

How Whole Brain[®] Thinking
helped IT company Integ increase
employee engagement and
customer focus



Background

IT company Integ provides secure communication and data networking solutions to organizations across Australia. The company has more than 150 skilled staff in six locations that support more than 2,500 customer sites.

Each year the company revisits its annual business plan and company focus. According to Integ's CEO, Ian Poole, "We then define the strategy, objectives and themes for the company for the year, which are presented to our employees." Poole says the company had a record revenue year to June 30, 2009, growing by double digits, but the general market conditions were tough.

"We recognized this year that the market is obviously not in a massive growth phase and there's a huge emphasis on a return to customer focus. In our market-place we are looking at aligning ourselves to our customers' needs so we spend a lot of time understanding what their business requirements are and make sure our solutions are a best fit for them," says Poole. Integ also completed an employee survey prior to the setting of the business plan. The results showed satisfaction among employees was high. Around 87% were proud to work for the company. But employees were dissatisfied in the areas of reward and recognition and the level of communication between teams.

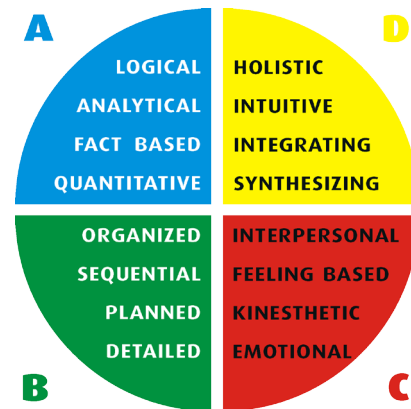
"They told us we communicate well within our own working group but when we start to work across functional boundaries such as from sales to engineering or service to finance, we have difficulties," Poole says.

Integ's key objectives for the year were defined to include 'customer focus' and 'engaged culture.' "The engaged employee is something we needed to place stronger emphasis on," says Poole.

Solution

To facilitate this process and help reach their organizational goal, Integ partnered with Herrmann International Asia to strengthen the communication skills of its 150 employees.

Having used the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) in the past, Kerrie Blanch, Integ's Human Resources Director, recommended profiling its employees and categorizing them in Herrmann's four thinking quadrants: Blue, Green, Red and Yellow. "The HBDI® is an excellent, very simple tool to profile individuals and create team profiles, which shows the preferred thinking style of the individuals and of the team," says Blanch.



The HBDI® and Whole Brain® Model provide the company with an 'organizing principle' that, when understood, allows each individual to look at others through the model and understand their thinking preferences. It can evaluate a team—or even an industry such as IT—assessing how it operates. Staff are given the tools to leverage their natural preferences and are equipped with the skills they need to operate outside their preferences when the situation arises.

The implementation of the Whole Brain® Model follows a series of steps, with the final goal being self-taught cultural change for the organization. The program begins with individual awareness through the HBDI®. The second level focuses on application, typically

around teams and around organizational goals, in this case increased employee engagement and customer focus.

An integral component of application is the adoption of Whole Brain® Thinking within the organization, so that the culture becomes embedded in the company. Integ has reached this step by reinforcing Whole Brain® Thinking in both serious and fun ways.

As Kerry Scotland, Marketing Director for Integ Group, explains, “The HBDI® is a wonderful instrument and our teams actually use it in meetings to guide their thinking through the logical sequence of the quadrants. We have lots of good things happening but to really get it cemented and keep it going is why we launched and created the Integ Gets Red program in July.

“The program is fun and focused on people’s skills with customers and with their teams. It was just getting it to that next level and making it part of the culture.”

Results

“The program had instant effects on attitudes at Integ,” says CEO Poole. “Awareness of a colleague’s dominant thinking style and a newfound respect for it eased the communication difficulty that existed between varying teams. There is now more of an appreciation and awareness of how and why different individuals think.”

“Overall, it’s been primarily a change in awareness. It’s quite amazing how a lot of people in the organization have got their profile mounted on their desk. And people are saying ‘I’m yellow, I like to work in a yellow environment as opposed to a blue environment’. They know

they’re different and because of that they like to work together,” says Poole.

It was no surprise that with its team of engineers and highly skilled IT staff, the majority of the Integrator’s staff were dominant in the blue category. They pursued analytics and logic to tackle a job but weren’t so hot in the red category, which is the area of communication and interpersonal skills.

Poole encouraged people to think red. “We want an engaged culture; getting people to engage better, across teams, within themselves, back with their customers, back with their partners and to use the skills to help them develop their communication skills. And that’s really where the Integ Gets Red Program is linked to our Rewards and Recognition Program.”

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Integ has launched a number of initiatives to complement the HBDI® results and the company’s new engaged culture. Management has kept the momentum going by creating visual aids such as awards, red hats and red cards. (Red cards are actually a pat on

the back rather than a ticket to the naughty corner.)

“We’ve got people with ‘customer’ written on their hats which shows ‘I’m thinking all the time about my customer. Whatever I’m doing at the moment I’m focusing on my customer.’”

Poole says there are lots of Red Cards floating around the office. “People who give these Red Cards are people in the office, often in opposite quadrants. It’s real engagement and you can see a lot of fun and excitement across the business.”

Using the Red Balloon Reward company, the Integ Gets Red Awards Program is a points-based incentive program in which:

- ◆ all Integ employees are encouraged to nominate their peers to recognise values behavior (Integ Values Award)
- ◆ customers and peers are encouraged to nominate strong customer satisfaction (Red Hat Reward) and great team work (Red Team Reward)
- ◆ managers are encouraged to reward top employee performance (Red Hot Performer).

The leader can recognize these nominations with Red Balloon points that the employee can spend on their own choice of great experiences. The end result is stronger team work, employee engagement and retention and delivering excellence to Integ's external customers.

Russell Jones, Channel Manager at Alcatel-Lucent's Enterprise Division, has already seen improvements in Alcatel's interaction with Integ. "I have seen an increase in our communication and recognition of Integ's employees from our team. It's so good to have a formal avenue to recognize outstanding work, applaud great results and cement our teams further."

*Adapted from an original article by Negar Salek from CRN
October 2009.*

better results through better thinking

Clients

The Herrmann International clients, for whom better thinking has become integral to their business culture, include:

Air France

Alcoa

American Express

AXA

Bank of America

Barclays

BMW

Boeing

Cintas

Cirque du Soleil

Cisco

Coca-Cola

GE

Harrahs

Home Shopping Network

Hugo Boss

IBM

Johnson & Johnson

Limited Brands

Microsoft

MIT

New Zealand Telecom

Procter and Gamble

PWC

Regus

Shell Oil

Target

US Navy

Weyerhaeuser Corporation

Wharton School of Business



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