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Building CEO Capability for Export into High Value Markets

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Executive summary

The 'Building CEO Capability for Export into High Value Markets' project (the Capability Initiative) was established to support WA agribusinesses to increase their capabilities, boost international competitiveness and increase their confidence to invest in accessing and developing high value growth opportunities. The project was part of a broader Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Asian Market Success (AMS) Project funded by the WA Government Royalties for Regions Program. The Initiative aimed to inform businesses on how they could structure, refine and/or attract investment towards their international growth/export strategies.

The key achievements of the project for the CEOs/senior managers who participated have been:

- increased understanding of growth issues and what to do about them
- learning about what they should/should not do as a leader
- peer to peer learning from other CEOs/leaders
- increased confidence in their company's opportunities and potential to accelerate growth
- plans to implement changes as a result of attending.

Selected consultants delivered the following customised programs of work:

1. Strategies to engage participation by senior managers of agrifood companies who are often time poor
 - To address the issue of senior managers being time-poor, a series of breakfast and luncheon seminars/workshops were delivered which were very well received and well attended. Feedback received from the attendees showed that the seminars/workshops had a positive impact on understanding of business growth, confidence, leadership and intentions to make changes.
 - Other capability development formats were also considered and piloted.
2. Focus on entrepreneurial management and innovation management for business growth, particularly touching upon strategic alliances with in-market partners, new business models or closely aligned value chains that increase international competitiveness and winning strategies for high value growth markets
 - This program of work was addressed through the services of the UniSA Centre for Business Growth, the Export Council of Australia and the Silk Initiative which included hearing from successful businesses in seminars/workshops and one-on-one learning.
3. Post-program legacy building through documenting the approach and lessons learnt
 - This final report to the MLA Donor Company documents the approach, the project outcomes, lessons learnt and recommendations.

The long term industry-wide benefits will be realised as the CEOs implement changes and achieve their growth and export objectives and as more CEOs undergo similar capability development. To ensure that programs attract participants that have a great degree of commitment towards more time intensive learning opportunities, it is recommended that a financial commitment from participants in these types of activities be required.

Implications for industry in export capability development activities are the importance of:

- a market orientation;
- ensuring opportunities for social learning; and

- delivering capability development in leading an organisation to support export, not only the more traditional areas often requested by managers (e.g. marketing, branding, positioning).

Further research and evaluation will be needed to assess the longer term impact of the project on participants.

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1 Background

In 2014-15, the Western Australian Government allocated \$6.0 million over three years (2015-16 to 2017-18) from the Royalties for Regions (RfR) Fund towards the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's (formerly known as the Department of Agriculture and Food) "Asian Market Success" (AMS) project. A further \$1.5 million was allocated from the RfR Fund for continuation of the AMS project in 2018-19. The AMS Project aimed to *enable WA agrifood businesses to extract greater value from accessing premium Asian markets through a customer-centric approach with in-market partners while attracting investment.*

DPIRD AMS and Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) established the 'Building CEO Capability for Export into High Value Markets' project (the Capability Initiative) to support WA agribusinesses to increase their capabilities, boost international competitiveness and increase their confidence to invest in accessing and developing high value growth opportunities.

In 2015-16 the AMS project commissioned two reports:

- *Target Market Opportunities in Asia for WA Premium Products* which identified twenty high growth, high value export opportunities for WA agrifood and beverage companies, including beef and lamb.
- *Investment Ready* identified investment options available to the agrifood and beverage sector.

The Capability Initiative aimed to "inform businesses on how they could structure, refine and/or attract investment towards their international growth/export strategies (in an environment where the businesses are cognisant of aligned markets for export products as well as investment options and models, contributed to largely by the findings of the two reports)" (MLA-DPIRD Agreement, p.3). The intention was to target and engage with emerging WA agrifood exporters; WA agribusinesses who have demonstrated the ability to grow their businesses and have the willingness and capability for expansion and export but have not necessarily demonstrated a strong export track record.

The AMS project undertook a stakeholder needs analysis in a bid to understand the challenges in export-driven growth and how best to assist businesses. Some of the general needs identified were:

- Provision of information or assistance for new or inexperienced agrifood exporters to develop cultural awareness for doing business in particular Asian countries.
- Provision of market information, customer information and general assistance by request to those considering export or who identify as small exporters.
- Facilitation of relationships between exporting businesses in Australia to develop alliances or partnerships.
- Facilitation of relationships or networking between exporting businesses in Australia and potential customers in Asia.

Other themes for potential exploration were:

- Understanding the challenges to unlocking the target market opportunities;
- optimising logistical efficiencies;
- export-led success stories, failures and lessons learnt;
- seeking and negotiating strategic in-market relationships; and
- understanding how to attract and manage quality investor relationships necessary for export-driven growth.

The process involved selected consultants delivering customised programs of work targeted to achieve the aims of the Capability Initiative, exposing and informing senior management from WA agrifood businesses on how to employ best practice methodologies and/or other proven winning strategies to improve their businesses' competitiveness in the international arena.

There were three customised programs of work.

1. Strategies to engage participation by senior managers of agrifood companies who are often time-poor.
2. Focus on entrepreneurial management and innovation management for business growth, particularly touching upon strategic alliances with in-market partners, new business models or closely aligned value chains that increase international competitiveness, and winning strategies for high value high growth markets.
3. Post-program legacy building through documenting the approach and lessons learnt. The aim was to leverage and capture approaches and outcomes for dissemination more broadly across the red meat industry.

This approach is supported by international research on export market development for small to medium enterprises that highlights the following important success factors: a learning orientation (Nasution et al. 2011; Weerawardena 2007; April and Reddy 2015); a global mindset (Weerawardena, 2007); a market orientation (Narver and Slater 1990); and capability development (April and Reddy 2015). Figure 1 summarises the underlying logic of export market development and improving international competitiveness.



Figure 1: Logic diagram for improved international competitiveness

Export capabilities include international business skills, technical know-how, international market intelligence and the ability to develop social networks in the international business community (April and Reddy, 2015). Export commitment, social learning, experiential learning were also found to be important in export market development (April and Reddy, 2015).

2 Project objectives

2.1 MLA Insights to Innovation

The MLA Insights2Innovation objective was to *develop new knowledge and deep market insights that inform more strategic value chain innovation investment decisions and ultimately lead to increased value for primary products.*

2.2 Building CEO Capability for Export into High Value Markets

The Capability Initiative aimed to contribute to this MLA objective by *exposing and informing senior management from WA agribusinesses on how they can use best practice to improve their international competitiveness and substantially expand exports.*

The intended longer term outcome of the project was a *demonstrated increase in the capacity of Western Australia's agrifood sector to attract appropriate investment and capture high value, premium export markets in Asia.*

The output of the program was the 'package' of detailed materials developed for the programs of work. Providers were required to submit a report capturing their reflections on the specific initiative, its outcomes and recommendations for achieving ongoing value.

The measures of success:

1. New business opportunities actioned
2. New market entered
3. New investment devoted to a business
4. New joint ventures
5. Business results that derive from these actions

3 Methodology

The AMS project worked closely with identified cohorts of WA agribusinesses and generated active participation and collaboration with them to consider ways in which to create/improve their business models. The intention was to include co-investment/contribution of some kind from them to ensure strong buy-in and sustained commitment to the initiative and intended outcomes.

Third party service providers were appointed to deliver the program of capability development. Following a workshop with seventeen agribusiness senior executives to test the concept of a program to boost CEO capability for export, the following program was developed:

- The University of South Australia's (UniSA) Centre for Business Growth ran capability development program (Growth Clinics) aimed at equipping businesses to become more internationally competitive.
- The Export Council of Australia (ECA), the peak industry body representing Australia's international trade community, ran a series of seminars and roundtable events featuring successful, well known and inspirational exporters sharing their experiences. Online "Going Global" and one-on-one international business coaching opportunities were also offered to selected participants.

- The Silk Initiative was commissioned to present a one-day seminar and workshop to illustrate why CEOs and their businesses belong in China/Asia, where to obtain market information and consumer data and how they should come to market.

4 Results

4.1 UniSA, Australian Centre for Business Growth

4.1.1 Program Design

WA agribusinesses were asked about their interest in a customised capability development program. The AMS project commissioned Professor Jana Matthews, Director of the Centre for Business Growth at the University of South Australia to design a one-day workshop and seminar to test the concept of a program to boost CEO capability for export. Seventeen senior executives attended this workshop, held on 6 February 2017.

Red meat value chain participants:

- Harvey Beef
- Pardoo Beef Corporation
- Milne AgriGroup (ruminant feed supply)
- British Sausage Co.

Other agrifood representatives:

- Chia Australia Pty Ltd
- Moora Citrus Pty Ltd
- Alba Edible Oils
- Agrifresh
- Capilano Honey Limited
- Hay Australia Pty Ltd
- Noodle Cooperative
- Avena Mills Pty Ltd
- D'Orsogna smallgoods

The workshop included a combination of presentations, large group discussions, small group discussions and personal assessments. Professor Matthews asked the CEOs to identify where they needed help, based on what they had learned at the workshop. The responses included leadership, marketing, finance, product and externalities. More specifically in the area of leadership the CEOs identified:

- Need to understand: *my leadership style, what I have achieved and why, more about roles and responsibilities as the leader of a growth company, and how to measure my effectiveness as a leader*
- Need to learn how to think about aiming for exponential growth
- Need to assess my communication skills and get better at communicating
- Need to learn how to develop clearer strategic and operational plans (medium and long-term)
- Need to plan better and communicate the risk of not achieving goals
- Need to learn how to find and work with a skilled, quality board
- Need to shorten the start-up phase

Workshop participants valued the peer-to-peer networking opportunity that the workshop presented and welcomed a more formalised forum to meet regularly. Feedback from twelve

participants in an anonymous survey highlighted that eight were very interested and two were somewhat interested in further capacity building in this area.

The report on the workshop by Professor Matthews stated: “Many policy makers think money is what holds back small and medium companies from growing – so they propose tax breaks, pay for jobs created, and try to figure out how to make more venture money available. Others think that companies need help with marketing, branding and positioning, market research, introductions to markets in other countries, and assistance with supply chain management. There is no question that companies can use help marketing, and can do more with more money. But the major factor that holds companies back is that very few CEOs know how to lead a growth company, so they are reluctant to hire more people, enter new markets or take on more risk.”

Importantly for the program design, Professor Matthews concluded: “We are not surprised that the CEOs indicated they need help with marketing, branding, channels, finding and managing sales representatives/distributors, exporting and the actual selling process. Australian companies, in general, need help with all these topics. But by the end of the day the CEOs began to understand that improving their skills in marketing was only one of the areas they needed to focus on, to be ready to enter the Asian market. They realised they had a more fundamental need – the need to learn how to lead and build an organisation that would be strong enough to support going global – and for that they needed more than marketing assistance for entering new markets.”

Based on this feedback, it was clear that a program was needed to enable WA’s agrifood businesses to lead and build organisations that are robust enough to take advantage of the high growth opportunities available in the Asian market. It was therefore recommended that selected agrifood company CEOs undertake a fully-funded one day growth assessment clinic to identify what they can do to accelerate growth and map out an action plan for their organisation to facilitate entrepreneurial and innovation management.

4.1.2 Growth Assessment Clinics

The UniSA Centre for Business Growth (CBG) ran the following Growth Assessment Clinics:

- May 2017 with 8 CEO agriculture and food related participants
- Between March and May in 2018 with 9 CEO participants

The Growth Assessment Clinics aimed to help each CEO identify what they could do to accelerate growth and map out an action plan for their organisation to facilitate entrepreneurial management and innovation management for business growth. Criteria for selection of CEOs for the Clinics:

- companies with 5-200 employees and
- CEOs willing to provide information and complete preparatory work before attending.

Once accepted, participants had some preparatory information to provide the Centre:

- company’s most recent year’s financials;
- customer information;
- description of products or services and product/service roadmap;
- marketing information and marketing strategy;
- organisation chart; and
- on-line organisational assessment to assess the company’s “readiness for growth”.

During the Clinics, participants worked with experts to learn what happens during growth, understand their roles and responsibilities as leaders, discussed the results of the pre-clinic diagnostic tool, received tailored advice, and developed an Action Plan for Company Growth and a Leadership Development Plan. The Clinic was undertaken under a Knowledge Framework for Growth with the following components:

- Products and Services
- Marketing and Sales
- Dealing with Externalities
- Building the Organisation
- Financing Growth and
- Managing Yourself as Leader

Survey forms were filled out by the CEOs and reports (UniSA, 2017; UniSA, 2018) were prepared by UniSA on the basis of these evaluation and survey forms. The results of the two reports were combined and the key results are:

- 100 percent of respondents agreed that the Growth Assessment Clinic enabled them to understand the growth issues their companies are experiencing and what they need to do about them;
- 100 percent agreed they had learnt what they should/should not be doing as a leader;
- 93 percent agreed that the structure of Assessment Clinic enabled them to learn from other CEOs, as well as from the Growth Expert;
- 93 percent agree that based on what they learned at the Clinic, they now believe their company has the opportunities and potential to accelerate its growth;
- 100 percent plan to implement some of the concepts they learned at the Assessment Clinic;
- 93 percent said the clinic met their expectations; and
- 93 percent would recommend the clinic to others CEOs.

The key messages that participants took away from the clinics related to planning, goal setting and delegation.

The Growth Expert's presentation and discussions with the Growth Expert and other CEOs at the clinic enabled respondents to:

- understand their growth issues and learn how to resolve them;
- apply their learning to their company;
- develop solutions to their specific problems;
- re-examine roles; and
- clarify responsibilities.

When asked 'What happened during the Assessment Clinic that enabled you to understand your company's growth issues and what you need to do about them?' the majority of CEOs mentioned the usefulness of working through the Centre of Business Growth's tools and frameworks, such as the '5 Levels of Delegation' and reflecting on how these models can be applied within their business. One participant said "*the models were a reminder that building the team, and making plans to delegate authority correctly to my team, are critical to ongoing success*".

Another common theme amongst participants was the insight gained from listening to the other CEOs in the Assessment Clinic discuss their growth issues. A number of participants found it valuable to hear and learn from the experiences of other CEOs, and understand their solutions to non-growth challenges. One CEO noted, *“listening to other businesses, you realise what your issues are that you’re avoiding.”*

An example quote from another respondent: *“It is a good opportunity to do some reflecting on your business and spend time with other senior leaders in similar companies to your own. The content and structure of the training is excellent and there is something for everyone in the Clinic, even people who think their company has its bases covered. It’s useful to be challenged and this Clinic will do that.”*

Others focused on what they learned about the role of a CEO: *“I found the clarity around the changing roles of the CEO as a business grows very enlightening”*; *“some good discussion around the role of the CEO.”*

In response to a question on what they would say to other CEOs considering applying for an Assessment Clinic: *“Go in with an open mind and give it a go. You only get out what you put in but it’s worth it.”* *“Enjoy, listen and learn.”* *“Invest in the future of your business with some well-structured and relevant learning about growth.”* *“A great opportunity to understand the necessary structures and resources to enable growth...”* *“I think it is a great opportunity, and if you are looking to grow your business than a good place to start...”*

4.1.3 Growth Modules

Following the Growth Assessments, some businesses were offered the opportunity to be involved in the CBG Modules Program. It was anticipated that self-selected CEOs would progress from the Growth Assessment Clinics through a nine to 12 month business growth program, together with their senior leadership team to ensure engagement across their organisation. This was intended for companies with at least \$2 million in turnover per annum.

The Growth Modules comprise three, three-day modules conducted in Adelaide. Preparatory work is required before attending to maximise the value from participating. Due to high level of time and resource commitment involved, uptake by businesses was very low with only one company expressing interest to participate. The three executives from the company completed the first module but had to postpone their participation in the other two modules due to external influences on the business. Participation in the modules have yet to resume (at time of final reporting).

The CEO was interviewed to gain some feedback on the program to date and the key results are listed below.

- The business was in the early stages of development with an experienced management team and saw value in more engagement in understanding the opportunities.
- Preparation for the first module included identifying what the company was looking for and providing a couple of videos about their expectations and what they could contribute.
- The three executives appreciated the involvement of other businesses from different backgrounds and seeing what other people were doing and the challenges they face.

- They found the module very engaging and were impressed by the structure and depth of knowledge of the facilitators. *“It opens your mind to different ways of looking at things.”*
- Despite the impact of external factors on their company that meant they had to defer the other modules, they were able to stay in touch with UniSA who offered their assistance and guidance. *“Jana [Jana Matthews, Director, Australian Centre for Business Growth] was interested in following up with us and how we’re going. She was able to provide us with support ... They’ve been able to help us with a couple of things.”*
- The prospect of participating with a new cohort of businesses when they attend the second and third modules was seen as an opportunity.
- In discussing the opinions of the other two participants: *“The others... were sceptical but they came away quite enthusiastic, looking at things from different ways, seeing how other people solve problems. The key is that it focuses you on growth, the changing roles of the personnel in the business, they’re not static, your responsibilities change and you need to change in those key positions, your roles and responsibilities, let go of things and pick up new things. It was something we were all aware of but hadn’t really thought about.”*
- In answer to a question on whether the module helped in what directly happened to the business: *“Not in terms of what we’re actually dealing with, but the opening of your mind to different ways of thinking and the personal growth. We’ve been through a pretty torrid time, we’re still here, we’re still working through it, we’ve still got the support of our shareholders, the business is still there – that’s a sign of the resilience of the people in the business.”*

4.2 Export Council of Australia

On the basis of feedback at the February workshop where senior executives identified a need for shorter, targeted networking sessions, “AMS engaged the Export Council of Australia to create and deliver activities that enabled emerging WA agrifood exporters to build their export capability. The services to be provided by the ECA were:

- Thought leadership, development and implementation required for a series of events that were aimed at deepening agribusinesses’ understanding of the realities of export-led business growth and which involved bringing these businesses together to engage in peer-centric learning and networking” (ECA, 2018).

In addition, other education support services were offered.

- Online Going Global course which explores the benefits of going global, how to select the right market, the legal and freight/logistics considerations, financing, marketing, staffing and how to pitch the business for international success.
- One-on-one international business coaching service which aligns the specific needs of an individual company with the services of a subject expert in a range of different areas including: export planning and strategy; developing presentation and pitching skills; export documentation and procedures; trade finance; navigating regulations and compliance; eCommerce; new market entry planning, human resources strategy; managing the relationship with Australian Customs and Border Protection Services; and effective financial management for maximum profitability.

4.2.1 ECA 2017-18 Program

A series of four breakfasts and a lunch-time seminar were hosted by ECA for WA agribusinesses featuring successful and inspirational exporters who shared their export journeys and lessons for success. Details of the events are listed below (ECA, 2018).

- 2 October 2017 breakfast in Perth with 45 participants - David Larkin, CEO Hancock Agriculture spoke about his journey of building a renowned global meat brand over 10 years at Atron, then leading it through a successful acquisition to today as CEO of one of Australia's biggest agribusiness conglomerates.
- 30 November 2017 breakfast in Perth with 41 participants – an interactive panel discussion moderated by Collins Rex with speakers Sharon Bosveld, CEO Churchview Estate, Kim Fewster, MD Fewsters Farm Honey and Joseph Ling, CEO Agrifresh.
- 22 February 2018 breakfast in Perth with 53 participants – Jennie Franceschi, MD Fresh Produce Alliance.
- 5 April 2018 breakfast in Perth with 29 participants – Cristina Talacko, Director Sal Doce.
- 4 May 2018 regional lunch with 65 participants – Peter Walsh, CEO V&V Walsh and Anthony Wilkes, CEO Burch Family Wines.

In addition, the following services were provided.

- A Roundtable session where lessons learned from the breakfast events were discussed, collated and recommendations compiled.
- Access to ECA's online Going Global course modules for up to 30 businesses.
- One-on-one international business coaching for up to 20 businesses, including matching the specific needs of a business with a subject expert. Ongoing coaching sessions are conducted face-to-face unless otherwise suited to the individual businesses' needs in which case the sessions can be conducted via video conferencing.
- Other additional export support services offered through ECA's business membership benefits for up to 20 businesses.

4.2.2 Evaluation

Events Component

The ECA reported that "the events component of the programme has been a great success, as shown in the event feedback received and also from anecdotal evidence. All events were well attended, and the Regional luncheon was particularly appreciated by WA businesses. All speakers were well-received and delegates responded well to the 'In Conversation' model of presentation."

Recommendations

- That future programmes maintain a strong, regular events component
- That future events are more interactive and discussion-based
- That some networking-focused events be a part of future programs
- That export speakers have a strong WA-based component.

The AMS Project prepared an evaluation report on this series of events held up to 2017-18 (DPIRD, 2018). Some of the key results of this evaluation are summarised below, highlighting that participants felt they had improved their confidence and understanding of aspects of export capability.

The combined events:

- improved attendees' confidence to make decisions regarding their export business (83.6 percent)
- improved export understanding (75.3 percent)

- increased potential to improve export earnings (75.4 percent)
- expanded my understanding of the topic (43.8 percent) and
- provided interest in learning more about the topic (35.6 percent).

Feedback from respondents on the most valuable lessons learned were categorised into themes, listed below with some sample quotes.

- Hearing the speakers' positive experiences: *"It was great to hear real WA exporters share their experiences"*
- Do your research: *"Take home message was 'research'"*
- Relationships are key: *"For me it was all about the value of relationships with buyers and suppliers"*
- Takes a long term view: *"Success takes time!!!"*
- Networking: *"I found the networking particularly valuable"*
- Requires work and motivation: *"...it will still be a helluva lot of work".*

Additional findings:

- High correlation of respondents rating presentations as 'excellent' or 'very good' and reporting that the event either expanded their understanding of the topic (90.6 percent) or improved their export understanding a great deal (96 percent). This supports the importance of ensuring the high quality of presenters and session planning is continued for future events.
- Feedback for future events
 - Informal conversational style
 - Interviewing concept
 - More time for networking
 - Panel discussion

On-Line Going Global Course

While 23 companies involved in the Capacity Building Program were given access to the Online Going Global course, a number did not complete the course and the overall impact of the program was not able to be evaluated. As the ECA report states: *"The ECA contacted all the candidates to assess the reasons for non-completion."* The reasons they found were:

- Lack of understanding of the work involved
- Lack of time
- Lack of resources
- Too much detail in the course
- Company not yet ready to export
- Company not at the right stage of development to complete the course

Recommendations

- That candidates for Online Going Global be given a cut-off date to complete the course
- That those candidates who have not made the cut-off date have their access suspended
- That any incomplete/unused places on the course be re-assigned to new companies

- That companies be made aware of the workload and time commitment prior to being given access to the course.

(Note: All recommendations were implemented as part of the 2018-19 program).

One-on-one Business Coaching

Twenty companies were given access to one-on-one business coaching, however very few businesses took up the offer and DPIRD was not able to evaluate impact. Again, the reasons were assessed:

- The company had not yet identified the areas with which they need help
- The company was not yet ready to export
- The person most suited to Coaching was time-poor

(Note: only one business participated actively)

Recommendations

- That all current Coaching candidates be advised that they need to take up their assigned hours by a specific date
- That all time not used by the cut-off date be made available on a “first come first served” basis to both existing and new Coaching candidates.

(Note: All recommendations were implemented as part of the 2018-19 Program).

4.2.3 2018/19 Program

The 2018-2019 series of events included:

- 30 November 2018 breakfast in Bentley with 11 participants – Cameron Gordon, Director Incite (Singapore) spoke on ‘Refining your distribution strategy’ which was targeted at established exporters (Note: all other events below were targeted at emerging exporters)
- 1 February 2019 breakfast in South Perth with 24 participants – Joseph Ling, AGRIFresh and Sharon Bosveld, Churchview Estate on ‘Lessons we learned the hard way – starting out advice from WA’s Export Champions’
- 1 March 2019 breakfast in South Perth with 12 participants – Heath Baker, Head of Trade and Policy ECA spoke on ‘Making ribbons of red tape and busting barriers’
- 3 May 2019 breakfast with 16 participants in South Perth – Representatives from Linley Valley Pork and Mareterram Foods; and Annemette Thomsen, International Business Adviser and consultant with ECA spoke on the topic ‘All wrapped up: labelling and packaging for exporters’
- 27 June 2019 breakfast in South Perth with 16 participants – Najib Lawand, Director Export Connect on ‘Sending your product world-wide: logistics and freight forwarding’
- 28 March 2019 lunch in Applecross with 21 participants – Dianne Tipping, Chairperson Export Council of Australia on ‘E-commerce for business’
- 28 June 2019 lunch in Albany with 10 participants – Najib Lawand, Director Export Connect spoke on ‘Strategies to conquer export markets’.

Once again, access was also available to the other export support services, the Online Going Global Course and One-on-one Export Coaching.

4.2.4 Evaluation

Events component

The ECA conducted feedback surveys for 6 of the 7 breakfast events (ECA, 2019), with an overall response rate of 23 percent. The key benefits of the events were found to be that they:

- triggered ideas;
- expanded their understanding of exporting requirements;
- provided an interest in learning more about export, and
- gained greater insights into what they already knew.

Suggestions for future topics/speakers included:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| • Trade shows | • Negotiating in an Asian environment |
| • Entry requirements into specific markets | • Understanding the value/price point |
| • Hear from businesses and their experiences | • Finance |
| • International export agreements | • Logistics |
| • Beverage exporters | • Export duties |
| • Finding and agent/distributor | • More networking |

On-line Going Global Course and one-on-one business coaching

Six businesses were accepted for the Online Going Global Course and these businesses are at different stages of completion. Four businesses were accepted for the one-on-one business coaching and this coaching is being conducted in line with business needs. The impact of these components may be considered once full completion is achieved.

4.3 The Silk Initiative

A one-day workshop and seminar was held on 17 July 2017 by Andrew Kuiler, founder and CEO of 'The Silk Initiative' (TSI) consultancy based in Shanghai with experience in marketing research and insights and connecting food and beverage brands and products with today's fast-evolving Chinese consumer. Eighteen participants attended the workshop, three of which were red-meat businesses. A mixed seminar/workshop approach was used as suggested by The Silk Initiative. This was seen to provide business leaders/ CEOs with enough new knowledge on China coupled with hands-on practical business application. TSI had previously found that business leaders want to know that their time away from the business has been well spent and they want to return with energy and action plans around any newly formed ideas.

The morning sessions focused on:

- Chinese food and beverage trends;
- opportunities and risks;
- why these CEOs and their businesses belong in China/Asia;
- where they can obtain market and consumer data to back up their business decisions; and
- how they should come to market (brand, product, pack, price, etc) using case studies.

The Geraldton Fishermen's Cooperative was also invited to present a case study on the recent implementation of their Brolos rock lobster direct to consumer strategy for China. This additional workshop component generated a high level of interest and engagement with participants.

In the afternoon, participants were asked to take what they'd learned earlier in the day and apply it to their own businesses. Participants were also given the opportunity for brief one-on-one sessions to meet with Andrew at the end of the day or at a later date.

A separate breakfast event was held on 18 July 2017 for WA agrifood industry groups and other supporting agencies on food and beverage in China. The event was designed to reflect on the previous day's workshop and the speaker provided insights into the challenges that WA companies may face developing trusted relationships with partners in international markets. Informal feedback from participants indicated the event was well received.

Feedback from workshop participants highlighted that the challenges they face in exporting to China are related to:

- Regulation
- Partnering
- Customer
- Cost
- Delivery channel
- Marketing

Some of the responses in relation to the most valuable sections of the workshop were:

- Market and product evaluation
- Opportunities
- Who to communicate with before and during the procedure
- Case studies
- Broker's presentation
- Emotional benefits
- Customer focus
- Benefits over features
- General China insight
- Defining brand and value proposition.

There were very few responses regarding the least valuable:

- The last two hours; and
- Functional and emotional benefit ID would have been better as a group/table workshop.

Andrew was perceived to be very knowledgeable about the subject by 88 percent of the respondents.

In response to what was gained from the workshop, some of the most frequent responses were:

- Expanded my understanding (77 percent)
- Challenged me to rethink something (70 percent)
- Refocused my attention on the topic (53 percent)
- Stimulated me to think about export in a new way (47 percent)
- Triggered ideas based on information presented (47 percent) and
- Gained greater insights into what I already knew (47 percent)

The relevance of the workshop gained a high rating; 65 percent rated the information as ‘very relevant’ to their business at the current time and 85 percent as ‘very relevant’ to their business in future. The majority (65 percent) found the event to be a useful networking opportunity, 77 percent rated the case studies as very useful and 42 percent found the workshop exercises to be useful. The majority (82 percent) were also interested in further information on exporting to China.

In response to the final question about further support required to achieve their business’ export goals, the responses were categorised as follows:

- Other areas in the export field
- Distribution agents
- Advisory
- Export regulatory
- Regional markets
- Government assistance through grants, access to WA trade offices for market connectivity, certification verification and in-market visits
- Marketing and branding including product testing in-market, focus groups in China, who to talk to about trademark branding to China and how to target products in the right way.

The work delivered by The Silk Initiative has been of significant value in supporting the export and global explanation performance of those involved. Formal and informal feedback from attending companies suggests that targeted international events such as the one delivered by The Silk Initiative are extremely valuable to agrifood companies that are seeking to improve their understanding of complex export markets such as China.

4.4 Communication Activities

The events were often by invitation only, directly targeted at senior executives in agribusinesses across multiple industries with an interest in export and business growth. Some of the additional communication activities were:

- event advertising on the ECA website;
- event registration via the trybooking website;
- press releases;
- ‘Growth Assessment Clinics’ brochure; and
- ‘You’re invited – Exclusive Breakfast Event’ brochures.

5 Discussion

5.1 Inferences and insights from the data relative to previous research

Research on export market development shows that some of the key success factors for small to medium enterprises to improve their international competitiveness are:

- A learning orientation
- A global mindset
- A market orientation
- Capability development including:
 - International business skills
 - Technical know-how
 - International market intelligence
 - Ability to develop social networks in the international business community
- Export commitment
- Social and experiential learning.

Some of these key success factors are reflected in the feedback from participants on the most valuable aspects of the capability development they experienced as listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Feedback from participants reflecting key success factors from previous research

Feedback from participants	Key success factors
Hearing from speakers about their experiences	Social learning
Networking opportunities	Social learning
<i>"Listening to other businesses, you realise what your issues are, that you're avoiding"</i>	Social learning
<i>"Looking at things from different ways, seeing how other people solve problems"</i>	Social learning
Importance of doing your research	Market orientation International market intelligence
The value of building relationships	Ability to develop social networks within the international business community
Realisation of the need for a long term view	Commitment to export
Acknowledgment of the hard work and motivation required	Commitment to export
<i>"Invest in the future of your business with some well-structured and relevant learning about growth"</i>	Capability development Learning orientation
<i>"The models were a reminder that building the team, and making plans to delegate authority correctly to my team, are critical to ongoing success"</i>	Capability development

5.2 Practical implications for industry

- Arrange events to allow businesses to network and learn from each other (social learning)
- Capability building needs to include a market orientation and market intelligence
- Ensure participant commitment of their own resources and time, or 'skin in the game'.

5.3 Unanswered questions/additional research recommended

A longer-term follow-up with these businesses would be needed to determine the degree to which these increases in confidence, understanding and potential are translated into the longer term outcomes of new business opportunities, markets, investment or joint ventures.

5.4 Draft extension messages

Key success factors for leaders of companies aiming for growth and/or exporting into Asian markets:

- Learn how to build an organisation strong enough to support going global
- Take the time to identify what is needed for growth and to map out an action plan to facilitate entrepreneurial management and innovation management
- There is value in hearing and learning from other CEOs as well as from experts:
 - *“listening to other businesses, you realise what your issues are that you’re avoiding”*
 - *“...looking at things from different ways, seeing how other people solve problems”*
- Capability development is extremely valuable
- Capability development from organisations like the UniSA Centre for Business Growth Growth Assessment Clinics and Growth Modules which are based on tools and frameworks that can be applied to your business
 - *“The models were a reminder that building the team, and making plans to delegate authority correctly to my team, are critical to ongoing success.”*
- Advice from CEOs to others considering applying for a Growth Assessment Clinic was:
 - *“Go in with an open mind and give it a go. You only get out what you put in but it’s worth it”*
 - *“Enjoy, listen and learn”*
 - *“Invest in the future of your business with some well-structured and relevant learning about growth”*
- Some of the key issues for CEOs are planning, goal setting and delegation.
- Time and financial commitment is needed to export and capability development.

5.5 Improvements in project delivery

Very few agribusiness executives committed to the more time-intensive capability building offered (Growth Modules, one-on-one coaching and online courses). The AMS Project has since improved the approach and will now require a 50 percent financial contribution as businesses are more likely to commit their time to the programs when they have ‘skin in the game’.

6 Conclusions/recommendations

In general, the evaluations found that the key achievements for participating CEOs were:

- increased understanding of growth issues and what to do about them;
- learning about what they should/should not do as a leader; learning from other CEOs/leaders;
- increased confidence in their company’s opportunities and potential to accelerate growth; and
- plans to implement changes as a result of attending.

The main aim of the Capability Initiative was to *expose and inform senior management from WA agribusinesses on how they can use best practice to improve their international competitiveness and substantially expand exports*. This objective was achieved for the seventeen CEOs in the Growth Assessment Clinics, three Senior Managers in Growth Module 1 and 343 participants in the Export Capability Building Program of breakfast and lunch-time seminars and workshops.

6.1 Future R&D

- Follow up with participants in the Capability Initiative to analyse the longer-term impact on their export capabilities, capacity and international competitiveness.
- Research the effectiveness of short-term capability building activities compared to more intensive online learning on one-on-one business coaching will inform future capability development programs.

6.2 Practical application of insights and implications to the red meat industry

- It is important for businesses to make a financial contribution to more intensive capability building to ensure their time commitment.
- Clear communication of the benefits of more intensive capability building.
- Quality presentations by experienced exporters and opportunities for networking and social learning have an impact on businesses and their capabilities.
- More intensive capability building has a greater impact on senior executives but fewer will commit the necessary time.

7 Key messages

- While business leaders may perceive that learning about marketing, branding, channels, finding and managing sales representatives and distributors, exporting and the selling process are all important, it is also important to learn how to lead and build an organisation robust enough to support the process of 'going global'.
- For leaders of companies aiming to grow and begin exporting, there are benefits to be gained through intensive capability development. The benefits will need to be demonstrated to them to ensure the required commitment of time and investment in resources.

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