility to the whole process”* Dr Sylvie Vanasse, Director of People.

### **Debrief & Development Planning**

Through integrating data from the Acceleration Centre, Personal Style Inventories and 180 Degree feedback,

a comprehensive report detailing areas of strength and opportunities for development was provided to each individual at their DDI debrief session. The debrief process received very strong feedback, with PB associates feeling “pampered”, acknowledging the depth and targeted nature of the feedback.

With associates’ strengths and development opportunities highlighted so transparently, it was essential to consider and devise a robust, targeted and sustainable approach to development planning, development execution and ongoing measurement.

To guard against development plans not being implemented, refined and reviewed, DDI and PB decided on an approach that included the individual, their manager, an Executive Review Board, and DDI. The process was designed to be aligned with the current PB performance management system.

Essentially, PB associates created their own development plans (with their manager) which were submitted to DDI for review and feedback. Individuals were then asked to refine their plans, which were subsequently submitted to and approved by Sylvie Vanasse. PB’s Executive Review Board (which Sylvie is part of) reviews progress against the development plans every quarter, ensuring long term sustainability and momentum.

By including DDI in the development planning process, PB ensured each individual plan adhered to best industry practice, and was targeted and sustainable.

While PB’s new approach to Talent Management is still very much in its infancy, the results of the DDI PB Partnership are very encouraging. To name just a few:

## THE BOTTOM LINE

- > Development of associates now closely aligned to the strategic direction of the organisation
- > Talent identification process improved dramatically by casting the net wide, and consideration of multiple factors in choosing future leaders (and development of current ones).
- > Zero turnover in the High Potential group, with strong validation from peers that PB picked the “right” associates to develop
- > Success Profiles spreading throughout the organisation, which are to be used in selection, development, and performance management initiatives.
- > Business Drivers ensuring that *everyone* is contributing back to the business

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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