



BUSINESS EXCELLENCE CASE STUDY

CITY OF MARION
2007 Bronze Business Excellence Award Winner

OUR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE JOURNEY
March 2007
Peter Bice

Executive Summary

Since adopting The Business Excellence Framework in September 2004, and in having the ongoing support of SAI Global, the City of Marion has been able to introduce a planned approach to incremental improvement that has a focus on delivering quality services to the community. This strategy of incremental improvement, which is supported by a documented management system and regular internal and external evaluations, has allowed the City of Marion Council to sustain a process and consistency of direction for achieving business excellence.

Background of the Client

The first steps in 2000 were the development of a 5 year financial plan and a corporate plan, plus a concentrated effort to sort out major projects. By 2001, we were budgeting to commence working on our culture using Human Synergistics. Our Vision had stabilised by 2002 and has remained consistent since which has assisted in providing stable corporate direction. We started work on initiatives to realise our vision, including our drive on customer service in phones and customer request management. By late 2003 / early 2004 we recognised that we were experiencing difficulty accelerating progress toward our Vision and started looking for external validation and assessment of our progress.

A project team (The Vision Team) was charged with the task to research options and came back with a detailed assessment and recommendation to introduce the Business Excellence Framework - Excellence in Local Government. The basis of the recommendation was that the "Framework" offered the strongest alignment to our Vision, had a high level of external validation and is robust

Situation

The City of Marion needed to be achieving more measurable gains towards achieving our vision. The approach required was to be supportive, and link in with our existing approach to culture and journey to becoming an Employer of Choice.

SAI Global Solution

The first stage in integrating Business Excellence throughout the Council was to educate the leadership group around the principles, categories and items of the Framework, to ensure that role modelling of leadership was strong from the outset. The next stage was to include staff and work areas in process improvement training, using the Plan Do Study Act cycle (PDSA), and to begin introducing process level teams to work on identified opportunities.

Following good acceptance and results from the Process Improvement teams, we began the introduction of Systems Views in the organisation, beginning with the Elected Members, and recently filtering down through the organisation (E.g. OH&S Committee). In 2005 the City of Marion undertook a Guided Self Assessment to see how we were progressing on our Business Excellence journey. The Assessment involved various key stakeholder groups who identified opportunities for improvement.

Towards the end of 2006 it was decided to become involved in the vigorous external assessment process associated with a submission to the Australian Business Excellence Awards. This will provide a solid benchmark of where the City of Marion stands in relation to best practice in the key Category areas of the Business Excellence Framework. The resulting report will highlight strengths and areas for improvement, and enable structured action planning in conjunction with other surveying and measurement tools utilised by the council (We anticipate our results and report to be available by early July 2007).

Results

Many significant achievements have resulted from our planning and implementation strategies, encompassing the wide range of areas of focus. Some examples of major achievements which resulted in accreditation or awards include:

- ISO 14001 Accreditation and maintenance (first council in SA)
- Received grant funding for Energy/Water initiatives in council owned premises
- Long Term planning
- Operating deficit turned to surplus a year ahead of the financial plan
- Measurable improvement in organisation culture (statistically significant)
- Significant improvement in employee retention
- Major projects on track with SA State Aquatic Centre secured for Marion
- First council in SA to set up independent Development Assessment Panel
- First council in SA to set up Independent Audit Committee
- Maintain OH&S Self Insurer Status
- Strategic Planning Framework
- Establishment of Key Performance Indicators
- Establishment of Corporate Performance Reporting
- Measurable improvement in key customer service areas of customer requests and telephone response times

Improvements in the constructive behaviours recorded in the Organisational Cultural Inventory were deemed to be far above average for the measured time period; a reflection on the successful implementation and acceptance of the Constructive Culture model.

Results (cont)

The City of Marion's commitment to the environment and ecology is illustrated through our strategic projects such as Cities for Climate protection, and early involvement with the Local Agenda 21 Environmental project. Achievements relating to these strategies include more than halving the CO2 emissions per capita at the administration centre over the past 5 years, and doubling nearly doubling the recycling volume over the last 2 years.

2005-2006 was a significant period for the City of Marion as we saw progress on several major projects and achievements across all areas of council responsibility. Years of hard work paid off when the Federal Government announced a \$15 million commitment towards a Marion-based Olympic standard aquatic centre in April 2006. The Marion South Plan moved forward with an increase in Federal Government funding and the start of exploratory work for the Connector Road.

There was also the successful launch of a new three bin system and substantial upgrading of road infrastructure. Marion had the fifth lowest average residential rate for Adelaide metropolitan councils in 2005-2006, which was down from ninth lowest in 2001-2002. Council must maintain infrastructure and services for both present and future generations and a stable rate of up to five per cent is important to long-term planning. Adopting a structured approach to rates has enabled us to both cover costs and deliver services.

One of our most innovative and productive programs, Funding Community Priorities, reduces reliance on rates and has generated savings of \$2.5m since it was introduced in 2003. A measure of how far we have come as a council in the last six years is the shift from an operating deficit of \$3.6m in 1998-1999 to a forecasted surplus before capital revenues of \$2.9m for 2005-2006. We encourage the community to keep working with us to ensure that Marion becomes a City that values people, provides opportunities and enhances quality of life for current and future generations.

In 2006, the City of Marion commenced the process of producing a new economic development strategy for the City based on the City of Marion Strategic Plan and taking into account the South Australia Strategic Plan and the draft Blueprint document. To ensure that local small businesses have access to advice and other relevant services the City has entered into a partnership with the State Government and two neighbouring local authorities to fund the Inner Southern Business Enterprise Centre.

Acknowledgements

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About Us

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