

“Sustainability at South East Water is a commitment to take a long term view in providing water services to our community. We aim to ensure that we can protect the interests of future generations as well as provide optimal value for our current community.”

Sustainability Principles SE Water



The Victorian Engineering Excellence Award for Workplace Innovation – won by SE Water



“Our annual 'Brain Waves Cup' program allows you to work on ground breaking projects and initiatives.”

Most companies innovate to sell more of their products. South East Water, one of Melbourne's three state-owned metropolitan water retailers actually innovates to sell less of their product, deliver it more efficiently and increase revenues. Melbourne suffers regularly from droughts and has been suffering from particularly low water shortages in recent years. As a result, the company needs to encourage their 1.3 million customers to use less water as well as to improve the efficiency of their water delivery and sewage services in order to minimise wastage. At the same time, revenues need to be maintained in order to continue to deliver their services to a growing population. It's no mean feat for any company, let alone a state enterprise where the culture is often averse to innovation and new ways of thinking.

Profitable Sustainability

Fortunately, South East Water is not a typical state enterprise. Indeed, they have embraced innovation in a manner typical of a Silicon Valley Start up thanks to a comprehensive innovation programme designed and delivered by Dynamic Horizons and supported by Jenni idea management software service. The result: South East Water has been able to add several million Australian dollars to revenue and substantially boost their sustainability efforts.

Brain Waves – an Innovation Strategy

Dynamic Horizons has been working with South East Water, which provides drinking water and sewerage over 3,640 square kilometres, since late 2004 to develop the successful Brain Waves innovation program. Brain Waves is about growing South East Water's culture to support innovation in all forms – from operational to service to business model innovation. It is also tasked with uncovering, evaluating, and implementing opportunities for revenue growth, productivity increases and social and environmental initiatives.

Since inception Brain Waves has had successes right across South East Water. From 2005 to 2006 more than 200 ideas were registered with Brain Waves. 50 of these ideas have been implemented and the same number again are still being monitored or assessed.

Business Planning Competition: Big Ideas for Big Changes

In 2006 Dynamic Horizons helped South East Water run its biggest innovation initiative to date – an internal business planning competition called the Brain Waves Cup. Specifically, the Brain Waves Cup called for ideas that could greatly enhance performance, significantly change the way South East Water operates or had a strong community or sustainability focus. Twenty percent of the business participated in 18 teams that spent five months turning their ideas into viable business plans. Final business plans were submitted in June and winners were decided based on innovativeness of the concept, benefits to South East Water and quality of the plan.

Nine of these final business plans were approved by then Managing Director Dennis Cavagna to move forward. Included in these plans were new business models, safety initiatives and new services for residential and commercial customers. Projected financial benefits from the projects are well into seven figures and there are numerous social and environmental benefits.

Dynamic Horizons again helped South East Water run the Brain Waves Cup in 2007. The second Cup ran from July to December 2007 and like the year before uncovered some fantastic opportunities for South East Water – with six teams making it to the final round and having their business plans approved for implementation.

Securing The Future



“Securing a safe and reliable water supply for Melbourne has long been a priority.

But population growth and climate change are placing greater stress on our high quality drinking water reserves.

Our aim is responsible water resource management. This means developing solutions that help people save water and better manage their water needs by embracing other types of water to ensure sustainable use of this precious natural resource.


We believe that our water is too precious to waste”
South East Water Limited Australia Annual Report 2006

Continuous Innovation Programme

In the 12 months between the end of the first Brain Waves Cup and the beginning of the second, South East Water used Jenni to run a number of shorter ideas campaigns designed to focus employee creativity on specific business issues. This process was developed based on extensive research indicating that short, focused events significantly increases the number of top ideas uncovered. Almost 30 percent of South East Water’s workforce is registered with Jenni and have participated in several campaigns on topics ranging from “What should be included in a sustainable development?” to “In what ways could you better service your customer?” These campaigns successfully stimulated South East Water’s employees and Jenni made it easy to capture, review and progress their creative ideas. In 2008 South East Water will be running more campaigns for its employees as well as exploring how to use Jenni to tap into the ideas of customers and business partners.

Dynamic Horizons, a leading Australian innovation consultancy, is the official sales and service provider of Jenni idea management for Australia. It is part of the Global Innovation Service Team (GIST) including Partners in USA, UK, Czech Republic, Brazil, Italy & Australia.

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o i solutions limited  is the official sales and service provider for Jenni idea management in the UK.
www.oisolutions.co.uk tel 01202 706 975 email contact@oisolutions.co.uk