



## CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

# VELOCITY MARKETING

### SITUATION

Disconnections in the marketing and analytics leadership team were hampering staff engagement and collaboration. Working in a competitive environment underlined the need to rebuild trust and establish a shared set of behaviours.

### SOLUTION

Relationships were strengthened with a series of exercises that encouraged staff to get to know each other beyond the workplace. They focused on providing honest feedback to one another and challenging each other through positive interactions.

### RESULT

The team began making more time to celebrate their achievements, staff engagement soared and they achieved record results. Several team members were also nominated for internal company awards.



## SITUATION

**Something was broken in the marketing and analytics team Steve Baird was charged with leading when he came to Velocity in 2013.**

*“When I joined there were problems,” he explains.*

*“We were across different geographies, there were conflicting objectives and approaches, people weren’t pulling together and it reflected in staff engagement scores.*

*“The staff engagement scores in the couple of months after I joined were sitting at 41 per cent and at the time industry best practice was about 73 per cent.”*

Recognising that something had to change, in 2015 Baird met with Steve Lacy from Leading Teams and told Lacy the situation. There was inconsistent behaviour and varying levels of trust within the leadership team. They needed help getting buy-in for their agreed values and bringing them to life.

*“I put it off because I didn’t want to face those first few sessions. You could see things were broken and it felt like we weren’t ready to deal with it,” Baird says.*

Lacy explained how Leading Teams could help the team, so after Baird had recruited some strong leaders, they were ready to engage in a process to improve the team’s performance.

Lacy found a team that was focused largely in the mechanics (processes), as opposed to the dynamics (people). They were churning through campaigns without acknowledging the hard work and talent that was propelling them.

It was a mindset Lacy immediately sought to transform.

*“They didn’t make time to strengthen their relationships and amidst their busyness, they weren’t celebrating themselves or their team for different campaigns that were delivered; they’d execute one and they’d just move on to the next,” Lacy explains.*

*“There’s not much margin in their days or in their weeks, it’s fairly cut-throat.”*

## SOLUTION

**The initial session with Lacy saw the team discuss and then create their own language around the Velocity values. This meant more buy-in and clarity around the behaviours they expected from each other.**

Sitting alongside these conversations was time invested in strengthening the trust and respect within the team. Multiple check-ins, during multiple sessions, saw the team open up about topics beyond work.

Taking a step outside work boundaries was challenging for some.

*“It was a bit foreign for them at first and there were a few comments from the team like, ‘I’ve never really been in teams where we’ve shared things relating to our families or what we’re doing outside of work,’” Lacy recalls.*

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*“The first couple of sessions were confronting,” Baird says.*

*“One of the exercises the team still talks about was called the relationship pyramid and in it you’ve got to communicate the depth of your working relationship with a colleague.”*

The relationship pyramid exercise gauges if your relationship is at a superficial level, or if your relationship is strong enough to engage in genuine conversations to give and receive feedback.

*“It was confronting, but at the same time, Steve was a master at making people feel comfortable from the outset,” says Baird.*

*“We had eight sessions and trust was built over that time. After a year of doing it, we took it to another level where we provided feedback on each other about what we should keep doing, as well as where we need to improve and develop.”*

Before the sessions, Lacy said some of the staff had been short with each other. But as they began to know and understand each other, their language and communication improved.

It made huge changes within the team, Baird says.

*“It was a structured, yet flexible program where people could get*

*to know each other, they could provide feedback to each other and have focused conversations about how we were interacting day to day - the tools Lacy used helped give us meaning,” Baird says.*

*“I think the fundamental thing it built was trust and a lot of things flow from there.”*

An incentives and rewards program was also established to recognise outstanding efforts from individuals and motivate the team.

## RESULT

**A more cohesive team has led Velocity’s marketing and analytics team to increase their sales and boost growth.**

In the past four years, the team has doubled in size rising from 20 to 40. The newcomers have merged into a team that prides itself on trust and tellingly, the team’s staff engagement score has more than doubled to 84 per cent.

*“The work with Steve has been a significant factor for us. Setting up a leadership team who trust each other and bring out the best in their people has led to a greater degree of collaboration and engagement,” Baird says.*

*This increased collaboration, fostered by Lacy, helped the team achieve a record goal of signing up eight million members to its*

*frequent flyer program by June 2017. Baird shared that “we said we’d hit seven million by June 30, so to hit eight with the marketing team driving and delivering this was miraculous.”*

The team’s success is reflected by the nominations it has received for the Virgin Australia CEO Awards, the most prestigious awards across the Virgin Australia Group. For the past three years, members of the team have been nominated for awards recognising leadership and innovation. Scoring multiple nominations from a team of just 40 among a company of around 10,000 staff has prompted the team, in echoes of the film Cool Runnings, to jokingly refer to themselves as Jamaica.

Feedback with a higher degree of two-way honesty is more common and with the team currently going through a restructure, it’s now more valuable than ever, Baird says.

*“I gave one of my team here an annual performance review and he turned around to me at the end and said, ‘We’re about to go through some significant changes, so just remember you can’t please everyone, but that’s ok,’” Baird says.*

*“This is the kind of environment we have now. People feel free to speak openly.”*

