

Testimonial: Manufacturing

Case study: Jenkin Timber Ltd

Programme: Leadership Performance

STEEL TAKES ON TIMBER

Jenkin Timber, founded in 1922 by Harry Jenkin, is a family company that has expanded over three generations from a small construction company to one of New Zealand's leading innovators, manufacturers and international marketers of finger-jointed and solid wood NZ pine products.

In October 2000, Chief Executive Officer Richard Carbines listened to Craig Steel speak at the NZ Pine Manufacturers annual conference. He liked what he heard. The outcome was a relationship between Jenkin Timber and Craig Steel that shows no signs of ending. In the two years since Craig started, the company has grown by an impressive 61.5 percent. Jenkin expects to lift that a further 20 percent in the next 12 months. What is even more remarkable, however, is the fact that this result has been achieved against the timber market trend and a rising New Zealand dollar. Craig, the Jenkin team says, has become an integral part of the company's success.

So what did Jenkin Timber and Craig Steel do to achieve such spectacular growth?

In February 2001, Jenkin asked Craig to help its executive team improve their performance. Craig's leadership programme, eight sessions of 90 minutes a week, had such an impact that within twelve months, all of Jenkins managers and supervisors went through one of Craig's performance improvement programmes. Craig's input is so important to the company that both the executive and managers have monthly coaching sessions with the performance expert.

"The first time I met Craig I thought, 'This guy's good'," says Chairman Gary Jenkin. "His programmes have changed the way we think. You can see changes in everyone. We're all working for a common goal, all in the same boat, and all moving in the same direction."

Says Richard Carbines: "A lot of organisations say they work as a team but what does that really mean? To us it means a culture where everyone is absolutely committed to working together to achieve a common goal. Even though we have long been considered a leader in our industry, we are far better now than we previously were largely thanks to Craig."

"The company is certainly more effective and better organised," says marketing manager Mark Abbot. "The value Craig has brought is evident in so many ways. Today we are far more competitive and now have the skills to perform in the global market. Craig's influence has also helped make us more responsive, thus increasing our ability to foresee opportunities – a quality that for many years has enabled us to differentiate ourselves from our competitors."

"We have a lot of talented people here," says finance manager Colin Spring. "But Craig has helped us to be better than we would otherwise. People are a lot closer to the business, a lot more focused. We've had more than tenfold worth of benefit out of him."

"It's not rocket science, nor is it tree-hugging," says Mark Abbot. "The simplicity of Craig's concept is very impressive. His ideas have a fundamental soundness that is invaluable in modern business. At the end of the day he is extremely good at drawing out potential in individuals and businesses and that is what makes him so effective."

If people are a company's only sustainable point of difference, it makes good sense to develop those people. "It's your performance you need to focus on not the outcome," says Colin Spring. "Craig has not only given us a much greater understanding of performance but he has provided us with the tools to improve it."

"Getting results and more satisfaction in our work has certainly encouraged us to continue implementing his ideas," says Colin. "He doesn't try to turn you into the perfect employee but you do become infinitely more aware of your performance and how to approach things to ensure the best possible outcome".

"The results Craig has helped us achieve are not just something that benefits us," says Richard Carbines. "Our improvements have had a very positive impact on our customers. Craig has helped us improve our performance in the way we respond, the time we respond – everything that goes together in making a united front for our business. And, as a result, we are now beginning to successfully differentiate ourselves in the global marketplace."

"Craig has this ability to get you to think that little bit deeper about what you are doing and how you are doing it," says Mark Abbot. "We have found his work very inspiring. There is no doubt he has helped us improve our performance immeasurably."

Article written by freelance journalist Tracey Strange - October 2003

Craig Steel's performance improvement programmes have been of immense value for our people whom we recognise as the ultimate foundation and drivers of our business. In 2004 we were awarded the Exporter of the Year award in the Wood Processing Building and Interiors Category. Craig was a major contributor to this achievement.

It is pleasing to confirm the significant traction we have gained from his involvement and see this excellent business relationship continuing into the future.

Richard Carbines
Chief Executive Officer
October 2005