

LEADERSHIP PROFILE — JANUARY/JUNE 2002

MATTHEW BOULDEN

Profile



After graduating with a Bachelor of Business (Human Resource Management) from the University of Southern Queensland in 1996, Matthew relocated to Western Australia where he joined Hamersley Iron, a member of the Rio Tinto Group. Prior to his current assignment as leader of the Business Improvement team, Matthew initially worked as a Recruiting Officer before being promoted to the role of Human Resources Inland Superintendent — a role he has subsequently held for two and a half years.

The primary role of the Business Improvement team has been facilitating a change management methodology throughout the business called ‘breakthrough’. Breakthrough was developed by an American management consultant, Robert Shaffer. During his thirty-year career in management consulting, Shaffer observed that in times of crisis, organisations demonstrated a capacity for doubling and sometimes tripling their output. He therefore posed the question of what it was about unexpected crisis events that inspired people to collaborate and subsequently perform at a level not previously seen within the organisation. It is these antecedent conditions that were used when forming a team of people to run a breakthrough project.

Prior to completing his degree Matthew worked for a number of years as an electrician. This experience, combined with his work as a professional in human resources, has proven to be an ideal development path for doing the work he is currently involved with. For the most part this involves finding out what it is that impedes employees from getting on with their work. Matthew specifically focuses on maintenance improvement and, therefore, dealing directly with equipment operators and maintainers.

One of Matthew’s main projects to date involved working with a team to reduce the impact of maintenance on ship loading capacity. This project formed part of an earlier study that identified several different initiatives to increase the combined port capacities of East Intercourse Island and Parker Point from a total capacity of 72 million tonnes a year to 76 million tonnes and achieving this for under \$10 million dollars. The general rule of thumb is that for every million tonnes of extra capacity, it costs one approximately \$10 million in capital.

The Parker Point maintenance breakthrough team was assigned the task of finding a way to undertake the maintenance shutdowns at the Parker Point outloading sequence by using twenty percent (four days) less shutdown time each year without adversely impacting plant

reliability. The team worked together for five weeks. At the end of their time together they achieved a goal of a twenty-seven percent, or six days, reduction in the time required to shut the outloading sequence down, with a subsequent increase in the actual maintenance work performed during each of the shuts. This provides 1.2 million tonnes of extra capacity that was achieved with a net outlay of only \$250,000 — a result that well and truly exceeded everyone's expectations and left the team feeling a great sense of pride in their achievement.

Matthew's current project involves working with the Mine Equipment Maintenance (MEM) team in Paraburdoo. These guys maintain some of the biggest mobile equipment available in the world. Furthermore, at an ambient temperature of in excess of 50 degrees in the shade over summer, they do so in some of the toughest conditions imaginable. Matthew and his team have been set a task of reducing the cost of this work by \$5 million, to be achieved within two years. Matthew is unable to gauge progress at this stage, as it's only early days, but he says that getting all of the people to agree on the way to improve how to go about maintenance is no easy task. However, Matthew also says 'When you are able to achieve a result better than anyone thought possible, there is no more satisfying work imaginable — well, short of running a brewery, but that's another story'.