

The One-ETSA Work Challenge: Driving Innovation and Relentless Improvement

ETSA Utilities is South Australia's principle electricity distributor with more than 1,800 employees located across the state. In 2010, ETSA Utilities introduced the Works Management Program (WMP), which looks at how the organisation plans, designs, schedules and carries out work on its Network Assets and delivers customer service. The Program is a significant initiative supporting the One-ETSA approach of applying seamless, end-to-end integration across day-to-day activities within the organisation.



To discover ideas on how to improve integration and effectiveness, ETSA Utilities commissioned Vulture Street to host the One-ETSA Work Challenge—a large scale on-line collaboration event designed to elicit ideas from one of its key stakeholders—employees. The One-ETSA Work Challenge invited participation from all areas of the organisation, including office, field, supplementary labour and technical staff. Participants were asked to respond to six challenge questions under the general theme of discovering new ideas for bringing real change to ETSA Utilities, by posting their own ideas, and adding comments or votes to the ideas posted by others.

Overall, the One-ETSA Work Challenge was a great success, with 730 employees generating 289 ideas, 947 comments and 7,582 votes. Prizes were awarded to contributors of the three most popular ideas, which covered topics related to improving Intranet search functionality, improving work environments, and ways to eliminate duplication in data entry.

"I've always thought that the best ideas come from our people," states ETSA Utilities CEO Rob Stobbe. 'The volume and quality of ideas generated through the One-ETSA Work Challenge has shown that our people are committed to making ETSA Utilities an even better place to work.'

In addition to the high quality of ideas submitted, participation during the Challenge was very strong. Of the total group invited to participate, 34% were actively involved, representing 89% of all workgroups across the organisation. Across 188 work groups in total, 27 (over 14%) were able to achieve 100% participation in the Challenge (i.e. all members of the work group contributed by posting an idea, comment or voting), representing an outstanding result.

This level of engagement across all work groups using the online Challenge platform demonstrates that many in the organisation are eager to try web-based communication tools to voice their ideas and opinions. ETSA Utilities will continue to focus on enabling even more of the workforce from across the organisation, regardless of location, to share their ideas and have the opportunity to be heard.

Approximately half the ideas generated by the Challenge have been incorporated as part of the ETSA Utilities Works Management Program. Ideas relating to other parts of the business are being considered by relevant managers as part of ETSA Utilities' innovation and improvement activities. ETSA Utilities has in place a process to advise all idea generators on how their ideas are progressing—including those ideas that are not feasible to implement.

Overall, the One-ETSA Work Challenge was highly effective in generating a large number of new and innovative ideas for improvements, and stimulating engagement across all parts of the organisation.

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