

Case Study – shared value for Jawun partners



Left: Ross Love (Partner and Managing Director, BCG and then Jawun Board Member) and Ian Trust (Executive Chair, Wunan), East Kimberley, 2011

BCG and Wunan—a powerful combination

Background

The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) is a founding partner of Jawun, having committed the first ever ‘secondee’ in order to put into practice an idea for a unique partnership model. With Westpac, BCG was present at a roundtable in Weipa, Queensland, that brought corporate and philanthropic executives together with Indigenous leaders planning a reform agenda. Jawun Patron Noel Pearson remembers, *“We started Jawun because we wanted a vehicle for corporate and philanthropic partnerships to help us prosecute our Cape York reform agenda... Ann Sherry, then a senior executive with Westpac, and Colin Carter from the Boston Consulting Group took the initiative and established a secondment program of staff from their organisations to work with Cape York organisations to develop and implement our reform ideas.”*

Since 2001, Jawun has expanded its model to 10 Indigenous regions and forged partnerships with over 70 Indigenous and over 30 corporate and government organisations. BCG, who has seconded around 110 of its staff, remains a key supporter and strategic ally to Jawun and its Indigenous partners. For one organisation in the East Kimberley, this has been particularly impactful. This case study looks at BCG’s relationship with the Wunan Foundation, and the value of the partnership for both sides.

Approach

Wunan was established in 1997 by Indigenous leader Ian Trust, whose vision remains that success grows from investing in people’s ability, providing real opportunities and rewarding effort and self-responsibility. It has since grown to operate in four locations in the East Kimberley, and in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth (with the KEEP scholarship program). It delivers programs in education, employment, accommodation and housing, welfare reform, leadership, and health, and is a key opt-in member of the regional Empowered Communities.

The first BCG secondees deployed to Wunan worked on employment, in the first year that the Jawun-Wunan partnership commenced (2010). Later BCG secondees worked on provision of transitional housing, a Wunan-led reform initiative called Living Change, and the broader regional Empowered Communities reform that followed this. They brought fresh eyes, problem solving expertise, and senior project skills. They also drew on the content expertise of the broader BCG family – an example being secondee Tim Mooney who, while working on Wunan’s transitional housing strategy in 2012, sought input from an expert in social financing from BCG’s London office. Through this, BCG employees helped establish and advance some of Ian’s most ambitious plans for bold social change in the region.

Twelve BCG secondments in total, seven of them long term, have provided almost three years’ worth of skilled, professional support to Wunan to date (and an estimated in-kind contribution of \$2.36m). At the same time, ten senior executives from BCG have been on Jawun Executive Visits to East Kimberley, hosted by Wunan alongside Jawun’s other Indigenous partners in the region.

As the partnership between the two organisations strengthened, senior staff began to offer more strategic and longer-term support. This was in response to Wunan’s eagerness to supplement local knowledge

with external skills and perspectives, a relatively uncommon but powerful form of cross-sectoral collaboration that stands Wunan out among Indigenous organisations and has served it well.

As profiled in the Jawun 2014 [Learnings & Insights report](#), BCG Managing Partner Ross Love (who went on to become Managing Partner for New York) began a close and mutually supportive friendship with Ian Trust after meeting him on the first East Kimberley Executive Visit in 2010. Describing himself as a “sounding board” for Ian, Ross remembered, “*A leadership position is by nature a lonely job, whether you are at the top of a company or leading community change, there aren't really that many places to go for an outlet without having to think about what you're saying and how you're phrasing it; to refine your thoughts*”.

In 2012, Ian asked Ross to join the Wunan Board as an independent Director, a role he held for two years. During that time, Ross travelled to the East Kimberley four to five times a year for board meetings and other events, and said of the commitment: “*The complexity of the challenges and the people I get to work with make it some of the best professional time I spend in a year*”.

Trish Clancy is another senior BCG executive who became a close ally of Wunan. In 2011, after a six-month secondment supporting Wunan to establish the ground-breaking welfare reform model Living Change (see earlier [case study](#)), the BCG Project Leader (now Partner and Managing Director) was invited to join the Wunan Board. She served as Independent Director for five years. During this time she brought her background in public sector projects and service delivery reform to Wunan's ambitions to break welfare dependency cycle through implementation of Living Change and other initiatives including transitional housing and, since 2014, Empowered Communities. Today, with a regional reform agenda based on creation of jobs and provision of transitional housing to support employment as well as other social outcomes, the legacy of Trish's six months in the Kimberley – and years of follow-up support to Wunan – are clear to see.

Then in 2016, BCG Management Consultant Luke Green was seconded to the East Kimberley's Empowered Communities secretariat (BBY), working to support this newly established 'backbone' organisation implement communications, governance and employment initiatives. Working closely with Wunan during this time and impressed its leadership with his strategic advice, Luke was invited to become the newest Independent Director on the Wunan Board in 2016, continuing a BCG tradition.

From BCG's perspective, this approach to collaboration enabled senior people to remain closely connected to the broader area of Indigenous-led development over the long-term. As Trish Clancy recalls,

“What may start as a 3-6 month 'secondment' has in some of our cases evolved into a longer-term sustained connection, through which we have continued to give time and effort, but also further honed our experiences and expertise in that space, and on social impacts, and reforms more broadly. These perspectives and depth of genuine experience has permeated the broader BCG approach to social impact, and of course inspired many others to pursue similar paths. The BCG'ers involved in Wunan over the years have continued in their daily roles at BCG to work with corporates, governments, and public policy think tanks – bringing a depth of understanding of core issues, possible solutions, and empathy that is highly valued by all of those other organisations. And of course this has provided those BCG'ers with a unique and rewarding development opportunity that is relatively rare in the corporate world.”

Outcomes

Wunan has grown significantly through visionary and determined leadership using opportunities as well as cross-sectoral connections to increase their capacity to prosecute a bold vision for social change. The organisation now employs 135 people (of whom 71% are Indigenous) in management, social programs, and its five social enterprises: iBase Indigenous accounting service, Social Compass evaluation consultancy, East Kimberley Job Pathways, Kununurra Medical, and Wunan House Bed and Breakfast. These social enterprises, along with 17 commercial and residential properties, account for 63% of Wunan's overall funding and underpin a high degree of financial independence.

Wunan is also a leading voice and advocate for large community initiatives around transitional housing and alcohol reform, including through the Cashless Debit Card Trial. Demonstrating the influence of its

cross-sectoral network, this last initiative receives high level support from Alan Tudge, the BCG employee who was Jawun's very first secondee (in Cape York in 2001) and went on to be Deputy Director of the Cape York Institute before entering politics and taking up his current position as Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs. Minister Tudge describes Wunan as *"at the forefront of national policy development & practical implementation, particularly in the areas of housing & cashless welfare"* and *"an organisation that is admired & respected around Australia."*

After twenty years of driving services, enterprises and advocacy to support Indigenous communities in the East Kimberley, Wunan has proved it has the staying power that Founding Chairperson Ian Trust envisaged: *"We set up the Wunan Foundation to succeed and counter the widespread perception that Indigenous organisations only ever last for a short while before they eventually fail"*.

At regional level, Wunan now plays a key role in the Empowered Communities reform agenda that it was a foundational member of, building on learning from community reform initiatives including transitional housing and alcohol reform. A '100 Jobs' employment initiative is currently being prioritised in the region.

As it grows in reach and impact, Wunan continues to draw on strategic advice from BCG in the form of secondees, Board directors, and senior advisors. Ross remains close and over the years has offered a listening ear, direction, guidance to successive BCG secondees, and an extensive network of influential connections. Trish continues to be an Advisor to the Wunan Board, and Luke is still in his role as Independent Director.

Describing the value of having "really strategic" BCG people on the Wunan board, Ian Trust said: *"We can tap into their intellect as well. They can just give us another perspective on the issues we're facing"*.

BCG has also gained great value from the partnership in terms of their strengthened approach to social impact. Asked to define this, Ross Love described an impact well beyond the Kimberley:

"One aspect of the impact of the partnership on BCG's approach to Social Impact is that I have been able to carry some of the lessons to work here in New York. We have substantially increased and focused our efforts including through deeply embedded, multi-year relationships with organizations as diverse as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the International Rescue Committee – with substantial benefits to our partner organizations, our partners and staff, and our brand in this city."

Next Steps

After twenty years, Wunan is more relevant than ever in the social and economic empowerment of Indigenous communities in the East Kimberley. It is developing a strategy for the next twenty years of operation, to consolidate its areas of highest impact.

Within this, the BCG-Wunan partnership continues to play a role. In early 2018, Consultant Hector Williamson was deployed for three months to work with Wunan senior management on a plan to drive this next phase. In the words of CEO Jim Lewis, Hector *"facilitated a process to get the Board to identify the strategic direction of the organisation and the services that Wunan should focus on."* By the end of Hector's time at Wunan, Jim felt he had *"produced a record of work which will be very useful and relevant to Wunan and its work over at least the next 5 years."*

BCG secondees also provide strategic support to other Jawun-supported regions, including the one where Jawun has had the longest partnership: Cape York. Five senior BCG executives recently worked on a cohesive reform agenda named Pama Futures, which brings together land rights, empowerment and economic development. The reach of this is yet to unfold but it appears as another example where the potential of visionary Indigenous leadership is made stronger through strategic, long-term friendship with a key player in corporate Australia.