Pitt & Sherry Wins Prestigious National Award

Tasmanian-based, national consulting engineering company, Pitt & Sherry, has won the prestigious BRW Client Choice Award for the best consulting engineering firm with revenues under $50 million, and was the only Tasmanian business to be considered as a finalist for the prestigious, national annual awards.

Pitt & Sherry was also nominated as one of only three finalists for the Exceptional Service Award – a national award presented to just one company in Australia, regardless of size or their particular area of professional expertise.

Each year, Beaton Consulting undertakes the largest study of clients of professional services firms in the world; asking buyers of professional services to rate the performance of firms across a broad range of attributes such as value for money, service, and innovation over the past year. The most highly rated firms emerge as finalists in the BRW Client Choice Awards.

Speaking about the nomination, John Pitt, Managing Director of Pitt & Sherry, said that winning a BRW Client Choice Award was a milestone achievement and a fitting reward for the efforts of nearly 200 staff across Australia. “Pitt & Sherry recognise the importance of meeting or exceeding the expectations of our clients. We continually strive to implement innovative solutions based on the firm’s philosophy of sustainable thinking,” Mr Pitt said.

As a consulting business, Pitt & Sherry’s success relies heavily on building a strong client-staff relationship, governed by a mission to provide the best value to their clients. “Through listening to, and understanding the needs of our clients, staff, and shareholders, Pitt & Sherry has developed a strong vision that promotes values of integrity, performance, creativity, and professional relationships that we believe resonate with similar values of our clients.” Mr Pitt said.

Continued Growth sees New Role at Quadrant

Leading Tasmanian superannuation fund, Quadrant, has announced the appointment of Mr Stephen Thomas to the newly created position of General Manager, Fund Operations and Technology.

Mr Thomas brings over 20 years experience in the superannuation industry to the role, including senior management positions in operations and IT. His most recent position as an Executive Director of Synergy Capital Management Ltd included responsibility for the management of investments administration for a $2 billion portfolio and project program management.

Quadrant CEO Wayne Davy said that the newly created position is to drive technology-led improvement in member services, along with developing scalable business systems to support the rapid growth of one of Tasmania’s most successful home-grown superannuation funds. “Stephen’s strong track record in back office administration systems, service delivery and IT will be a real asset to Quadrant and its membership as we continue to grow and ensure our members receive the best possible service to help reach their retirement goals.”

Quadrant currently has more than 6,700 members and over $460 million in funds under management.
Tassie’s largest profits-to-members industry super fund.

Your natural choice for super in Tasmania.

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Technology Rises to Record Management Challenge

Technology Indicators has released the results of a study into records management in Local Government. The study was triggered by the data on low satisfaction of local councils with their records management technologies and the high priority of various records related projects. The objective of the study was to provide local councils with comparative peer data they could use to benchmark their capabilities in this area.

The study highlighted common challenges faced by Local Government. About 70% of councils reported increases in the number of electronic records they registered over the last 12 months and, at some councils, the volume of electronic records more than doubled. Councils also experience an increased public demand for council records (property information, maps, development applications etc). Increasingly, these services are being offered online, which adds another layer of challenges from the business process, technology and customer service perspectives.

For Local Government, improvement of the staff productivity and streamlining business processes is becoming a dominant business driver for the deployment, replacement or upgrade of their electronic records / document management systems (ERDMS). The study looked into different business benefits realised by local councils through the deployment of ERDMS – costs optimisation, compliance readiness, productivity and customer service. About 60% of the local councils surveyed reported significant or moderate benefits in the staff productivity achieved through the reductions in time or effort required to complete records related service requests, better processes and workflow, better information sharing and reduced errors.

The report with the study findings can be ordered from Technology Indicators, service@tech-indicators.com.au.

ICLEI Oceania Welcomes New CEO / Regional Director

Bill Forrest, former CEO of Nillumbik Shire Council, Victoria, has been appointed CEO / Regional Director of ICLEI Oceania. Mr Forrest brings to the sustainability organisation 25 years of experience in Local Government, 15 of these at the Director / CEO level.

Mr Forrest took up his role in early May, replacing Steve Gawler, former CEO of Frankston City Council, who has been Interim CEO since July 2009. As CEO of Nillumbik Shire Council in Victoria for five years, Mr Forrest led the Council and community through the difficult period following the Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. The Council was recently awarded a 2010 Premier’s Sustainability Award for Local Government for its work on environmental and community recovery in the aftermath of the bushfires.

Mr Forrest said Local Government has a very important role to play when it comes to sustainability and action on climate change. “ICLEI Oceania has an equally important role in supporting local governments to respond to ever-increasing challenges, both in service delivery and building community resilience,” he said. “We can make a real difference – locally, nationally and internationally.”

ICLEI Oceania, the regional office of the international, not-for-profit organisation ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, has worked with hundreds of councils in Australia and New Zealand since 1997 to bring about sustainability improvements through local action.

ICLEI CEO – Bill Forrest
Customer Service is Dead. Can you Revive it?

JOHN STANLEY, CONSULTANT  
John Stanley Associates

A recent British survey announced that nearly 60% of consumers had complained in the UK last year about the service they were receiving from various service providers. As a result, we recently carried out a survey of our own among our members. The results showed a sorry tale.

Firstly, we asked where they went for reliable information - 40% said sales assistants in shops, 34.5% said the Internet, 23.6% said they relied on friends, and 1.8% relied on magazine articles. We then asked if people in areas of service advice, compared to five years ago, were more knowledgeable - 9.1%, less knowledgeable - 61.8%, or the same - 29.1%. Finally we asked if customer service had improved over the last five years. 7.3% of respondents believe customer service has improved, 74.5% feel it has declined, and 18.2% believe that it has stayed the same.

There lies the real challenge. Whether it is true or not, the perception is that customer service has become a thing of the past. More importantly, what can you do about customer service? One thing is for certain, organisations that introduce reliable customer service strategies, become the heroes in the local community.

One reason for the decline is the reduction in customer service training in a lot of businesses. The reason given was that Gen Y’s tend not to stay in the job too long and therefore training was becoming an expensive exercise. I believe that this is now changing. The recession around the world in 2008 and 2009 made this generation realise that they needed more stability and, as a result, they are now staying in jobs longer. This means that training is now a justifiable investment in the business and it is time to relook at customer service in the organisation and ask where are the strengths and weaknesses.

The first step is to access where you are now in the customer service stakes. What real level of service are you providing? I know everyone I talk to believes they excel in customer service, but where do you really sit in the customer service stakes? There is only one real way to find out and that is to ask the customers. Next, design a customer service workshop that really addresses the needs of your business and identifies the weaknesses in the system and addresses these needs.

Finally, introduce a mystery client audit into the business - retailers have mystery shop audits all the time. Local councils could also benefit from this practice which provides an independent professional, unbiased view of the service you are providing.

In January, a survey came out in the UK on what consumers hated with customer service in the UK. 20% said being put on hold on the phone for a long period, 15% mentioned having to make multiple calls or visits to solve a problem, 10% said it was having to repeat themselves when they complained to different company representatives, 8% said having to communicate via the business preferred communication system rather than theirs, and 3% said not being able to navigate the web page easily to contact the business.

This highlights that customer service is more than the face-to-face relationship. The challenge is examining all your communication channels and then making a difference in the consumer’s eyes.

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So you think you’re a Director?

1. In what situations is a director in breach of their duties in relation to insolvency?
2. What would you do if a decision is made by your board that you consider is not in the best interest of the company?

Knowing your responsibilities and applicable laws can enhance your performance as a director. Not knowing could damage your reputation as a director, have implications for personal liability and even see you unwittingly on the wrong side of the law.

Take the quick online challenge now at tas.thechallenge.com.au