

## BHP Billiton & BHP Billiton Group Learning

### Breaking the mould: leader-led teaching to re-energise and redefine leadership

**B**HP Billiton is a leading global resources company headquartered in Australia. It is Australia's largest company and has over 128,000 employees and contractors across 141 locations in 26 countries.

Given the size and reach of the organisation, it implemented a company-wide integrated way of working known as the Operating Model, which included mandatory common systems and processes and a common organisational design. While this greatly improved transparency and the ability to identify best practice, it also resulted in a "compliance" mind set.

When Andrew Mackenzie was appointed as CEO in May 2013, he tasked the BHP Billiton's Group Learning Function with creating an approach to re-energise the culture and change the way leaders engaged. He believed this was critical to improving productivity and achieving a "step-up" culture.

#### The initiative

Group Learning began building and delivering a programme that could cut through management norms in a traditional, risk-averse company and create a shift in leadership behaviours.

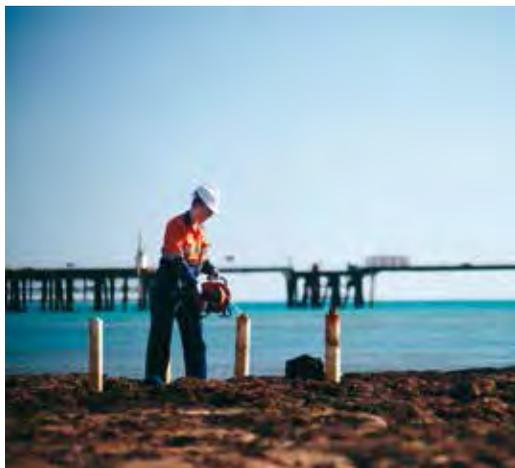
The Executive Leadership Program (ELP) was structured around three-day residential events and was tightly linked to business outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs). It targeted the company's top 550 leaders and facilitated a leadership dialogue on how to foster a "step-up" culture; help leaders better understand and leverage the Operating Model; role model good leadership by listening, inquiring and debating; and identify everyday opportunities to improve engagement and productivity.

# 70

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# 550

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The approach to facilitating significant behavioural change through the ELP included:

- **Leader-led:** the entire event was delivered by leaders, who used the experience to further their own development
- **Broad involvement:** a multitude of internal stakeholders contributed to the design and development of the ELP and over 70 leaders were involved in its delivery
- **Intact teams:** intact teams attended the ELP but were broken into “cross-business homerooms” for many sessions, as a means of exploring topics, before coming back together to apply lessons
- **Trust the process:** the ELP was designed to provoke discussion (through activities, videos and data) without a pre-defined solution. Each group processed material and proceeded in a slightly different way
- **Teach, don’t tell:** to provoke discussion and ownership, senior leaders learned how to listen, facilitate discussion and role model changes to unlock the problem-solving ability of the collective

The programme content featured internal case studies, problem-based pre-reads and experiential debates that encouraged participants to find their own solutions. Critically, it incorporated “cascade tools” that each participant used to replicate the “leader-led” modelling and extend the engagement deeper into the organisation.

The commitment of the CEO to this programme also served as a powerful demonstration of leader-led learning: he attended every ELP.

**The impact**

Twelve months on, the impact of the ELP has contributed to improved company performance. Production in FY2014 increased 9%, with productivity-led volume and cost efficiencies exceeding targets by 60% to reach US\$2.9 billion. Importantly, during the same period BHP Billiton reported a record low Total Recordable Injury Frequent rate and suffered no fatalities at its operated assets.

Additional tools continue to be developed to reinforce leadership priorities, including ELP videos featuring GMC members, a fortnightly “Learning Library” email of tailored tools linked to productivity, and “step-up” and “learning tools” for leader-led delivery. Many businesses have taken these tools and experiences and created “mini-ELPs” led by ELP participants to cascade learnings through the organisation.



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