

Case Study

Operational Review of Tribal Warrior Association



Background

Tribal Warrior Association (TWA) is a non-profit organisation and was set up to empower disadvantaged indigenous and non-indigenous people socially, culturally and economically. TWA encourages people to become self-sufficient by providing specialised training programs leading to employment opportunities in the maritime industries.

TWA's core focus areas include:

1. *Maritime Training*

Tribal Warrior Association Incorporated is the only indigenous maritime training company operating within Australia. Maritime training courses are facilitated by qualified maritime trainers via OTEN and the Western Australia Maritime College. TWA has successfully trained many skippers who have gained employment and are working boats around Sydney Harbour. One of TWA's former students is now teaching naval personnel small boat sailing skills around the harbour based at Garden Island. TWA has also trained at-risk youth from Inverell TAFE and have other students undergoing courses with them.

2. *Mentoring and Mentor Training*

Mentoring training is also provided to indigenous and non-indigenous people (Certificate IV in Mentoring Diverse Cultures) to train in how to culturally support indigenous people in employment and pre-employment training.

In addition, TWA facilitates a mentoring program with local disadvantaged people in which TWA mentors provide guidance and support to mentees on a daily basis. The program focuses on life-skills, employment, education, health and eliminating participant contact with the justice system.

3. *Commercial Arm – Tribal Warrior Cruises*

TWA's commercial arm focuses on tourism, vitalising Aboriginal culture through the maritime industry. Tribal Warrior cruises provide a 2 hour daily cultural cruise on Sydney Harbour, whale watching cruises, and cultural performances for all settings.

TWA is led by CEO Shane Phillips, a strong and well respected community leader, and holder of a Captains ticket.

Although TWA had actively operated for 12 years, assistance was needed in defining the future strategic direction of the organisation, including identification of potential areas for improvement via a comprehensive operational review.

Approach

1. Operational review

To support this work, Jawun engaged with one of its long terms partners, KPMG and facilitated initial meetings with TWA to go through the project brief and the support skills required. A KPMG Chartered Accountant, Waqas Ahmed, was identified and commenced work via the Jawun secondment program in April 2010.

The first step was for Waqas to spend time with the TWA CEO and other key personnel involved in the running of the organisation to gain a thorough understanding of the purpose, structure and operations of TWA as well as its future plans.

“It took him [Waqas] a few days to get used to our slower pace of doing things, and eventually he took off the suit and enjoyed his time with us.” – Tribal Warrior CEO, Shane Phillips

Waqas produced a report with a series of recommendations for process and business improvement for TWA.

2. Major partnership proposal

Vicki Reed (Personal Assistant) was placed by Jawun in July 2010 to create a partnership proposal to present to Carnival Australia.

Following on from Waqas’ review of operations, an opportunity arose for a partnership arrangement with Carnival Australia. Carnival Australia is a cruise ship company which has numerous international cruise ships port in Sydney each year. TWA required support in developing a partnership proposal. In July 2010, Jawun facilitated assistance from KPMG secondee, Vicki Reed, who is an executive assistant with strong administrative and presentation skills. The partnership proposal focused on TWA’s provision of ‘Shore Tours’ to passengers disembarking from CA ships. These ‘Shore Tours’ involve a 2 hour cultural cruise, and a “Welcome to Country” style performance from TWA dancers.

Vicki produced the partnership proposal and a DVD which showcased TWA’s product offering.

“Vicki produced a professional document and DVD to present to Carnival Australia. She helped us believe in our abilities, our products, and gain confidence in delivering a service to our customers and Carnival as a new partner.” – Tribal Warrior CEO, Shane Phillips

3. Assessment of financial systems and funding

Another recommendation from Waqas’ operational review was for TWA to undergo an assessment of their financial systems. Jawun facilitated support via KPMG and a KPMG accountant, John Clinton, was deployed in October 2010. John reviewed cash flow statements for all three areas of TWA operations, with a particular focus on the mentoring program. John developed a costings overview and identified gaps in funding in relation to the sustainability of the program into the future.

“The mentoring document produced by John showed a realistic picture of the gap between our current funding, and what we require to operate the program. It is now a foundation document we can amend to suit each different funding application, and instils confidence in funding partners.” –Tribal Warrior Mentoring Manager, Victor Morgan.

4. Funding strategy

It was evident from the previous secondment work that TWA required a funding strategy to ensure the future sustainability of its operations. Jawun facilitated the support again via KPMG and KPMG accountant Elenie Panos was deployed in March 2011. Elenie conducted funding research and identified suitable funding options for TWA including government, corporate and philanthropy. As well

as a detailed list of targets for funding, Elenie created application templates to suit all funding areas, including a completed application for funding.

“I had no idea there were so many areas of funding available to us. Elenie’s research was thorough and detailed and we now have a practical database to access for funding.” – Tribal Warrior CEO, Shane Phillips

Outcomes

Over the past year, focussed support from a number of skilled corporate secondees via the Jawun program has enabled TWA to better understand the strengths and weakness of its current operations and put in place a short and long term action plan to ensure the future sustainability of its operations. This started with a comprehensive operational review which identified a number of priorities for the organisation.

The partnership proposal was successful with Carnival Australia and so far, TWA have performed approximately 6 ‘Welcome to Country’ performances onboard, docked Carnival Australia ships, as well as facilitating a number of cultural cruises as a direct result of promotion to CA passengers.

A thorough assessment of the organisation’s finances and cash flow has been conducted and following this review a funding strategy has been developed.

TWA CEO, Shane Phillips sums up his feelings toward the assistance provided to date from the Jawun program:

“All of the secondees sent to us from KPMG are now considered friends by the whole Tribal team. They came in with open minds and hearts and helped us in ways we could not imagine.”

Next Steps

Tribal Warrior are now in a powerful position to move ahead in their business and are confident they have some tools to establish new partnerships, be successful in gaining funding, and deliver a quality service to their clients in the future.

Current and future secondment partnership with TWA will focus on the commercial side of the organisation in improving the customer product and experience; reviewing the structure of the maritime training courses; and fundraising into all three areas of operation.