

TRAINING BENEFITS

Viscount Plastics

Training at Viscount is viewed by both management and employees as part of the overall framework.

Training adds value to employee's work role and career progression and successful completion of training requirements financially benefits them.

Training also enhances the quality of the company's products through improved production techniques.

driving growth and profitability

Viscount Plastics, owned by the global Linpac Group, is a full service and solutions provider of innovative materials handling, industrial and packaging products. Spread across 16 locations in Australasia, Viscount employs over 1000 people with sales in excess of \$200m.

Sites at Canning Vale and Balcatta in WA employ more than 90 people and in 2006 Viscount acquired Blow Moulding, Injection Blow Moulding and a PET processing system from ACI Plastics.

In WA Viscount's main operation involves injection and blow moulding in the manufacturing of material handling and plastics packaging and includes a dedicated milk bottle facility. Manufactured products include containers for pharmaceutical and food products, crates and a variety of other products.

The Viscount mission is to develop proprietary products, use environmentally friendly processes and materials whilst focusing on its network and international affiliation to drive growth and profitability.

Viscount is committed to attracting, maintaining and developing a workforce that is highly skilled and motivated and this is reflected in its culture and recruitment processes.



TRAINING WITH THE plastics, rubber & cabling training package



"We have held a long term view that having a well trained workforce is a key element for the long term survival and profitability of our enterprise.

A skilled workforce will contribute towards achieving an efficient manufacturing operation that eliminates waste, in its broadest definition, and provides value to our clients in this highly competitive plastics industry.

From the point of view of the employee, competency based accredited training will provide the essential skills to perform their tasks, provide satisfaction and self esteem; as skills acquired over a number of years will be recognised and accredited through the National Competency Framework.

Viscount Plastics gratefully acknowledges the contribution to training that PARTEC (Plastics and Rubber Education Centre) and the PMITC, (Process Manufacturing Industry Training Council) have made to the company and our employees."

(Ian Kidd, General Manager, Viscount Plastics WA).

Background and Skill Development

A dynamic organisational learning and training culture had been encouraged and fostered at all levels of the Viscount operation both in Perth and across all other Australian sites.

The executive management team had linked up their senior management with several external courses and off-site training opportunities offered by the AME (The Association for Manufacturing Excellence-USA), Dale Carnegie and through LMA (Leadership Management Australia).

IFAP (Industrial Foundation for Accident

Prevention) courses for employees were available in forklift driving techniques, dogman and working at height. Other courses available included Senior First Aid.

Prior to 2001, training for plastics processing operators was mainly delivered using in-house company training manuals and on the job training. Training development initiatives for operators at Viscount tended to come from safety committee meetings attended by senior management. John Barnes, a training operator at the time, recalls that while there was a range of viable training opportunities for management there was always a consensus in the organisation that there wasn't enough specific machinery training available for operators.

PMB01 and nationally recognised training in fabrication, injection moulding and blow moulding made available through Central TAFE, the major public provider, allowed for the provision of work-based training and assessment for operators. Identification of training needs became strongly linked to the organisation's business development and strategic planning, factors that according to John Murray, Viscount WA's Operations Manager, assisted to alleviate concerns centred around employee time release, training costs, shiftwork issues and the need to assist some employees to overcome the fear associated with undertaking formalised training.

Lessons learned

In reflecting on the lessons learned at Viscount, John Barnes, now a shift supervisor and a designated workplace trainer points to the exceptionally strong motivating leadership, evident at every level of the business operation as one of the prime reasons why training and in particular implementation of PMB01 through funded traineeships has been so successfully embedded at Viscount. According to John, effective training in plastics at the factory floor team level requires both a qualified in-house training coordinator, and an external coordinator who not only has a detailed knowledge of what specific industry training is available but, more importantly, knows how to package it for the company and its employees. Central TAFE, Viscount's training partner, and Nasser Safi their experienced lecturer and workplace

trainer and assessor offered that level of expertise within an affordable delivery model to complement Viscount's operational needs.

John Murray, Operations Manager, proudly claims that Viscount's quality systems have noticeably improved as a direct result of increased training, particularly in PMB01. The initial low numbers of employees progressing from the Certificate I and II levels into the more technically proficient Certificate III level demonstrates that the training must be attractively linked to salary incentives and the plastics industry viewed by employees as a legitimate and viable career pathway.

Mitchell Ryan, Quality/HSH&E Administration Manager, best sums up the importance of these reciprocal links between personal development and growth and the company's business and production goals by asserting "that staff who feel confident and are made to feel part of the team environment invariably tend to respond positively through strong quality control monitoring and enhanced personal responsibility."

Narelle Wilkie, herself a young certificate II trainee at Viscount views the self-paced training program she has just recently commenced "as very practical and a good opportunity to learn.. the training links directly to what I do every day... my own safety and the safety of the people around me on the blow moulding machines has lifted since the training began....the training helps people to take responsibility for ensuring quality control."

Benefits of training at Viscount

From a relatively small number of employees being trained in PMB01 in 2003 to the current skills shortage in 2006, an average of between 10-15 employees is undergoing training at any one time.

While attempts to gauge the level of improvement as a result of training implementation in a diverse business organisation are not readily attainable without the introduction of specific recording instruments and monitoring systems, a number of organisational benefits have been identified.



Wastage management

Significant decrease in the amount of materials wastage. Employees are better educated on the importance of striving to achieve minimal wastage targets which are directly linked to the company's strategic operational KPI's, current environmental policy and to the current EBA. Materials wastage has been considerably reduced and a greater percentage of materials are recycled externally as a signatory to the National Packaging Covenant.

Employees' role in the production process

Realisation on the part of all employees, both new and existing, of how all the operational tasks and roles fit into the entire production side of the business. All members are involved in the overall production process. Carl Boggis, a UK accredited PET operator and a current shift supervisor at Viscount claims that training initiatives right across the organisation have promoted and greatly assisted environmental change throughout the operation. "The freedom and the willingness to discuss production issues and problems has dramatically lifted interest levels among the employees."

Productivity and profitability

It is impossible to measure levels of increased productivity and profitability as a direct result of training but John Murray, Operations Manager points out that Viscount continues to operate as a profitable 'lean' business due to the combined efforts of a committed and cohesive team over a significant period of time in a particularly competitive and challenging marketplace.

Improved quality production

Good customer satisfaction and a reputation for quality product are the results of a robust quality system. Viscount encourages an open access policy and conducts ongoing plant tours for existing and prospective customers. Any recorded faults or flaws in the finished manufactured product can, according to John, generally be traced back to trained staff but are usually related to staff shortage levels at the time and usually involve untrained labour hire personnel.

Employee satisfaction

There has been a visibly noticeable upward trend in productivity, and in employee job satisfaction overall according to several respondents interviewed during the course of the case study. Participating in training, whether for the purposes of acquiring skills sets or full qualifications had a pronounced positive impact on workers' attitudes.



Training coordination

Responsibility for driving the training implementation process and coordinating the traineeships was allocated to the QA / HSE Administration Manager. In partnership with the RTO, the QA / HSE Administration Manager manages the signing on process, the salary linked incentives scheme, the recording of training achievements and access to the adequate resources required to conduct training reviews.

Current training and safety initiatives

Viscount started implementing the BOP (Viscount Behaviour Observation Program) early in 2005. The Perth and Adelaide sites piloted the program with Zara Hart from IFAP

(Industrial Foundation for Accident Prevention) as the principal trainer. The program was well received on both sites and the decision to roll out the program across Australia and NZ came soon after. Zara Hart was retained as the trainer and the program was successfully implemented on all sites by the end of 2005. The BOP was a finalist at the 2006 PACIA (Plastics and Chemicals Industries Association) Awards.

Since implementation of BOP, Viscount has seen a 20% reduction in medical treatment injuries across all sites (rolling 12 months to April 06).

Employees at the Perth site were involved in the development of the BOP initiative from the start. The safety committee was involved during a 1 hour presentation given by Zara Hart which was very interactive and participatory in nature. The aim of the session was to determine the state of the safety culture at present and to develop the future direction for a localised behaviour based safety program. There was consensus at the safety committee meeting that the training should focus on developing their own safety culture with the employees over a period of time and that volunteers become champions to drive the program. The training sessions delivered on all the Viscount sites provided numerous opportunities for employee involvement. In fact, the focus of all the training was cooperative and consultative in nature with the aim of developing a program that everyone had contributed to in some way.

As with all innovative training initiatives it's difficult to directly attribute the results of the BOP initiative to improvements in product performance or quality. However, with the focus on providing positive feedback to the worker at the end of each observation it would be reasonable to say that the worker is left acknowledged for the way they are working and this has the potential to have a positive flow on effect in their approach to product quality control.

Viscount is actively training all leading hands in OHS to supervisor's level. First Aid Officers all hold current St. John's Ambulance First Aid Accreditation. Viscount's administration team are working towards gaining the Leadership Management Australia Certification. The

Viscount Safety Management Planning Team comprising safety coordinators from Australia and New Zealand have been working on the design of an enterprise 'safety bible'. It covers all aspects of the Viscount HSE program and is due to be rolled out in early 2007. Viscount has been working closely with Central TAFE and the PMITC in the development of a specialised short course in injection moulding - tool making and die setting, due to be delivered on campus in March 2007.

Recent developments have seen warehousing traineeships offered at Viscount with two employees from the stores successfully completing Certificate III in Transport and Warehousing through the WA Maritime Training Centre.

the future

"The company's people are its most valued assets. Training is fundamental to achieving this"

(John Barnes, Shift Supervisor and Workplace Trainer).

John Murray (Operations Manager) sees the need to assist production staff to reach another level of proficiency at operator level; the need to encourage and assist employees to learn more about the company's products and the goal of keeping all staff continually skilled as the major training challenges facing Viscount (WA) in the future.

June 2007

"Training means survival to organisations like ours in the current environment"

(John Barnes, Shift Supervisor and Workplace Trainer).



further information

Manufacturing Skills Australia has a goal of ensuring that the workforce skills needs of Australia's manufacturing enterprises are well covered.

For more information please send an email to info@mskills.com.au