

Western Asia

## Australia

### 2010 Category 4 1st Place Winner

*Advancing Knowledge Management in Government*

National Blood Authority, Australia

#### Recipients on behalf of the institution

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CEO of the National Blood Authority

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#### Summary

The NBA created a private and civil knowledge network as part of an organisational capability strategy. This network has allowed the NBA to deliver improved value for governments and a safe, affordable and secure supply of blood products for all citizens.

#### The Problem

Australia spends approximately 0.73% of its national health budget in providing fresh blood, plasma and recombinant blood products. These are key elements in the ongoing and emergency health care requirements for many citizens. The National Blood Authority (NBA) was established in 2003 to undertake planning, purchasing and management functions for the Australian blood sector.

The challenge was to create the NBA as a small expert body that could improve the delivery of blood related health services to all citizens as well being a valuable resource of knowledge and information on contemporary blood issues to government. An initial assessment of core capability requirements highlighted the need to:

- Understand the market dynamics and commercial imperatives within the global plasma products industry;
- Understand the risk environment and the particular challenges facing the delivery of fresh blood products by a not-for-profit organisation; and
- Develop sufficient networks and clinical knowledge to effectively engage the clinical community in developing strategies to improve appropriate blood usage.

As a small organisation with limited resources, purchasing advice from consultants did not offer a sustainable or cost-effective solution to address the NBA's ongoing knowledge requirements. Our mechanisms for obtaining knowledge needed to be able to withstand internal staff changes, address the paucity of readily accessible information in the public domain, particularly around the plasma industry, and be supported by organisational capabilities in other key areas.

#### The Solution

To support our knowledge capability requirement, the NBA built a private and civil knowledge network as part of a comprehensive corporate capability strategy. This strategy identified that NBA needed to develop capabilities in six key areas:

- consolidating the quality and volume of knowledge available to the NBA through its private and civic knowledge networks;

- enabling staff to apply processes and knowledge;
- enhancing our engagement with citizens and stakeholders;
- increasing the capacity to adapt and develop the organization;
- refining business systems and processes; and
- improving our capacity to manage and measure performance.

Potential improvements to enhance organisational capability, including knowledge flows, were primarily selected on the basis of staff estimates of their effectiveness and ease of implementation. Staff also participated in surveys to identify gaps in existing skills and expertise.

The NBA's strategy was to access and utilise in a sustainable way the knowledge that already existed in the private and civil sectors. Key to this was to minimise our risks through the development of multiple sources of knowledge from the clinical, government, private and not-for-profit sectors. The NBA's private knowledge network partners include the domestic private hospital and pathology sector, commercial and not for profit international plasma product and recombinant manufacturers, logistics experts, and business analysts advising the investment industry. Our clinical network partners include local and international professional organisations, clinicians, blood scientists, nurses, patient representative groups and the Australian Red Cross Blood Service. Our international government networks extend into Europe, Asia, Canada, USA and South America and include both public and private institutions.

Developing the knowledge of NBA staff was a key priority. Suppliers, along with clinical and blood sector experts and our own staff, are speakers at our fortnightly Knowledge Management forums. Key business processes for our most critical internal functions allow acquired knowledge to be incorporated into operational activities on an ongoing basis. A formal induction program for new staff requires them to gain specific knowledge of the organisation and the blood sector in their first few months, including the processes and policies for utilising our knowledge network in their daily tasks.

The NBA appointed a retired academic as our intelligence officer, to undertake horizon scanning by conducting web searches of company announcements, medical journals, financial markets and a range of other information sources. This results in a regular flow of information on relevant technical, industry, and clinical developments to relevant staff. Summary reports are compiled every two months for our advisory and governance boards.

As few countries undertake blood and plasma management at a national level, in 2008 the NBA created the international collaboration of National Plasma Products Supply Planners (NPPSpa). This group of five countries are engaged in purchasing and/or planning for plasma-derived and recombinant blood products. NPPSpa meets annually to exchange information and discuss policy development, technological advances, product demand, pricing and supply availability and benchmark performance.

The NBA has also used electronic communications media effectively: we established a secure on-line portal capability to enable a number of on-line government and clinical communities to share information for meetings and developmental projects. This helps strengthen the health sector by allowing the secure receipt and dissemination of useful information. A search engine has also been implemented to allow easier retrieval of stored knowledge within the NBA and improvements to this system are continually assessed.

The NBA has found that many citizens are highly motivated to contribute to the work of the NBA and the NBA is responsive to their inputs. The difference that the NBA work has made to the health sector is visible and we are confident that 'making a difference' is a strong motivator for both staff and our external knowledge partners.

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