



Greenlife Industry Australia

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CASE STUDY

Masterclass key to continued career success at Humphris Nursery

A strong foundation of business skills is critical to strategic decision making and effective change management, to drive positive outcomes for Australian nursery businesses.

That's the philosophy of James Edge, National Sales Manager at Humphris Nursery, one of the largest wholesale plant production enterprises in Australia.

Humphris Nursery employs over 100 staff over three sites in the outer-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, delivering a diverse range of quality products and services to several segments of the horticultural industry.

With 18 years' experience in the sector, James began his career in production at Humphris Nursery, being promoted to Production Manager within a few years while studying to achieve various qualifications along the way.

"I worked as Head Grower within the business for a decade before being offered the role of National Sales Manager. Transitioning into sales, I already had a strong understanding of what products worked well within our growing environments, production systems and within our team capabilities," James said.

"Though achieving good sales growth early on, I was able to identify key business skills that needed further development."

Both understanding the value of development and continuing to grow with the business, led James to apply for a Masterclass in Horticultural Business scholarship in 2017.

Facilitated by the University of Tasmania (UTAS), the Hort Masterclass is a ten-month course undertaken predominantly online. It offers a comprehensive and accessible program to those looking to accelerate and further progress their careers in the horticultural sector.

With funding from Hort Innovation's Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund through the nursery levy and additional contributions from the Australian Government, this initiative is the first of its kind in Australia, working to equip nursery growers and managers with leadership and business management skills specific to the horticultural sector.

"As a business, Humphris Nursery is committed to remaining at the cutting edge of technology and

innovation, to continually improve on quality, efficiencies and productive outputs," James said.

"To remain at the forefront of growth amidst dynamic environmental and market conditions, it's vital that we're constantly looking for new opportunities to grow the business.

"Over the past few years, we have acquired and developed more land, upgraded existing facilities, expanded our workforce and implemented new systems and automation, to improve production outputs.

"The practical skills that I learned through the program have been critical during these times of change, from supporting the development of a more holistic strategic plan, to the day-to-day implementation of change both in the business and across the supply chain.

"The strategic analysis and risk management aspects of the course has allowed me to more effectively assess return on investment for new business ventures and provide greater support across the business."

The Hort Masterclass offers a flexible online structure, covering several key modules such as financial management and law, supply chain management and logistics, people and culture, and business development and strategy.



Humphris Nursery, Mooroolbark site

Hort Innovation
Strategic levy investment

NURSERY FUND

This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au



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“As our business has grown, the skills I gained from participating in the Hort Masterclass have helped me develop as an individual and contribute at a higher level as a part of the senior management team within the business,” James said.

“Having a greater understanding of the business as a whole, has enabled me to identify efficiency flaws or gaps in our day-to-day operations.

“I’ve been able to make more informed, strategic business decisions, implement internal and external communications strategies to maximise sales and productive outcomes, develop and manage budgets and schedules more effectively, and support the business with new projects and in decision-making processes.

“The financial management aspects of the course led me to develop a costing calculator, incorporating variable and fixed costs across the business to assess how we are costing our product and ensure we are remaining competitive in the marketplace.”

To further his development, James has continued to engage in industry professional development courses, participating in the Green Industry Growing Leaders program in 2019.

“This program was instrumental in helping me hone my leadership approach and skills, allowing me to be more effective at supporting employees and the wider business during times of change,” James said.

The Hort Masterclass brings together students within the nursery industry and the broader horticultural sector, working to find solutions to shared challenges.

“Through networking with peers across different industries, I discovered that the entire horticultural sector faces similar challenges to the nursery industry,” James said.

“It was reassuring to hear that other industries were facing similar challenges both within our roles and businesses and provided a unique opportunity to share solutions and hear some of the strategies people implemented to overcome those challenges.”

“By participating in this course, I was able to walk away content with knowing that I had a stronger personal and professional foundation, and a great platform to continually build on.

“I would highly recommend this program to my peers, particularly those who are passionate about the industry, their business, and are looking to take the next step in their career. The skills learnt have been instrumental in my continued professional development, and ability to drive positive outcomes for the business.”

Upon successful completion of the course, students graduate from the University of Tasmania with a Diploma in Horticultural Business and are invited to attend a graduation ceremony.

Applications for the 2020 mid-year entry are now being accepted through UTAS, closing midnight on Sunday, 14 June 2020.

For more information on the program, scholarships, and to apply, head to: utas.edu.au/tia/study/masterclass-in-horticultural-business

The Hort Masterclass is part of the Hort Frontiers Leadership Fund, a Hort Innovation strategic partnership initiative that uses a combination of government and partner funding to address major issues facing the future of Australian horticulture for the benefit of the entire industry.

ENDS



James Edge, National Sales Manager, Humphris Nursery