

Dangling in the air sure way to learn team work



DON'T FALL: Changeworks is helping businesses develop team work through exercises involving hanging from a rope in the air. PHOTO: JASON DOUGHERTY/170430C

Trusting your co-workers improves productivity

YOU learn some things about yourself when you're hanging by a rope metres in the air, with no safety net to fall back on.

Just as importantly, you learn some things about the people holding the rope.

What Kim Luck learned while she was doing an impersonation of a human yoyo at the Ewan Maddock Recreation Reserve at Landsborough on Thursday, was that she was prepared to trust her life to a group of strangers she'd only just met.

Considering she was scared of heights, it was clearly a big step outside her comfort zone to take part in the exercise.

The manager of the mail and print services section at the University of the Sunshine Coast found herself in that predicament as part of a teambuilding and familiarisation day run by Clare Edwards from professional development and training company Changeworks.

Despite her apprehension, Ms Luck said she would definitely recommend it.

"I thought it was brilliant. 'I'm afraid of heights so it was a big thing for me,' she said.

"Clare was wonderful.

"To be able to bring a group of strangers together and get them performing as a team so quickly was incredible.

"It's all about trusting your teammates and the equipment, which has got an obvious parallel in the workplace."

The leap of faith was just one



WORKING TOGETHER: The trust-building exercises.

of the exercises undertaken by the participants during the day-long program.

Ms Edwards said each activity was followed by "a facilitation and de-brief with what was learned taken on board and used in the next challenge".

"With the human yoyo exercise, you need a clear strong leader and a team that can communicate well and is motivated. There's also a case of

"It tests each individual on trust and self-belief. You need to trust the equipment, the instructors and, most importantly, yourself"

making sure you land your team-mate back to earth safely!" she said.

"It tests each individual on trust and self-belief. You need to trust the equipment, the instructors and, most importantly, yourself."

Ms Edwards, who spent 16 years as a senior manager in the corporate world before

starting Changeworks in 2001, said feedback from the participants acknowledged it was the support of the team and the team spirit that had developed through the day that motivated many of them to firstly consider and then achieve the task.

She also said team building was about more than getting staff together for a day out.

"Employers are looking for a return on their investment. Taking the team out for a picnic may be fun, but what has the team learned about improving their performance?" she said.

"Every team build should close with a commitment to action. The team needs to commit to changing something about the way they perform that will result in greater productivity, enhanced team spirit and working relationships, and improvement in systems and procedures - all leading to an improvement on the bottom line."

As far as Ms Luck was concerned, the Changeworks program achieved that.

"Everyone says they haven't got time to take a whole day out from work - but I thought it was certainly worth it," she said.

Mini-me set to make mark on grey water

SUNSHINE Coast-based EcoNova has received significant state government funding to help the company develop a water recycling system able to process grey water to reusable quality.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded the firm \$194,000 as part of the Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund, with EcoNova contributing a further \$300,000 to the research.

General manager Christian Uhrig said existing grey water systems were too large, too expensive or too difficult to manage for individual homes, adding the project aimed to miniaturise the company's existing MembraneSafe technology so it could be implemented in households across Australia at a competitive price and with reduced maintenance needs.

"Our aim is to extend the barriers of water, waste and energy sustainability and be at

the international forefront of research and development in these areas," Mr Uhrig said.

"The government and scientists now understand that rainwater tanks are not the solution because it just doesn't rain often enough to make a difference.

"Our recycling solutions can provide up to 68% of the water needed by a household every day of the year - while still having the lifestyle people want."

Mr Uhrig said successful miniaturising of EcoNova's system would enable the highest class of recycled water to be available for toilet flushing, laundry reuse and other household duties.

He also said he expected "exciting developments" in the near future with regard to significant changes in existing legislation that inhibits the use of recycled water back into households.

"While most Australian states have guidelines relating to recycling of sewage effluent for irrigation purposes through conventional means, there are some gaps and discrepancies remaining in their criteria for urban uses and water types," Mr Uhrig said.

"Hopefully with the availability of our technology we'll see a change in this legislation."

Mr Uhrig also said while drought conditions had focused attention on water recycling and raised awareness that the present demand on our water providers was set to intensify, Australia was just waking up to the potential of non-potable water reuse which he said was widely practised overseas.

He said if the project to reduce the size and cost of the water recycling technology was successful, EcoNova grey water systems could be sold at hardware stores by the end of 2008.

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