

Finding Pearls

Building a transformational
Mentoring program in the recruitment
industry across Australia and
New Zealand

November 2014

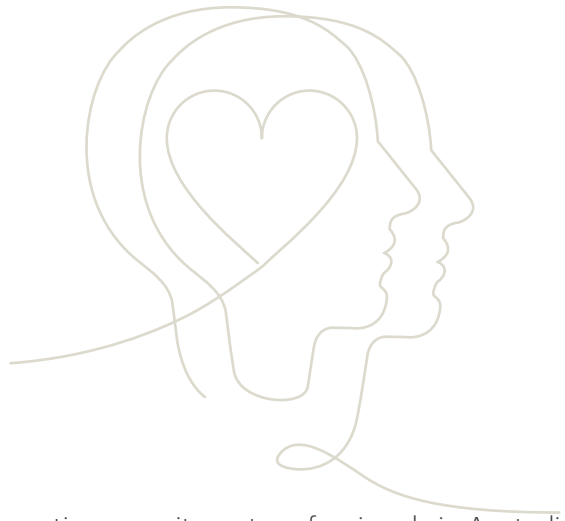
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Overview



In early 2011, the industry body representing recruitment professionals in Australia and New Zealand was facing the challenges presented to many industries around the world: to attract, retain, and develop its next generation of leaders.

Like many corporations and similar industry associations, The Recruitment & Consulting Services Association (RCSA), was investigating its approach to building long term succession within its industry, raising the overall perception of its membership within the business community, and injecting its membership with the leadership capabilities required to meet the challenges of a more complex commercial world.

To meet these needs the RCSA approached AltusQ seeking assistance to design a leadership program to enable emerging leaders to connect with experienced professionals – to get ‘best of breed’ guidance, raise overall professional standards, and build depth in their competencies. AltusQ worked closely with the RCSA to design and deliver the Professional Emerging & Aspiring Recruitment Leaders (PEARL) Mentoring Program.

Today, as it enters its fourth year of deployment, the PEARL Mentoring Program is lauded as having begun to change the face of professional recruitment in Australia and New Zealand.

This paper sets out the background, approach, implementation and results of the PEARL Mentoring Program. Specifically it outlines:

- The Why – history and key drivers that compelled the RCSA to develop the program
- Desired outcomes, ROI and success measures identified and used to measure the success of the program
- The challenges faced in building a **sustainable** industry-wide program across two countries
- Delivery model
- Key outcomes – measurable and anecdotal
- Learnings and refinement to enable continuous improvement for future years of the program.

“The objectives of the program were to foster relationships that were mutually beneficial for mentors and mentees and to contribute to the profession and the industry.”

Steve Granland, RCSA CEO



**RECRUITMENT & CONSULTING
SERVICES ASSOCIATION**
AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

To “Raise the bar”

RCSA’s vision is to create an industry that will attract new leaders due to its image as a reputable profession.

The objectives of building the PEARL Mentoring Program were to foster relationships that were mutually beneficial for mentors and mentees and to contribute to the profession and the industry.

To achieve a professional and consistent experience, the RCSA was looking to develop a robust and consistent program with clear objectives, structure, training, and review processes built in. They also needed consistent delivery of the program across all states of Australia and in New Zealand, preferably by locally based experts.

In short, the RCSA was looking to “raise the bar” on professional standards within the industry it represented. As a profession facing a tough post Global Financial Crisis environment, there was a “profound leakage” of young talent leaving the industry. Combined with the external perception that the recruitment industry was not a desirable career path or industry to be involved with, these issues posed a direct threat to the industry itself, and to the development of its leadership.

The RCSA’s objectives included the need to “re-set” the behaviours, ethical framework and overall perception of the industry.

For AltusQ, the PEARL Program challenged our own thinking and knowledge. The program helped us to “raise the bar” on our processes and methodology. Why? Because, for the first time, we were not working with a corporate or commercial organisation, or a mid-tiered business focused on growth. Instead, the RCSA presented to us the opportunities and challenges of working with:

- An organisation that represented an entire industry
- A Not-For-Profit entity solely focused on providing services to its membership. In many cases the quality of those programs and services determined the relevance of the organisation itself – as measured by membership subscriptions and participation
- A highly competitive industry, requiring us to “coach through” the challenges of people mentoring, and being mentored by, the very people with whom they competed day in and day out.



“Thank God it’s Monday!”

Origins of an industry-wide program

“How do you create and maintain a ‘thank God it’s Monday’ culture in an organisation?”

“What capabilities and mindset of leadership consciousness are necessary to sustain that culture?”

When we asked the RCSA these questions - in early 2006 - it saw the birth of a relationship that initially emerged with a training and coaching program to develop recruitment leaders in how to engage the hearts and minds of their people.

AltusQ provided the RCSA with a team of leadership coaches who could help set the higher standards for the leaders of the industry. Our team of 35 coaches - united in a consistent philosophy that transformation is possible - provided the RCSA with a scaleable partner program that eventually sowed the seeds of the PEARL Mentoring Program as the catalyst to transform their industry.

Using AltusQ’s process, developed from successfully implementing long term mentoring programs across enterprises, the RCSA was able to quickly design and build the PEARL Program without having to ‘reinvent the wheel.’

Speed of implementation and minimize cost of the program were imperatives for this program to succeed, especially considering the Not-for-Profit status of the RCSA.

AltusQ has now been coaching the mentoring participants in the program for 3 years. This work has incorporated up-front training for mentors and mentees as well as quarterly peer meetings for both groups by a team of across Australia and New Zealand.

Giving back

AltusQ has done this work on a pro-bono basis which to date equates to well over 500 hours of what we consider to be our “giving back” to the commercial world.

From this program we have developed a reputation for implementing world-class mentoring programs.

Our ROI sits in our relationship with the RCSA. Through that growing relationship we have been introduced to a number of global organisations, national and state based government entities, and other industry bodies – many of whom have engaged us to build and manage their mentoring, leadership development and executive coaching programs.

“AltusQ has strong experience with corporate in-house mentoring programs over a number of years, great intellectual property and materials, a network of offices across Australia and New Zealand and they know how to engage with professionals from across our industry.”

RCSA CEO Steve Granland

Program design

Most of us in the commercial world will acknowledge and focus on the benefits of any particular strategy, product or service. Yet, what we know, is that the blockers - the show stoppers - and reasons for not doing something lie in the underlying fears. These fears, unaddressed up-front, are left as the 'elephants in the room' and lead to the premature termination of many a good idea.

Imagine this...

You own a successful business, or you manage and run a division of a corporation. It's a competitive industry you work in, and the typical pressures of our modern day commercial world are always in play.

You have recruited well and your business has some young staff members whom you want to nurture, support, and encourage. You consider them as your future insurance policy for the longevity and vitality of your business.

Now, take those great people, and entrust their professional development to a mentor who is the founder or executive manager of your biggest competitor.

Know that at least once a month, your 'rising stars' are meeting one-on-one with that mentor to help them build their capabilities, share their challenges, goals, desires, and aspirations.

What fears arise from this?

This is where we had to start. This is the environment of the PEARL Mentoring Program, and while on the surface it could have been a major show stopper, it turned into a major benefit of the program.

We had to address the arising fears in order for the program to be successful. And the fears were not just with the RCSA and its membership. AltusQ had to face our own fears as the program unfolded.

We all had to "*play it brave.*"

In the table following we have identified some of key fears that had to be address in the design and deployment of the program – for both the RCSA and for AltusQ as a service provider.

“Playing it brave” – Addressing the fears of an industry

Context	RCSA Fears	AltusQ Fears
Trust & Integrity	Will program participants act with restraint when exposed to new talent?	Will our reputation as a leading mentoring program provider be put at risk by a far from reputable industry?
Control	How well do we know AltusQ as our outsourced mentoring program provider and can we put our name on their work?	Will all participants follow the program guidelines as they say they will? Can a team of 5 coaches across 2 countries hold this program together?
Quality	How will these conversations unfold and what will be the quality of the mentoring outcomes?	Will all mentors put their heart and soul into this program for the betterment of their mentees?
Consistency	Will standards be upheld across all relationships or just some?	How do we ensure that all mentors receive the same message regardless of their location and whether we are coaching them face to face or via Skype?
Time	How much time will we need to devote to administering this program?	How much time will RCSA devote to administering this program?



No madness, just methods...



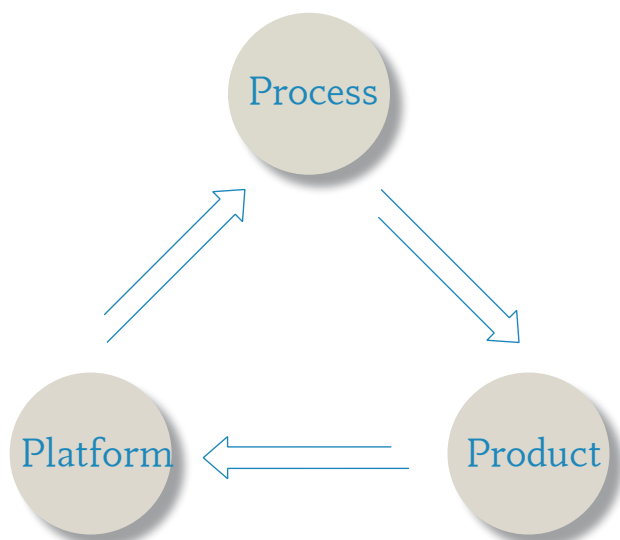
To address these fears we relied on our core methodology; developed over a number of years and gained by experience in running similar programs in the banking and finance, government and other corporate sectors.

Our methodology is based on three basic deliverables of Process, Product and Platform.



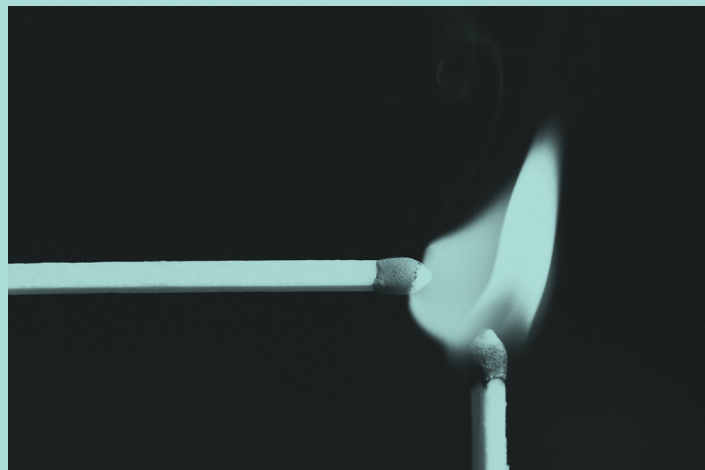
Process = pathway to success

The PEARL Program was underpinned by a process that falls broadly into 5 “must haves”, as show on the diagram above.



Process

1. Championed by leaders	2. Strategically planned	3. Measured and defined	
<p>The PEARL Program was 'owned' and driven from the very top of the RCSA's executive.</p> <p>The key reasons for this include the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Position the program as a priority. As recipients of mentoring guidance in their own development, the RCSA Executive knew the benefits and were willing to share this knowledge with their colleagues – Legitimise the program. As senior industry leaders, they gave the program a sense of respect and 'gravitas.' They sent a clear message that the industry was taking its commitment to building capability, and engaging its members seriously – Be the voice of the program. Broadcast the return on investment from the program, attend the key milestone events in the program such as the launch, training and regular mentor and mentee meetings. 	<p>Successful mentoring programs are not just good initiatives by chance. They are planned out projects with specific and measurable outcomes. The need for a disciplined approach was essential to the PEARL Program.</p> <p>The program kick started with a robust planning process to ensure that the energy and efforts invested could be maintained year-on-year rather than dwindle to nothing within six months. The planning took into consideration the requirement to seamlessly run the program across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 4 States in Australia and 2 Islands in New Zealand – 4+ time-zones – 100s of participants across 100s of businesses. 	<p>The RCSA had specific goals to achieve from the program. These were the 'measures that matter' – not only for the Association but for the industry in general.</p> <p>We worked with the RCSA to clearly articulate their desired outcomes so that the full return on investment (ROI) could be measured and communicated to all member organisations. While some of the measures were empirical by nature - and required a number of program intakes to calculate any statistically valid shifts such as employee engagement levels, retention rates etc – others were anecdotal in nature.</p> <p>Some of the key measures that matter for the PEARL Program included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mentor and mentee program satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mentees perception of their industry as a viable and attractive long term profession – Mentors rating the program as adding value to their own leadership skills – Mentors volunteering across multiple mentee intakes – Mentees graduating to become mentors over time – Referrals from the program to attract new mentors and mentees.



4. Trained

The downfall for many a-doomed mentoring program is the notion that all that is required is to pair up a mentor with a mentee, and they'll do the rest.

The alternative approach – and a factor of most successful programs – lies in providing introductory and ongoing skills development for both mentors and mentees.

A cornerstone success factor in the PEARL Program lies in the training of the mentors and Mentees.

Why?

– **It sends a message of Commitment:** the program is serious, defined and focused.

– **Consistency of approach:** mentees could have multiple mentors in their careers. Having those mentors run to a similar methodology/process (not to be confused with 'mentoring style') provides a common platform across program

– **Quality of delivery:** provided through a common framework (or mentoring process) that enables the mentor to overlay their personal style and experiences to ensure powerful outcomes

– **Enhanced Capability:** our experience and evidence indicates that trained mentors use their newly acquired mentoring skills in their primary roles, with their own teams as well as in other aspects of their careers. Indeed many take their learned skills into aspects of their lives outside of work. For the PEARL Program, these outcomes were mirrored as indicated in the section Pearls of Wisdom below

– **Setting Expectations:** Mentee briefings set the basic expectations on what they are required to do, how they need to 'drive' the process etc.

– The PEARL Program training and quarterly 'meets' is a compulsory aspect of the program. It also provides AltusQ, as facilitators, with a feed-back mechanism to identify and report on any key themes/issues facing RCSA members and the industry. This has been invaluable and has helped the RCSA to develop ongoing professional development and training programs for their industry.

5. Supported by systems and processes

Having the systems and processes to capture and report on the program as it unfolds, measure the ROI and outcomes, etc. is clearly essential.

Although the challenges of providing these in the context of an industry-wide mentoring program were different to what we have experienced in the corporate and enterprise-wide environment, we found that similar needs existed.

We were able to leverage off our previously developed systems to provide easily tailored:

- Accountability and evaluation measures
- Matching processes, to help reduce the incidence of mismatching or non-matching of candidates
- Internal marketing and promotion
- Real-time feedback process
- Codes of conduct, agreements and escalation procedures.

Product and platform

Product = QMentor White Label

Given our experiences with building these programs, we have been able to create a 'white label' approach to implementation. This enabled the RCSA to leverage off our years of experience, trial, and error, in order to implement the program with speed and confidence.

The QMentor white label approach wraps together:

- AltusQ proprietary coaching and mentoring intellectual property and processes
- Methodologies for stakeholder, project, and participant management
- Tools and resources: everything from Strategy planning tools and ROI measurement tools, to draft emails for sponsors to send to participants, training manuals, trainers guide books, mentor and mentee tips, etc.



Platform= Leveraged results

Like many organisations who commit to a mentoring program, the RCSA has been surprised by the level of administration involved in engaging program participants and handling all the communications required for a successful implementation.

To support them to grow this program further AltusQ has utilised the Chronus software platform. This platform has been specifically designed for reducing the administration overhead on the mentoring program coordinators, allowing for the entire program to be programmed via a workflow design process during the program planning phase.

As the RCSA and AltusQ move into the next year of the program we will be implementing Chronus with a view to realise its value, with expected benefits including:

- Efficiencies for administration
- Participant communication as a form of social media
- A central repository for all the program's documentation
- Policy and procedure
- Regular pulse checks of program participants
- Support for the matching process by producing a "short list" of matches.

*"...in former times men
have met with Angels
here, have found Pearls
here, and have in this
place found the words
of Life."*

**Pilgrim's Progress – John
Bunyan**

An overnight success, years in the making.

It takes time and energy for an oyster to make a pearl.

From the point at which a grain of sand enters the oyster, it begins to secrete a liquid known as nacre in thin layers over the sand to make it smoother. Eventually these thin layers form a shiny pearl.

From only 15 mentor /mentee matches in Year One to having well over 230 participants, the PEARL Mentoring Program well and truly has a life of its own and has begun to impact the industry.

Some program facts to date

- Over 230 participants to date
- 5 coaches as program facilitators across Australia & New Zealand,
- 170 leaders on a program of professional and personal development
- 620 goals being worked on by mentee participants
- 3,260+ mentoring hours given by industry leaders to mentees.





Pearls of wisdom

As an outcome of the first year of the program, measured results included:

- ➔ 100% of mentors and 94 per cent of mentees would recommend the program to others.
- ➔ 75% per cent of mentees reported a better perception of how professional they believe the industry is as a result of their experience in the program.
- ➔ 79% per cent of mentors volunteered to be a mentor again with the second intake of the mentees in the subsequent program.
- ➔ Both mentors and mentees reported that they were able to apply the skills they learned to their core roles.
- ➔ Mentors reported that they had developed their leadership skills including better listening skills, better insight into their own biases, how to effectively provide feedback, and how to manage their own staff's self-awareness. The mentors generally agree that bringing these skills back into their work environments has enhanced their businesses, and the industry in immeasurable ways.
- ➔ In each subsequent year, similar results have been measured. Of note are the number of mentees who continue with the program in following years with either the same or another mentor. So too the number of mentees who become mentors in subsequent years.
- ➔ Recently, one insight given by a mentor – presently signing up for his 4th year as a mentor – was that the skills many mentors have attained have enabled them to prepare for roles as Non-Executive Directors – by “learning the essential skills of asking the right questions and the tough questions, which has been invaluable”.
- ➔ Further feedback and ‘pearls of wisdom’ can be found in this [link](#) to a short video of interviews with mentors and mentees from the PEARL Program.

Wisdom from pearls

As designers and facilitators of this program AltusQ is grateful for the opportunity to learn many facets of delivering successful mentoring programs. Here are a few of our own “pearls:”

- ➔ Fears of program leaders need to be explored and resolved both upfront and continuously throughout the program.
- ➔ There needs to be a compelling vision that can translate into measures that can be tracked – this is the basis for the entire program design.
- ➔ Having quarterly peer meetings where we can coach the mentors and mentees and where they can “peer mentor” each other is a foundation to keep the program on-track and to maintain energy in the program.

*“Errors, like straws,
upon the surface flow;
he who would search
for pearls must dive
below.”*

John Dryden

Summary and conclusions

As the program moves into planning for 2015 we are exploring some exciting innovations including a more self-service approach, using technology to streamline administration, and other options for engaging mentors both within and outside the industry.



A note of thanks

To the team at the RCSA for being brave enough to embrace a new frontier in leading their industry and for trusting our team with this flagship program.

About the authors



Vanessa Fudge

Vanessa is a Director and leadership coach with AltusQ.

Vanessa's clients include BankWest, Boulderstone, the ATO, Lloyds International, CBA and the NSW Institute of Sport.

She loves working directly with CEO's, executive teams, managers, partnerships and boards to fulfil their love for business.

Together with fellow AltusQ Partner Akram Sabbagh she has developed an Enterprise Mentoring 'White Label' program which is currently being run in a number of corporations and industry bodies across Australia and bodies in Australia and internationally.

Vanessa was recently the author and lecturer in the Sydney Business School 'Applied Coaching Skills' module for the Masters of Business Coaching degree offered by Wollongong University.

Prior to joining AltusQ, Vanessa ran a Change Management Consulting Firm advising corporations on their strategic change processes in the fields of finance, banking and insurance and federal and local government.

Vanessa is a registered organisational psychologist; an Accredited Certified Meta Coach (ACMC) through the Institute of Neuro- Semantics; Organisational Development Resources (ODR) Practitioner and Train the Trainer; holds a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and a Bachelor of Science (Honours) Psychology from UNSW.

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Akram Sabbagh

Akram (Ak) is a Partner and a Senior Coach with AltusQ.

Ak works with corporate boards, senior executives, teams and business units as well as owners of mid-tier businesses on their growth.

Based in Western Australia, many of his clients include a diverse range of resource industry (hard rock & oil and gas) businesses as well as businesses servicing that industry.

Together with fellow AltusQ Partner Vanessa Fudge, Ak has developed the AltusQ Enterprise Mentoring 'White Label' program which is currently being implemented within a number of corporations and industry bodies in Australia and internationally.

Prior to AltusQ, Ak held Coaching and Executive roles with corporations like IBM Australia, Ernst & Young, and PMP Ltd, as well as with a number of small and medium sized businesses in the IT&T industry. He has also held the position of National Sales & Marketing Manager for a telecommunications company.

Ak holds a Bachelor of Arts - Communication, Canberra University and is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors

He is a past guest lecturer for Curtin University of Technology's offshore MBA program in Singapore.

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About AltusQ

To lead in an increasingly complex world, we know there must be a balance of both the commercial and cultural aspects of business to support decision making.

AltusQ's focus is to combine and balance IQ around knowledge and understanding, EQ around emotional capabilities, and AQ around attitude. All are required to affect sustained behavioural change.

Our approach is grounded in evidence from psychology, adult learning and organisational change research* that acknowledge the way in which the human brain works and the stages people go through as we move from infancy to the higher stages of awareness and consciousness. We also 'get' that most adults learn by experience, so we make everything we do 'experiential'.

Essentially, we help our clients to engage both their 'head' and their 'heart' to empower them to become better leaders and more successful in business and life.

*Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Lovinger, Maslow, Hall, Fowler, Jaques, Beck, Torbert, Cook-Greuter, Kouzes & Posner, Kegan, Wilber, Goleman, Rock.

Contact us in Australia

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For more information on our leadership and mentoring programs, talk to your AltusQ contact, call us on 1300 996 918, email us at info@AltusQ.com.au or visit www.AltusQ.com.au.

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