

THE POWER OF

REDARC®

At Redarc, people are regarded as the company's greatest asset. Improving workforce skills in language, literacy and numeracy was recognised as essential to continue to grow as a company and a quality global supplier.

Redarc is fortunate to have an extremely loyal and dedicated local workforce. The staff retention rate is 98 per cent and attendance is above 97 per cent. About 39 per cent of the staff are female and more than 90 per cent live within twenty minutes of the factory.

Redarc, based in Lonsdale south of Adelaide, is a multi-award winning electronics manufacturer with annual revenue of \$25m and employment of over 100 staff. The company manufactures a range of power conversion products including battery management systems, power supplies, DC/DC voltage converters and inverters supplied to the automotive, mining, defence, agricultural and marine industries.

The majority of staff on the production floor arrive without qualifications or experience and so all staff need to undertake training. Local people are not trained in advanced manufacturing and that is the major challenge for the company because a certificate II traineeship is considered to be the minimum requirement for employment.

Initially workforce development efforts focused on the numeracy skills that apprentices need to underpin a manufacturing qualification. Then awareness of language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) spread to other issues, such as the workplace communication needs of employees from non-English speaking backgrounds, the communication needs of supervisors and the advanced statistical and computing requirements of many staff.

Redarc have created a culture of continual learning and development for workers at all levels of the organisation. Comprehensive workforce development initiatives are underpinned by attention to the foundation skills of the workforce.



**NATIONAL FOUNDATION SKILLS
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Approach to training

To embed LLN skill development in workforce training, Redarc participated in a three year training partnership with TAFE South Australia supported by funding through the Australian Government. The program enabled TAFE trainers to work flexibly with the company to customise training and delivery approaches specifically for the needs and context of Redarc employees – ensuring that training addressed workplace priorities and directly benefited the company.

All staff at Redarc are entitled to two hours of training per week, appropriate to their needs, and the achievements of individual employees are recognised and celebrated by the company. Training is conducted during normal business hours, either on the job or in the company training room, and staff are paid for their time participating in training.

Over the three years, the LLN program provided different types of support and skill development opportunities for staff throughout Redarc, including:

- Communicating for success
- Quality at Redarc
- Literacy and numeracy for apprentices
- Introduction to statistical process control
- Computing skills and Excel applied skills
- Occupational health and safety
- Supervision for team leaders

Redarc is the 2014 Telstra Australian Business of the Year. The company's success is reflected in its increasing sales overseas and its recent doubling of factory size. To maintain market edge, Redarc invests heavily in research and development, new production systems and ongoing staff development.



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Business benefits of LLN training

Anthony Kittel, Redarc CEO and Managing Director has seen many direct benefits from the LLN program.

“Confidence is a key benefit. There is more active participation in team meetings, increased understanding of business processes, greater contribution to quality improvement, improved communication within the teams and with the team leaders, increased skills in completing workplace documentation, increased confidence in the use of ICT technology, both at work and at home, and an ability to build on current knowledge of skills and transfer the learning from the various training programs.”

Anthony Kittel, CEO and Managing Director



New Team Leaders, a major focus of LLN training, have acquired a range of interpersonal, coaching, planning and project management skills. The positive networks they have formed as a group are the result of the better understanding they have of the soft skills necessary to underpin effective workplace relationships.

The business has increasingly moved toward implementing Lean Manufacturing principles, notably the drive to remove waste which is increasingly gaining traction through the abilities of

the new team leader group who are able to manage and drive line projects. All operational employees undertook Lean awareness training relationships skills so they are 'on board' with project aims.

The training program has provided a platform for growth, supporting company growth at a rate of 30 per cent per year. Redarc measures sales per employee as a key performance indicator. Over the past four years these have been above the minimum target level and costs have remained on budget. The company has expanded sales into New Zealand, France, the Netherlands, the United States and Canada.

Keys to success

Anthony Kittel identifies three features of Redarc's LLN program that contributed to the program's success:

- *an organisational culture that values and empowers staff*
- *use of specialist trainers from TAFE SA who customise training to particularly suit Redarc*
- *a wide range of LLN training along a continuum to address all workplace needs.*

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Seven Workplace Champions have been appointed as public ambassadors for foundation skills

The Foundation Skills Workplace Champions aim to raise employer awareness of the benefits of addressing foundation skills in the workplace by sharing positive outcomes from their own organisations.

Foundation Skills Workplace Champions

- Anthony Kittel, Redarc Electronics Pty Ltd
- Victoria Jacques, Villa Maria Aged Care
- Yvonne Webb, CHARTTES Industry Training Advisory Council, NT
- Vince Ball, ACT Regional Building and Construction Industry Training Council
- Graeme Finlayson, Oak Training and Development, Tasmania
- Ro Coroneos, Lend Lease
- Kim Moore, Unitywater

Further information on individual champions is available on the website of the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project: <http://www.statedevelopment.sa.gov.au/nfss>

Support for the Workplace Champions is being provided by Michael Taylor from the Australian Industry Group, and the National Foundation Skills Strategy Project Team.

The National Foundation Skills Strategy Project (NFSS) 2014-2015 is a joint initiative by Australian governments to support priority action areas from the National Foundation Skills Strategy for Adults.

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