

# Skilling Australians: Workforce Development Case Study

## Westpac: Embedding a learning culture



# How does an enterprise retain high value workers and create a positive work culture?

Through a strategic and reliable approach to workforce development, Westpac has fostered employee engagement and provided career progression opportunities.

## Westpac's Best Banker Strategy is the people capability-building component of its vision to be the Best Retail and Business Bank in Australia by 2017.

The strategy provides Westpac's people with the support and tools to be the Best Bankers and the Best Leaders in the market. It brings together different initiatives and learning and development opportunities to build staff capability. The strategy is organised under the three 'pillars' of 'Leadership', 'Professional Bankers' and a 'High Performance Culture'.

## Qualifications are key

The Professional Qualifications Program is a key initiative under the Best Banker Strategy. This program is about developing market leading, externally recognised professional qualifications that allow Westpac to demonstrate that their staff have the knowledge and skills to provide the services the customer needs. Since 2012 Westpac has supported 1,470 qualification completions through the Professional Qualifications Program.

The focus is on recognising the existing skills of staff and then further developing their capabilities. Westpac has partnered

with two leading RTOs to deliver the program. Each qualification is specifically designed around Westpac employee roles. The Westpac Professional Education Team puts together the learning outcomes required for each role and the RTOs map these outcomes to qualifications, then monitor and assess the training. Paula Dexter, Program Manager within Westpac's Professional Education Team says that the Professional Qualifications Program has been invaluable in fostering employee engagement:

*Many of our long-term employees have completed the required training for their role and now look for the opportunity to get formal recognition by turning their skills into a qualification.*

The Professional Qualifications Program is also bringing about career progression opportunities within the organisation. One of the key impacts Westpac has seen from the initiative is more upward movement of qualified staff. A teller, for example, who has completed a Certificate III in Financial Services is more likely to be selected fill a Personal

Banking Advisor vacancy than someone who has not completed the Certificate III. Also, because their skills are consistently understood and recognised across the country, the qualified staff are more likely to transfer into other banks owned by Westpac (e.g. BT Financial Group and the St George Banking Group) and into Westpac jobs in other states.

## A focus on customer service

The Professional Qualifications Program is targeted at all customer-facing roles, these roles include, but are not limited to:

1. Tellers
2. Personal Banking Advisors
3. Personal Bankers
4. Bank Managers
5. Local Business Bankers
6. Relationship Bankers
7. Assistant Relationship Bankers
8. Business Development Managers
9. Relationship Managers
10. Partnership Managers.

This is because one of the drivers of the initiative is to improve customer



confidence in the professionalism of Westpac bankers. It is also because Westpac has recognised that the way people want to interact with banking staff is changing, the customer service role is becoming more complex and front-line workers need a broader skill set.

Westpac has introduced a new front-line role to address these changing requirements. The Personal Banking Advisor (PBA) role is a mix of the current Teller role and the Personal Banker role. PBAs need to be able to fulfil a sales role as well as a customer service function.

The establishment of the PBA role is part of a broader response to the way customers want to engage with banks. Research has shown customers are using the branch more, but in different ways – less for simple banking tasks and more for seeking advice about financial matters. The physical layout of Westpac branches are also changing to accommodate this different focus, with the disappearance of glass security screens and the introduction of comfortable areas for customers to have face-to-face conversations with staff in a relaxed,

lounge-style environment. The skills, knowledge and behaviours required by Westpac's branch staff are being realigned to respond to the purpose and function of branches now and into the future.

### **Establishing a culture of learning**

The Professional Qualifications Program is being driven from the top, with strong buy-in from the CEO and the whole executive team. Jason Yetton, the Group Executive for Westpac Retail and Business Banking, initiated the program in 2012 and is passionate about what it can achieve. His vision for a better skilled, better qualified workforce has energised the whole organisation. The aim is to have 80 percent of the Westpac customer-facing workforce with professional qualifications by 2017:

*2017 is a milestone that we are going to mark by achieving something extraordinary – we are going to have the best bankers in the market.*

*Jason Yetton, Group Executive, WRBB*

Jason realised that to reach this milestone he needed to build a strong learning culture within Westpac. First, he ensured the organisation backed its commitment with sufficient resources – \$50 million has been allocated to the Best Banker Strategy so far. Second, he set ambitious targets for staff around achieving enrolments and completions and he monitors these closely. Third, he developed key performance indicators for managers in relation to the learning outcomes of their staff so that everyone in the organisation has a stake in the success of the program. Finally, he put in place arrangements to openly acknowledge the achievements of staff. Twice a year, Jason hosts a dinner function for graduates of the program where they are treated as honoured guests and personally congratulated by members of the Westpac executive team.

Not surprisingly, nationally recognised training is now in high demand at Westpac.

For more information please visit  
<http://www.westpac.com.au>

#### **Innovation & Business Skills Australia Ltd**

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) is funded by the Australian Government to:

- provide integrated industry intelligence and advice to governments on workforce development and skills needs,
- maintain and improve training materials and supporting products and services, and
- provide advice on skills, training and workforce development to enterprises.

IBSA is committed to building the capability of businesses and to ensuring individuals have contemporary skills through the vocational education and training system in ICT, telecommunications, education and training, small business administration, printing, finance and the cultural and creative industries. IBSA is an expert intermediary on qualifications, skills needs and workforce planning and works as a central coordination point for the Australian Government's workforce development programs.

Level 11, 176 Wellington Parade  
East Melbourne Victoria 3002  
P: +61 3 9815 7000  
F: +61 3 9815 7001  
[www.ibsa.org.au](http://www.ibsa.org.au)



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education and Training**