

VULTURE STREET CASE STUDY: QMI SOLUTIONS

CREATING ONE QMI

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Steve Bryant
QMI Marketing Manager

QMI Solutions is a not-for-profit company dedicated to helping improve the productivity and competitiveness of Queensland industry. Based in Brisbane, QMI Solutions also has staff at regional offices in Townsville, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Wide Bay and Toowoomba. Over the past three years the organisation expanded by 30 per cent with the addition of two new divisions. Internal surveys revealed low cross-divisional awareness of the company’s products and capabilities, a below-average confidence in explaining the integrated QMI value proposition to an external audience and a sense of lack of engagement from a significant proportion of regional staff.

Steve Bryant, QMI’s Marketing Manager, was tasked with actively seeking ideas on how to improve integration and engagement across the organisation’s three divisions.



“Vulture Street’s jam service was a great solution. Staff weren’t required to be on site to use it and it could be accessed at any time convenient to employees,” says Steve. Christened the OneQMI Challenge, the jam - or online collaboration event - was positioned as part of a broader internal re-branding project. The OneQMI Challenge was held over two weeks in mid 2009 and involved 63 participants who generated 20 substantial new ideas, 209 votes (positive and negative) on the ideas, and 57 comments.

Vulture Street provided a comprehensive report on the resulting jam data, summarising key outcomes and insights with an in-depth analysis of participation rates, interpretation of usage statistics, identification of emergent themes and trends and recommendations for forward planning.

In this case, QMI undertook its post-jam action planning at its annual off-site, held shortly after the jam. Steve had correctly anticipated that several features of the jam process would be particularly well suited to QMI’s culture and specific requirements. The Challenge’s quick set up and deployment required no involvement from the IT department; engagement with regional team members incurred no extra cost; and the neutrality of the jam space meant that a high degree of objectivity was achieved.

An unexpected benefit of the process was the effect of the jam’s transparency on the staff. Rather than inhibiting contributions, it helped foster cultural maturity in the organisation by encouraging ownership of ideas and opinions.

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Steve emphasises that communication to participants – before, during and after the jam event – about the broader goals and how actions would be taken forward, was essential for the success of the Challenge.

Given the wide-ranging nature of the OneQMI Challenge and the speed at which a new solution had to be found, QMI has done an extraordinary job in using a jam to tap into the wisdom of its employees, and has excelled at integrating the findings into its broader decision-making processes.

QMI: 8 TIPS FOR JAM SUCCESS

QMI's Steve Bryant highlights key lessons for engaging staff in a jam challenge:

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1. Clearly state a purpose for the event, and that it will lead to recognisable change
2. Have a plan at the executive level for turning ideas into action
3. Put an accessible face to the process - not necessarily the CEO – who can personify the challenge (known as the 'jam sponsor')
4. Use champions, preferably existing thought leaders, to stimulate focus on the challenge
5. Seed the jam event with a few ideas before opening – preferably contentious ones! This means that someone (one of the jam champions) must be willing to be provocative, to drive both positive and negative votes
6. Give non tech-savvy people a meaningful alternative for participation if needed, whether that is on the phone or face-to-face
7. Take notice of negative as well as positive opinions, both quantitative (i.e. votes) and qualitative (i.e. comments)
8. Recognise that participation in this kind of event provides a secondary effect – a mechanism for staff to learn about and engage with organisational strategy. The valuable outcomes are not just in the ideas themselves, but also in the fact that we went through the process together!

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