

Statement of Core Competencies

WS & Associates is a firm of senior business and consulting professionals that specialise in improving corporate financial and operational performance, developing strategic options for underperforming businesses and executing corporate turnarounds.

Our Services include: Corporate Turnaround and Operational Performance Improvement.

We differ from other consulting firms

Our staff are Senior, experienced, hands on professionals

- We work in small teams with a mix of young professionals and senior consultants
- Our role is to deliver measurable results
- We focus on cash, profit and value
- We are happy to align interests and be driven by success fees

Our professionals are experienced in successfully driving change, and bring to bear a broad range of industry, consulting and corporate advisory experience with a practical hands-on appreciation of the complexities of business.

WS & Associates is proud to be in co-operation with the KordaMentha group, which includes the 333 Capital, 333 Real Estate and 333 Management businesses, and Alix Partners (www.alixpartners.com).

Our consultants have been able to achieve productivity increases of 15-40% and more with over one hundred businesses in Australia, New Zealand and Asia. These increases have been achieved often after considerable and continual restructuring and rationalisation programs that have been undertaken by either the business or outside consulting firms.

Improvement in productivity levels that are obtained are sustainable as we introduce appropriate work management systems and achieve desired behavioural and cultural outcomes.

Our programs are not aimed at expensive re-engineering of processes, redesigning what may be effective or capital based solutions. They focus on systemic waste in a business. This waste is caused by inadequate work management systems which lack crucial forecasting of demand and activity volumes, loose standards or KPI's, resource matching, scheduling and rostering, review disciplines, poor asset utilisation, poor equipment maintenance programs, management reporting and a work culture which has excessive down or idle time built in and is entrenched in operating budgets.

The above factors can also have a profound effect on quality levels and on-time and in-full order fulfilment.

Our philosophy is based on the proven belief that most people come to work to succeed but, all too frequently, management systems fail to support them. We see ourselves as the means to realign and re-equip management staff with the necessary tools, disciplines and behaviour to control productivity outcomes.

Our Methodology – How we Work

Financial outcomes are a consequence of operational performance, yet many operations seek performance improvement by simply identifying financial targets. This is the rhetoric of failure.

People need to know the nature of the steps involved in moving to a higher plane of performance. They need tangible tasks and problems that when solved lead to real improvement. We succeed by providing the foundations for leadership in an organisation. We develop real leaders by identifying these tangible tasks and problems.

The Traditional Work Management and Control System (Push Approach)

Our approach to this model is to firstly conduct a hands-on up front business review for all our clients over a concentrated two or three week period. The result of this review is that management gain detailed evidence of the extent of savings in operating costs from increased productivity, improved cash flows from the reduced manufacturing leads times and lower inventory levels or the true revenue or capacity potential of the organisation. Our consultants work across all shifts and over weekends if necessary to obtain a balanced view.

Our studies entail a critical examination of the productivity management process. Our approach is based on the empirical identification and quantification of systemic waste.

We believe that while benchmarking and best practice approaches are very valuable, it makes little sense to limit the improvement horizon while waste and lost time can be seen during observation of work in progress.

This entails a “wall to wall” study of the enterprise that begins with sales forecasts client orders, effectiveness of planning systems and ends with performance reporting and review disciplines. We examine and calculate the true capacities of plant equipment and labour to deliver required outputs based on a quantitative analysis of each element of the process. This enables us to quantify significant opportunities for improved resource matching. We examine work in progress closely to identify the root causes of recurring operating problems that lead to lost time and lost capacity – be they machine or labour based.

We are equally focussed on questioning the behavioural profile of managers to determine whether they actually control productivity outcomes in the business on a day to day basis. We live through work in progress to determine the strength of the management review process and extent to which problems in the process are identified and solved permanently.

We review current key performance indicators against the “zero based” opportunity for productivity outcomes. Productivity goals will be assessed upon a combination of best performance goals derived from historical performance, direct observation of work in progress to get a “zero based” expectation, and some internal benchmarking to obtain an “objective” basis for productivity standards.

We find that short interval measurement of output in work processes, together with the scientific establishment of process capacities is often the starting point for identifying the root causes of system waste.

Often, work environments present complex combinations of resources applied together within the same time frame.

We examine the adequacy of maintenance programs and their effect on plant up time. This includes predictability and reliability systems and maintenance planning and operations to identify if this aspect can be improved.

Productivity improvements we can confidently expect may be realised in either reduction in labour costs and/or improvements in capacity and throughput. Other improvements, such as greater utilisation of assets, reductions in cycle times and inventory and work in progress levels are high level goals.

Many of our senior clients have exceptional difficulty managing variable costs as variable costs. Once this focus fails at senior levels in an organisation it is followed by the collapse of the front line of management in their role managing short interval work based productivity issues.

Many middle and senior managers appear to the uniqueness of their business or work process or to the “creative” aspect of the work in less structured environments as a reason to continue to ignore the existence of these opportunities. Unstructured work environments can be a haven for ineffectual management behaviour, poor systems and poor productivity.

Our consultants as a consequence therefore design systems and establish understanding and discipline around the removal of recurring systemic waste in unstructured environments as well as structured work environments. These include professional service, consulting, project based, “job shop”, sales, administration and maintenance environments.

The object of the initial review therefore is not about initially implementing change but demonstrating the opportunity to recover waste in all its various forms and to quantify the opportunity together with only the activity required to deliver the improvement. Our review will not put forward any recommendation that requires capital expenditure.

Hard evidence of the root causes, extent and value of the lost opportunity will be provided. Much of our time would be spent in the company of front-line supervisors while work is in progress.

During our review we progressively table evidence of opportunity from our studies and analysis in order to foster an acceptance of the need for change. There are usually three formal presentation meetings culminating in the decision meeting. Our program is critically focussed on developing recognition of the need to act within the management team and represents the beginning of our education program.

A schematic of our work management system is attached.

The Lean System – The Pull Approach (where appropriate)

Many companies today are becoming lean enterprises by replacing where appropriate their outdated mass-production systems with lean systems to improve quality, eliminate waste and reduce delays and total costs.

Our lean system emphasises the prevention of waste: any extra time, labour or material spent producing a product or service that doesn’t add value to it. Our lean system’s unique tools, techniques and methods can help your organisation reduce costs, achieve just-in-time delivery, and shorten lead times.

A lean enterprise fosters a company culture in which all employees continually improve their skill levels and production processes. And because lean systems are customer focused and driven, a lean enterprise’s products and services are created and delivered in the right amounts, to the right location, at the right time and in the right condition. Products and services are produced only for a specific customer order rather than being added to an inventory.

Our lean system allows production of a wide variety of products and services, efficient rapid changeover among them as needed, efficient response to fluctuating demand and increased quality.

A schematic of a “pull management control system approach” is attached.

Clients

A list of our senior consultant’s past and present clients is attached. References from these companies may be provided if required.

Staffing

WS & Associates currently has a number of highly skilled consultants with appropriate academic qualifications currently working on project in most states of Australia. Importantly we can offer the necessary depth of experience for the detailed projects we conduct. Most of our senior staff have been directly involved with all of the projects they have successfully completed over the past sixteen years.

They have a hands-on approach and continue to be directly involved in both the detailed two to three week review – which precedes any project – and the projects which follow. This degree of experience is essential when high-order productivity gains are to be implemented and sustained.

Profiles of our senior consultants are attached. They are also contained in our web site. Profiles of other consultants who would be working on a review would be provided once a start date for review is known. We believe our consultants who are highly qualified and experienced change managers are well placed to objectively analyse, evidence and quantify opportunities.

As a general statement we often find that in an organisation, capable senior staff whose primary role is managing may not have the analytical skills and systems knowledge to realise the full potential benefits of the change process. Alternatively, they may have their hands fully running the business. Lastly an outside consultant can often see opportunities which managers due to familiarity with and ownership of a process, may very well miss.

The Implementation Project

Our implementation project focuses on realising the opportunities defined in the up front review. We use a unique and well-defined approach which we have developed over the past fifteen years – and which is focussed on delivering results. The project involves four distinct phases which are designed not only to embrace detailed reviews of operating process systems and waste systems design, but implementation of the new systems, full on-the-job training in the new systems and effecting permanent behaviour change – the key to sustainable productivity improvement.

A project takes 15-22 weeks to complete. Client reviews are held weekly.

Should a client proceed with a project to realise the opportunities defined in the review, return of between three and eight times would be our objective.

Pull Management Control System (lean) Approach

