THE RTO PROFIT BLUEPRINT:

10 Revolutionary Secret Tactics to Skyrocket Your Profits

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Introduction

In the fast-evolving landscape of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), the gap between leaders and followers lies in leveraging the right strategies. In the pages that follow, you're about to uncover a carefully curated collection of strategies, insights, and innovations designed specifically for visionary RTO leaders like you. But this isn't just another business guide; it's a roadmap to unprecedented success, profitability, and operational excellence that you've only dared to dream of.

The secrets enclosed within these pages are born from the trials, triumphs, and transformations of leading RTOs. We delve deep into the core of what truly drives RTO growth, from unlocking new revenue streams to mastering the art of student acquisition and retention. These secrets are your keys to unlocking a future where your RTO doesn't just survive; it thrives. Each chapter is crafted to not only reveal a secret but to guide you on how to implement it effectively, ensuring that you're not just inspired but also equipped to take immediate action.

As you embark on this journey, I invite you to have an open mind and readiness to transform because these 10 secrets are more than just advice; they are the keys to unlocking a new era of success and profitability for your RTO. So, are you ready to explore the goldmine that lies within your reach?

1. The Enrolment Explosion:

Ultimate Student Acquisition Playbook for Your RTO

Student Acquisition involves you or your team doing any or a combination of the Big 8:

1. Warm Outreach
2. SEO / Posting Content
3. Cold Outreach
4. Paid Ads
5. Influencers / Affiliates
   This is such a BIG opportunity; I've featured it as its own secret - #8 (See Page 33)
6. Customer/Student Referrals
7. Agencies
8. Tenders

1 Warm Outreach

Who knows you? No, not just your besties – think bigger. Create a list by extracting all the contacts from your phone, all your Facebook friends, all your LinkedIn connections, all your Instagram followers, all your TikTok followers....... I think you get it - this Spreadsheet list should feature EVERYONE who knows you.

So now you've got a list, what next? We want to connect with them! Firstly, consider the medium you'd like to use: emails, phone calls, SMS, DMs, etc. Next, plot what you want to share – this shouldn't be a PDF brochure or a highly produced video as this'll scream 'advertising'. These people know you, so share a personal message, reference something you know about them or share a personal update about yourself / your family they may be interested in. Then transition to asking if they know anybody... that might be feeling a bit professionally lost at the moment, but is great with kids, so may be a phenomenal childcare worker ... that runs a business in warehousing or logistics because we've just launched an amazing new manual handling program helping such businesses collapse their time off due to injury + WorkCover claims...

But people are instinctively protective of the goodwill they have with their network, so they'll be wary to share who they know if they feel there is a risk such a recommendation could backfire. Help de-risk them nominating someone ... would you believe we've now helped over 1,200 graduates enter the childcare industry and last year we achieved a 4.7 average satisfaction score on TrustPilot... we've already rolled out this program in 5 pilot sites, the results have been phenomenal and the testimonials we've already collected on our website are really inspiring....

I suspect your list may be a LOT bigger than you think and given the personal nature of your message, you'll be surprised by the engagement you get with this outreach.

2 Posting Content and SEO

Posting free content allows you to build an audience. If your existing audience thinks the content is valuable and could benefit people they know, they'll share it and then the audience they share it to might like it and become part of your audience. The key is to develop and post GREAT content. This includes your copy and BLOGS for Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) – you must start with GREAT content. Keyword stacking to just elicit traffic from Google is wasteful. Ensure the traffic is landing on GREAT content – they'll become your audience and are more likely to share, which further expands your audience.

So, while Warm Outreach is one-to-one, posting content gives you leverage, your one post could reach a much wider audience. I say 'could' because this too is subject to the content being GREAT, capturing the attention of the viewers that are mindlessly scrolling lots of other posts. You need to give viewers a quick reason to consume your content — think headlines and topics. But after you capture their attention, you need to stoke their curiosity to keep them engaged with your content. Curiosity is un-answered questions they have circling in their mind, that they're keen to learn the answer to. What questions can you start percolating up into their consciousness? Finally, you need to sate this curiosity, completely answering all the questions you've had circling in their minds. This rewards the viewer for digesting your content and when done effectively, helps you grow your audience — they share and then their audience becomes part of your audience, etc, etc, etc.

Your RTO is sitting on a HEAP of content — you currently call it learner guides 😊. But you're also undoubtedly changing lives — helping people enter or change or advance careers. You likely already have all the content you need to post daily for the next year – so get started and post consistently!

3 Cold Outreach

Warm Outreach can work brilliantly, but of course it is a limited audience, so invariably you're going to have to start reaching out to strangers to acquire more students. Strangers lack one key thing that you enjoyed with your Warm audience: Trust. Strangers don't know you and don't trust you. Beyond a lack of trust, you do have other new challenges compared to warm outreach: (i) You don't have their contact details; (ii) because they don't know you, their instinct will be to ignore you; and (iii) if you do manage to steal their attention, they're not interested in your Training Courses.

Despite these challenges, many an RTO has been built on Cold Outreach – it's worked before and if you choose + commit, it can help your RTO grow faster and enhance the predictability of your student acquisition.

But first, you'll need to conquer the 3 challenges introduced below.

Challenge 1:

"How do we contact prospective students"

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Build a List

Who do you want to speak to? You want to be as specific as possible, so that your messaging can then speak to these people exclusively. If you're selling Project Management training, perhaps you want to speak with HR or L&D Managers in Resource and Construction companies; if you're selling Hospitality training, perhaps you want to speak with owners of cafes and restaurants; if you're selling Leadership training, perhaps you want to speak to line managers of white collar businesses about levelling-up their skills to help earn a promotion into higher Leadership roles; etc. Once you've defined WHO you want to speak to, you need a list of these people, which you can build via:

(i) Software to scrape a list of names and contact details. A quick Google search will reveal plenty of options – so subscribe, get a sample and test to confirm the contact info is accurate and up to date.

(ii) List Brokers – chances are, if you're the CEO or in a Senior Leadership position at your RTO, List Brokers have already been contacting you — search your inbox or junk/clutter, you'll likely have a few providers that will be super eager to hear from you. Invite them to provide stats for how many of your WHO they can provide full contact information for, but ahead of making any large commitment, make sure you get a data sample to verify that it is accurate and up to date.

(iii) Scrape them Manually – search databases, groups and communities for your WHO. Ideally when you find them, contact details will be available too (even if this is just a link to their social profiles where you can get contact details from), otherwise you'll have to continue searching for their details outside the group, but at least you have a few extra data points now which'll make it easier.

Challenge 2:

Regardless of the medium/s you choose to use for your Cold Outreach (e.g. email, phone, direct mail, SMS, video MMS, etc), you need to craft your messaging. It should look or sound like it's from someone they know, so ideally you should have a couple of pieces of information about the prospect that you can complement them on. In short, your Cold Outreach messaging should sound/look like a Warm Outreach message. This personalisation will hopefully stall you being deleted out of their inbox or being hung-up on, but you need to quickly back this up by giving amazing value. Perhaps this is a highly valuable lead magnet or a phenomenal offer or access to an exclusive experience. Once clear on what you want to include in your messaging, you need to get busy writing your scripts or templates. Give careful thought to your call to action and even 'split-test' different call to actions. I've seen some RTOs who've been directing their Cold Outreach traffic to a Landing Page with an 'Enrol Today' call to action, radically improve their success by instead having this Landing Page propose a call with a Careers Counsellor to discuss whether the Training Course will be a good fit for them.

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Challenge 3:

"They're not interested in my Training Courses"

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Volume

If you've defined your WHO well and crafted strong messaging (infused with personalisation and amazing value), then you just need to get this messaging in front of more strangers, more often and via different mediums.

- Automate delivery of your messaging as much as possible
- Leverage AI and personalisation tech (you've likely received such messages in your inbox with your name on a coffee cup, video of sender browsing your website, etc) — this is getting better and better all the time, so embrace the tactics available to you. Volume and automation don't have to come at the expense of personalising your Student Acquisition Cold Outreach campaigns
- More and different – don't assume your WHO read your email or watched your video or listened to your voicemail, repeat yourself and remind them about your amazing value, but also connect with them on different mediums as they may have a preferred or just by seeing you in multiple places (i.e. their phone via a SMS and then their inbox on their PC) enhances the trust they feel for you

4 Paid Ads

Advertising is an obvious inclusion in the Student Acquisition Big 8 – attracting more strangers or cold audience to your RTO. You're essentially paying for access to someone else's audience and whilst this could take many forms (e.g. TV, Newspaper, Magazine, etc) we're going to focus on Digital Advertising. The challenges we need to conquer to make Digital Advertising a success include:

(i) Figuring out where to advertise

(ii) Ensuring the right WHOs see your advertising

(iii) Crafting a really effective ad

(iv) Effectively capturing the contact details of the WHOs that are interested

Let's attack the challenges one at a time!

Challenge 1:

Where will I advertise my courses?

Clearly, you've got a raft of choices here — including some RTO specific marketplaces, like Candlefox, which you should definitely consider. However, whilst marketplaces are 'easy' they likely won't give you the flexibility and customisation you need, plus your offering will be arranged alongside ALL of your competitors. So, let's consider advertising directly — but should this be on TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Google……? The answer may be all, so instead let's focus on where we want to START advertising — don't underestimate this important decision, many RTOs get 'advertising overwhelm' so just don't start.

- What platforms do you personally use – so you have a bit of a clue how it works?

- Does the platform have a way you can really target your WHO so you're not paying for eyeballs that aren't a fit?

- Watch, listen or read heaps of ads on this platform – get a free schooling on tactics that other advertisers are using in their ads, take notes ready to infuse into your ads. Also observe if there's any trends in how other advertisers are using the varying 'ad types' – e.g. LinkedIn you can advertise in the newsfeed or send messages, Instagram you can advertise in the newsfeed or stories, etc.

- Don't panic about the mechanics of 'how' you'll advertise on this platform – they're a business, likely employing squadrons of people to make this easy and availing step by step instructions for you to follow

Challenge 2:

How do I get the right WHO to see my ads?

On most platforms you can advertise to EVERYONE in the whole world, but clearly you don't want to do this, and it'd waste a LOT of money. You only want to advertise to your specific WHO that is your ideal student and for this WHO you should know and understand their interests, demographics, geographical location, etc. You want to deliberately target them, and your chosen platform will likely have 2 keyways to do this.

(i) **Lookalike Audience**
Your RTO has students, but clearly you want MORE and this is where a lookalike audience can help. If you upload a list of students the platform will show your ad to an audience similar or that 'looks like', but is MUCH bigger, than the list you uploaded. The bigger the list the better as it helps the platform really target in on the profile of all your current/historical students. If you're a small or new RTO and don't have a student list big enough to meet your platform's minimum list size, consider adding anyone who has enquired about your courses.

(ii) **Profile Factors**
A clear WHO will really help you target via profile factors which can include age, income, gender, interests, location, etc. The more filters you apply, the more specific

the audience will be who sees your ad – which is a great way to start. To scale in the future, you may need to dial out the filters to engage a larger, broader audience – but start specific.

Challenge 3:

Killer ads

Developing killer ads is a science and as such, requires lots of experimentation. I preface such to flag that you're unlikely to launch with the world's most amazing student acquisition ad, but you must launch regardless and then iterate to generate constant improvements. Obviously, your ad requires a 'design element' which again I want to encourage you NOT to be a barrier. Canva has LOTS of templates for any advertising platform, all ad types and can incorporate images or videos. Canva is super easy to use. But beyond the design of the ad, the most critical items to developing a killer ad are:

(i) **How you get the attention of your WHO**

Getting your WHO to notice your ad is super critical – stopping their mindless scrolling to capture their eyes/ears for just long enough for them to qualify 'this is for me'. This interruption and first impression are what you should experiment with the most. This could be the headline, verbal, nonverbal or a combination of all.

- Does your WHO identify with a label or group (could include features, traits, titles, places and other descriptors) e.g. Melbourne Personal Trainers, Gamers in Sydney, Brisbane Café Owners, etc.

- Your WHO answers 'Yes that's me' — Are you a highly organised person but earn under $100,000? Do you hate the 9 to 5 monotony of working in an office? Do you deserve to lead your own team at work? etc, etc.

- If-Then statements — If you work in Retail, then we can DOUBLE your salary; If you were born between 2000 and 2009 and want to work with Children, then pay attention to learn how; etc, etc.

- Amazing Results — This woman doubled her salary in less than 6 months; This young man only graduated Year 12 six months ago. Friends super jealous (key is what the ad image shows); etc, etc.

- Use the setting and spokesperson to get attention – use colours, sounds, movements, etc to grab attention. Anchor visuals to match any labels/groups you've set e.g. feature prominent Melbourne location in background, so viewers know it's Melbourne OR the spokesperson looks, talks, acts in ways familiar to your WHO; etc. Use the scene to echo your 'Yes that's me' or If-Then statements e.g. visual of someone that resembles the profile of your WHO working in Retail; visual of someone aged between 16 to 24 playing with kids; etc.

(ii) **How you pique the interest of your WHO**

You must strongly position the value and massive benefits of your WHO taking action to share their contact information, which will likely be in exchange for a 'lead magnet' you've put together OR an appointment with your Career Coach. So, you need to convince your WHO that they NEED this lead magnet or coaching session.

- Celebrate the Dream Outcome and here's a hot tip — this is NOT studying in your RTO, regardless of how amazing your campus or LMS is! It's what happens after they graduate – the new job, the new salary, the new perks they can afford because of the new salary, the new lifestyle because of the new job, etc, etc.

- Opposite of the Dream Outcome — Stoke the Pain — the stuff they'll have to continue enduring if they don't take action.

- Show that there's a high likelihood they'll get what they want – emphasise the success of people like them, can you give a guarantee?

- Show your WHO how fast they can get what they want

- Effort and Sacrifice — show how they'll be forced to keep giving up the things they love and continue suffering from the things they hate but then show how easy it will be for them to change this reality

- Show how other people will treat your WHO when they realise their Dream Outcome - partner, parents, friends, old work colleagues, new work colleagues, etc. Your WHOs will fantasise about how amazing they'll feel when they receive these reactions

- Show what your WHOs decisions have led to in the past (e.g. no action, status quo, which is unacceptable) and what their decisions could lead to in the future (e.g. new job, new salary, new lifestyle, etc). Prompting your WHO to visualise their own timeline (Past, Present, Future) will help them evaluate the consequences of their decision (or indecision) right now.

(iii) **What you direct your WHO to do next**

You captured their attention, you piqued their interest... for a short window of time, so you must capitalise quickly within this window by telling your WHO exactly what to do next. Click this button, comment 'free guide', call this number, visit this website, etc. Whatever you want your WHO to do – direct it and make it quick + EASY (DON'T subject them to a 33-field enquiry form, etc).

Challenge 4:

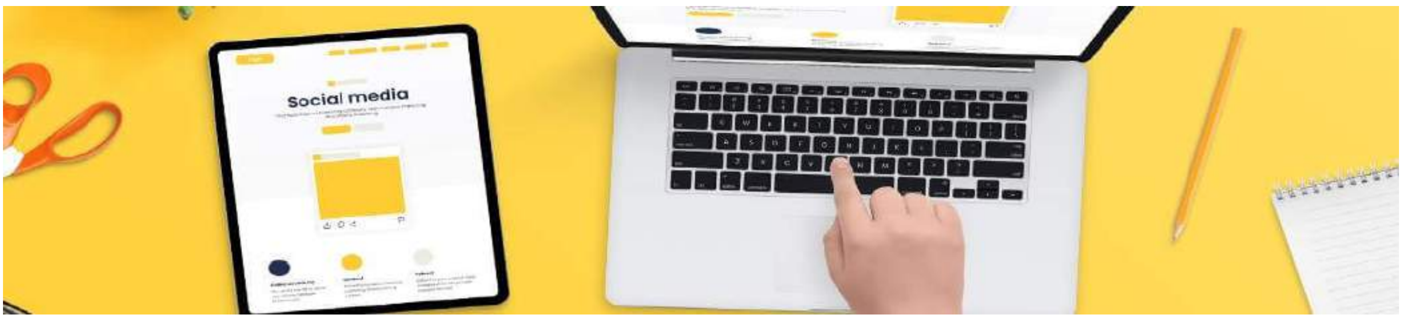
Getting Your WHOs to Invite You to Contact Them or Directly Book

The simplest way to do this is to have the button you've just directed them to press, link through to a basic landing page. You just need to ensure this landing page MATCHES your ad — carry the same look and language across. If you're going to send them a Lead Magnet, you obviously need to capture their email and you're likely interested to capture more contact details too, but note that for each additional field you mandate, you'll likely have a drop in leads — so this is definitely something to experiment with. If you're going to invite them to book directly for a Career Coaching session, embed Calendly or your booking system for your Career Coaches directly into your Landing Page.

HOT TIP

Your chosen platform likely has a database of ads past and present that you can review for inspiration and you can likely filter to see 'good' performing results by considering ads that have run for a long time (businesses would be unlikely to let a dud ad continue running – so over 30 days or so should highlight good performers). Google "<PLATFORM> ad library"

With these 4 key challenges SOLVED, you'll be on your way to launching your Paid Ads campaign on your chosen platform. Set a clear budget and measure not only the Cost Per Lead, but the Cost Per Acquisition i.e. how much it costs you for each student you enrol via Paid Ads. If you convert 1 out of every 10 leads and your Cost Per Lead is $50, then your Cost Per Acquisition is $500. Clearly you need to have a MAXIMUM Cost Per Lead threshold and ensure your ads aren't exceeding such and even if they're under your maximum, you should always be looking to optimise to further collapse your Cost Per Acquisition.



5 Influencers / Affliates

This is such a BIG opportunity, I've featured it as its own secret *(see secret 8. Connect and Conquer: Building Strategic Partnerships That Catapult Your RTO on page 35.)*

6 Customer / Student Referrals

When you do an amazing job, Referrals will just come automatically. No! Perhaps you'll get a couple, but for this to be a formidable part of your Student Acquisition strategy, you'll need to implement some deliberate activities to help 'grease the wheels'. However, I don't want to diminish the significance of doing an 'amazing job' — this is definitely a prerequisite to earn the trust of your customers/students. A HUGE part of this is setting expectations, you absolutely want to under promise and overdeliver.

The #2 secret in this eBook introduces 'Retention Marketing' in which it will challenge you to plot the Emotional Journey of your students as they interact with your brand. This will also provide a roadmap for when to ask for referrals, as there's clearly going to be windows of time that your Customers and Students are going to be most delighted, where there's a much higher probability of getting referrals.

- In your Enrolment process, ask the student to nominate who they'd like to do the course with, suggesting how they'll get better results when they do it with a friend, family member or colleague. This could be further incentivised by providing a 2-sided referral benefit – your enrolling student will get $100 credit off their tuition fees and their referral will enjoy a $100 discount too.

- Include a letter from your CEO and gift voucher in your Graduation Gift — the letter shares that students who graduate always hear from friends, family members or colleagues that they wish they had or could do the same course, so the Gift Voucher gives you an opportunity to be their hero and make this possible, by giving them the voucher they'll enjoy 15% off tuition fees, but it's only valid for 30 days after graduation, so they should look to give it and have that person take action ASAP.

- Ensure your Graduation Ceremonies are also referral events — students will naturally be proud to share their achievements, challenge them to invite at least 3 people they know who want or need to do a course you offer, because you'll be offering exclusive enrolment discounts on the evening. After the audience has seen the achievement and recognition of your new graduates, they'll instinctively want that for themselves, so make a compelling offer, but ensure it's got some scarcity attached to it (i.e. tonight only or for the next 24 hours only) to incentivise their action NOW.

- Use Referrals in negotiations.
  Perhaps you have a corporate client haggling you on price, instead of paying your $2,000 course tuition fee, they're suggesting they're only prepared to pay $1,800. Of course this can be approached in a myriad of ways, but consider Referrals — "...our course represents amazing value at $2,000, we're actually considering putting the price up next month, but we do really want to work with you so in exchange for an introduction to 3 HR Managers at other companies that you know I'd be happy to extend you a special price of $1,900."

- Alumni email newsletter.
  Keep in touch with your graduates, people are instinctively curious, so share stories of other graduates – what they're doing, where they're doing it, etc. Within these stories, readers may think 'oh, that's exactly what Roger keeps saying he wants to do' — every newsletter should include a referral call to action, so this reader is prompted to ensure Roger learns how you help your students and the amazing outcomes they realise. Trial whether a 1-way or 2-way referral incentive could work best to ensure you get good incoming referrals after each newsletter broadcast.

7 Marketing Agencies

Engaging an Agency to run paid ads or package and distribute content can be a great option, particularly if you're not confident on the strategies required to succeed with these tactics or you don't have an internal team to help you execute such tactics. Even if you do have some idea and have a team, Agencies can still play a valuable role in helping you learn new methods or new platforms. Perhaps you run a Facebook advertising program in-house, which produces a steady and predictable flow of leads to your sales team, but you want to scale this year and have determined your ideal student buyer is a regular TikTok user. You want to launch a TikTok advertising campaign but have zero experience with such.

Now you could jump in, going through all the trial and error to learn the platform yourself, which'll cost you a lot of time and money OR you could stand on the shoulders of someone who's done this successfully before. A prime example of where using an agency to learn a new platform can be very valuable.
However, Marketing Agencies and consultants are prolific, so even if you decide this is a strategy you want to pursue, a big challenge is selecting who you'd like to work with.

- Can you get Referrals from trusted associates or other RTO operators who will candidly share their experiences and the exact results they're achieving with the Agency?
- Who believes you're their ideal buyer i.e. which Agencies or Consultants are reaching out or targeting you? Are they doing a good job?
- When you research with very specific keywords, who wants you as a customer i.e. who is bidding the most on ad-words or investing in SEO to be the top organic results?

The above will help you produce a shortlist, then you obviously need to go through a procurement process.

- Do they have testimonies from happy RTO clients who've enjoyed very successful campaigns similar to what you want to run?
- Will they provide a referral to an RTO they're working with?
- Do they offer any guarantees?
- Will they show you results of active campaigns they're running - nothing cuts through all the hot air than logging into a performance dashboard to see the number of leads, cost per lead, etc?
- Can you afford them? You must calculate your maximum cost of student acquisition i.e. the MAXIMUM you can pay to get a new student enrolled. Is it foreseeable that the Agency you're considering can help you enrol students for less than this cost? For instance, if they're suggesting they can deliver leads at a cost per lead of $100 and based on their experience, you should be able to enjoy a 10% conversion rate from lead to enrolled student, then the cost of student acquisition is $1,000. Perhaps if you're an RTO promoting courses with VSL available, this may be fine, but if you're an RTO promoting a low-cost fee for service face to face course, perhaps this is too expensive. Any Agency or Consultant MUST be able to demonstrate they can help you enrol students for LESS THAN your maximum student acquisition cost, otherwise they need to be struck off your list.

8 Tenders

Participating in Tenders can be a strategy to boost your student acquisition, either directly or indirectly. Direct student acquisition via tenders is particularly relevant if Government or Large Enterprise are your ideal customers, as they're more likely to run a Tender process. Such tenders can come in all shapes and sizes, it could be a Regional Council wanting to run twenty staff through a

Diploma of Leadership and Management course or a State Government wanting to enrol hundreds of students into a Diploma of Project Management. Indirect student acquisition via tenders typically involves you tendering for exclusive rights to run a program or receive funding when you stage a training intervention for a specific cohort of students. Winning these tenders doesn't directly equal Enrolments, but it provides you the opportunity to then liaise with stakeholders on a more exclusive basis to acquire students.

Awareness of Tenders and screening their suitability is the first step. I'd suggest registering on various tender notification websites (Google for options), where you'll typically be invited to detail tenders you'd like to be alerted to – those that are aligned with your domain expertise or within the geographical bounds that your RTO operates, etc. Once your interest is piqued by a particular tender opportunity and you think you're the perfect RTO to win such, you need to put together your application. Remember, each tender is unique, and understanding the specific context and requirements of each is critical to success. Tailoring the approach to these unique aspects will make the proposal stand out. I'd strongly recommend seeking out the services of an experienced tender writing consultant if you haven't already had successful experience with such. Standing on their shoulders could make all the difference and save you from the pitfalls and heartache that can plague inexperience.

However, if you're keen to dive into writing your first response, please see below my hints and tips for writing successful tenders:

Understand the Requirements

Thoroughly read and understand the tender documentation. RTO leaders should ensure they know exactly what is being asked for, including any specific requirements or criteria that must be met. Misunderstanding the requirements can lead to a proposal that doesn't meet the client's needs.

Tailor the Proposal

Avoid generic proposals. Tailor each response to the specific tender, showing an understanding of the potential client's needs and how your RTO can meet these needs uniquely. This includes addressing the specific outcomes the tender is aiming to achieve.

Highlight Relevant Experience and Expertise

In the proposal, emphasize past successes and relevant experience. This could include case studies, testimonials, or detailed examples that demonstrate the RTO's capability to deliver the required services effectively.

Detail the Approach and Methodology

Clearly articulate how your RTO will deliver the services, including the methodology, tools, and resources. This demonstrates organization and preparedness, as well as a deep understanding of the project.

Price Competitively
While price shouldn't be the only factor, it is undoubtedly important. Ensure the pricing is competitive but also realistic. Provide a clear justification for the pricing, relating it to the value and quality of the services offered.

Focus on Quality and Value
Emphasize the quality of training and value for money. This could involve explaining the qualifications of trainers, the success rates of past courses, or innovative teaching methods.

Meet Compliance and Quality Standards
Ensure that the proposal meets all compliance and quality standards required in the tender. This could include national standards for vocational education and training.

Professional Presentation
Make sure the proposal is professionally presented. This includes clear formatting, no typos or grammatical errors, and using clear and concise language.

Build Relationships
Building relationships with potential clients can be advantageous. Understanding their long-term goals and how your RTO aligns with these can be a key differentiator.

Ask Questions
If anything in the tender document is unclear, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. This shows a commitment to understanding and meeting the client's needs fully.

Provide Evidence of Continuous Improvement
Show how your organization continually improves its processes and training programs. This could be through feedback mechanisms, quality assurance processes, or innovation in training delivery.

Strong Conclusion and Call to Action
End the proposal with a strong conclusion that summarizes the key benefits of choosing your RTO and include a clear call to action.

2. Beyond Enrolment:

Mastering the Art of Students Retention in Your RTO

Retention Marketing is grossly under-utilised and yet for many RTOs, revenue is tied to Student progression – be this to get to census dates or unit completions or course completions or even to sure up Referrals for many more Enrolments (because flakey students who are un-loved and drop-out 'aint referring you to their network).

So, the onus is on you to tap into what the 'emotional journey' is of your students throughout their entire experience with your brand. Clearly this journey is going to be very different for CRICOS vs online vs trainee or apprentice students, etc, but it will undoubtedly be punctuated by similar times of excitement, anxiety, doubt, remorse, resentment, stress, anger, happiness, etc. When might a student experience these emotions within their journey with you? Your opportunity is not to let this journey be an accident, rather a bespoke, curated experience where thought has been given to each interaction to accentuate the positive and mitigate the negative emotions the student might be feeling.

What's a student's experience with you at enrolment? Do they receive a Welcome Gift celebrating the choice they've made? Do they get an excited welcome call from their Trainer that can't wait to work with them? An email from the CEO thanking them for choosing your RTO?

What happens when your students complete a Unit of Competency? Do they receive a SMS with a funny GIF celebrating their achievement? Do you send their employer / supervisor an email (cc'ing the student) to share how amazing they're doing (think the pride they could feel when their employer acknowledges this in tomorrow's all hands meeting)?

What happens when your student completes assessment? Does it get marked within hours? If it's marked Not Yet Competent, do they get a call from their Trainer or Student Support to talk them through the feedback and encourage them?

What happens on the student's birthday?
Do they receive a gift from you?
Does their Trainer call them?

What happens when life events crop-up for Students? Do you have mechanisms in place to know this? Does Student Support connect with them weekly to 'check-in' and provide pastoral care, learning of any issues going on so they can provide support and concessions if required?

What happens when your student completes their qualification? Do they receive a 'graduation' gift from you? Do you have a 'graduation' ceremony? Do you publicly recognise them by tagging and posting photos of their graduation on your socials? Does their Trainer phone the Supervisor / Employer to exclaim how much of a pleasure it's been supporting their staff member? Do you award them a credential on LinkedIn?

Your student journey is undoubtedly punctuated by milestones and 'friction points', plot them all and then workshop what you could do to delight at each. Leverage automation and notification features within your Student Management System to mitigate the 'manual work' of executing these initiatives. Designed well, such practices can easily be integrated to ensure your Retention Marketing initiatives quickly form part of your standard operating procedures. Once a SOP, not only will it help you realise more unit completions, more course completions, more census dates realised, but it will provide an amazing opportunity for you to collect Referrals.

3. Building a Better RTO

Keys to Unlocking Superior Staff Efficiency and Boosting Morale

Labour costs are likely your largest expense line item in your monthly PandL – so staff efficiency is paramount to profitability. Furthermore, it's tough for any business to thrive if there's a revolving door of staff coming and going — RTOs are complex, so retaining and compounding institutional knowledge is super important. Cultivating a really healthy team with strong morale must form part of your strategy if you're serious about skyrocketing profits in your RTO.

But these aren't two disparate, disconnected opportunities — they're inextricably linked and we're going to dive into strategies that can deliver on both!

We've all heard the saying "people don't leave companies, they leave bad managers" and a percentage of Managers may be lacking interpersonal skills where this is true, but I'd suggest they more often leave Managers enforcing accountability to tasks they don't want to do. So, the real problem is the job, or specifically, what tasks make up the 'job'.

In Australia we typically have 'stacked' job descriptions — particularly in SME businesses, because the cost of labour is so significant we feel we need to cram so many tasks and expectations on any FTE to justify the salary. But this is a big problem.

My business, PeoplePartners, runs on a system called EOS (Entrepreneurial Operating System — you should definitely GOOGLE it and consider for your RTO) and within such is a basic tool for evaluating staff called the People Analyzer. It's used to evaluate each staff members alignment to our values, plus whether they 'GWC their role'. G stands for 'Gets it'; W for 'Wants it'; and C for 'Capacity'. Job description stacking sets up staff to NOT GWC their role — they might struggle to get the breadth of responsibilities, they may grow to resent and thus not want all the responsibilities, they mightn't have capacity for such a broad role OR they wrestle with a combination of all three. So, if you have staff not GWCing their role, either they're super un-happy or you're un-happy or both — any which way, this signals dysfunction and impending resignation/termination. The revolving door is spinning, and another chunk of institutional knowledge is about to walk out the door.

So how do we stop this door spinning and boost morale?

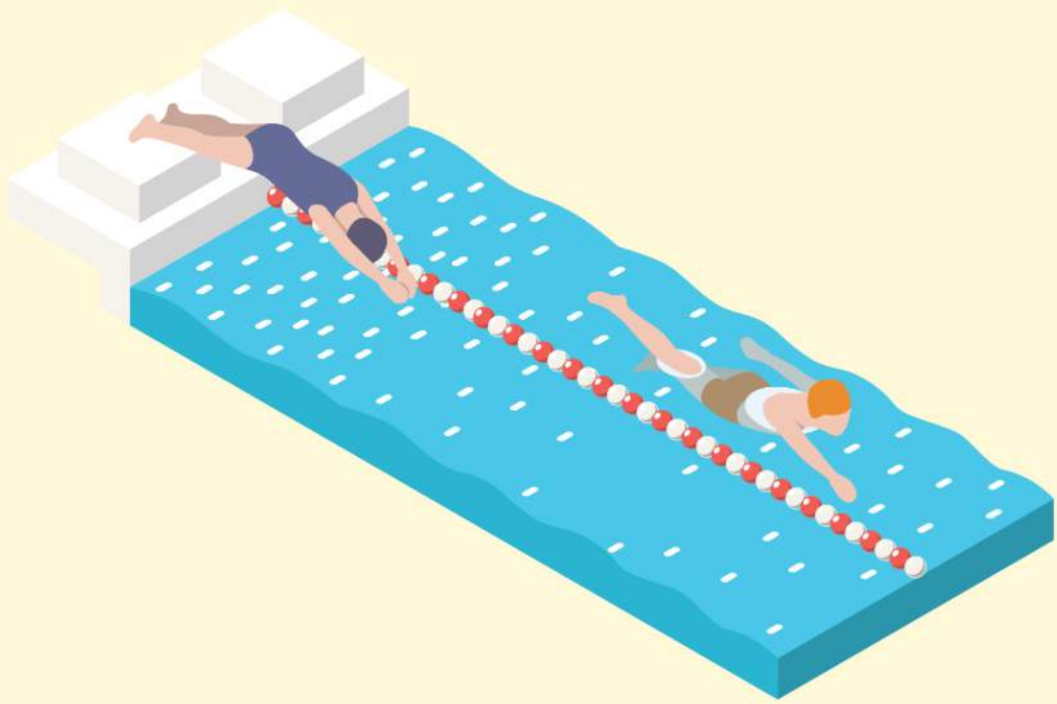
We need to help staff operate in their passion and strength zone for as high a percentage of their workday as possible. This requires 'un-stacking' of job descriptions and likely the complete re-engineering of roles within your RTO. We firstly need to do a full task audit of what each role currently does. At a topline, you want to try to separate high attention to detail tasks from those that require high interpersonal skills. Within these two buckets further separate tasks into groupings that will align with typical skillsets. You'll notice even at the topline level, you have many tasks that are currently part of 1 role in different buckets and this is starting to highlight the problem — if you have someone with high interpersonal skills, trying to do lots of tasks that require high attention to detail, or vice versa, then trouble is brewing!

For example, your RTO likely has an accountant or bookkeeper and because they're in 'finance', part of their job is to make accounts receivable phone calls i.e. chasing-up money. Typically, someone in Finance is drawn to such because they have a high attention to detail to balance the books, find rounding errors, tally timesheets, reconcile invoices, etc. This directly contrasts with the high interpersonal skills required to make outbound accounts receivable calls – often requiring overcoming objections, challenging excuses, firmly requesting action, etc. I pretty much guarantee if your RTO has Finance staff responsible for outbound accounts receivable calls, they hate it, leave it to last, constantly "run out of time" before getting to it or even tell you it was done, but they've in fact just sent another email. When this task falls under the spotlight, the Manager will clearly demand higher accountability because the Finance staff member isn't doing this task well. This'll start to introduce friction and resentment on one or both sides. And all of a sudden, we're sliding down the slippery slope towards resignation/termination.

But it doesn't have to be this way – Finance just shouldn't be expected to make outbound phone calls, remove the task from the job description, remove the friction and allow the Finance team member to thrive in what they love – numbers and detailed stuff. Of course, the outbound calls need to be made, your RTOs cashflow demands it, the task just needs to be aggregated into a role full of other tasks also requiring high interpersonal skills, so making such calls is a natural fit. However this is just one example, the same realities are likely coursing through every other role in your RTO: do your Trainers hate marking; are you constantly battling with your Sales team to log activities in the CRM; are certain Managers presenting ordinary, subjective Management Reports in your monthly meeting; etc? All these tasks are critical, you're likely just asking the wrong people to complete them. Utopia is that you have someone in each newly defined role, who is amazing at every task within their new job description, and they love doing every task. Staff morale and institutional knowledge retention is directly corelated to how close you can get to this utopia.

When presenting this topic in a workshop, it's normally at this point I get asked "this idea to segment and re-arrange tasks sounds great, but I can't afford the extra head count to pick-up all the responsibilities we're trimming off my existing roles". So, I want to assure you that this process doesn't have to add any headcount to your RTO, in fact it routinely can lead to a reduction in headcount. How?

Well, think of two swimmers lining-up on the starter blocks for a 100m freestyle race. One swimmer is amazing at swimming and absolutely loves it, the other is terrible at freestyle and hates swimming. There's no question who is winning this race, the only question is how much quicker the amazing swimmer will be. And this is the potential for efficiency in your RTO – if tasks are assigned to staff who are amazing at the tasks and love doing them, how much **quicker** will they complete them?



This staff efficiency can be further doubled down on through segmentation. You can consider what's an 'inside' (in office or in front of computer) vs an 'outside' (in field, client face to face meetings, in classroom, etc.) task OR what's a 'front of house' (anything involving client contact) vs a 'back of house' (everything not involving client contact) task. Segmenting through this lens can perfectly set you up to outsource and offshore roles, which is something PeoplePartners specialises in helping RTOs do, because it can introduce the ultimate in staff efficiency, saving 70% on labour costs.

Pairing the efficiency and morale boosting impact of re-engineering roles for your onshore team to operate exclusively in their passion + strength zone, with well-designed offshore roles is the ultimate secret tactic that will skyrocket your RTO's profits ! Subject to the size of your RTO, this tactic can add hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars to your bottom line.

Let's dive into an example of how we helped one particular RTO re-engineer their whole workforce, with changes touching every department. This RTO may look like yours so you'll be able to draw direct parallels, but even if it doesn't, hopefully you'll see how the principles could be applied to your RTO and the opportunities that could be realised. This RTO delivered Traineeships and Apprenticeships, so the majority of their training was delivered in the field, not on campus.

Department	Training
Originally	• 8 Full Time Trainers • All driving around in cars – going from client to client to train their Trainees and Apprentices on a periodic basis (every 5 weeks) • Session duration + travel time, admin and marking meant each Trainers constraint was ~3 sessions per day. The content of many of these sessions was the same, but obviously delivered across different locations by the 8 Trainers • Because of these 3 sessions per day constraint, Trainers could only support 70 students each. Higher loads just stretched the gap between sessions, so slowed down the rate of unit completions per student (which was the economic driver for the RTO)
Post Re-engineering	• 2 Field Based Assessors – driving around to visit all students who've completed their online work and thus qualified for observational assessment. Every visit produces unit completions • 2 Inside Trainers – each running 5 online workshops per day, so 10 workshops per day available for Trainees and Apprentices to be booked into. • 2 Student Support Officers – monitoring progression of every student via confirming when logged into LMS, every time assessment attempted and proactively reaching out to support and encourage. Student Support also responsible for booking all students into workshops if they don't self-book + vetting all submitted assessment before it goes to the Marker • 1 Part Time Marker – responsible for ALL marking
Change	• More unit completions so a 15% increase in revenue per month • Agile workforce with redundancy across roles • Staff operating in their passion and strength zone – with segmentation enabling distinct roles aligning with different skills / preferences • Reduction of 6 company cars for a saving of $90,000 • Reduction of 1.5 FTE Headcount for a saving of $120,000 • Offshoring the 2 students support roles for a saving of $112,000

Department	Sales
Originally	• 5 Full Time Business Development Managers (BDMs) • All field based, so all issued company cars and driving around visiting prospects + clients each day • BDMs prosecute both New Business and Account Manage existing clients • BDMs do their own lead gen, prospecting and are responsible to ensure everything is logged in the CRM
Post Re-engineering	• 1 BDM – driving around completing all set new business appointments • 1 Sales Coordinator – owns the diary of the BDM, responsible for confirming all appointments, doing all appointment follow-through, recording everything in CRM • 1 Account Manager – providing full support and care to all existing Customers + checking if they need to enrol new Trainees and Apprentices or if they have Referrals to friends / colleagues • 1 Lead Generator – cold prospecting, warm prospecting, following-up all Referrals to secure appointments for BDM
Change	• Doubling new business appointments • Staff operating in their passion zone – BDMs notoriously hate logging activities in CRM, they no longer must • Reduction in 1 FTE headcount for a saving of $120,000 • Reduction of 4 company cars for a saving of $60,000 • Sales Coordinator, Account Manager and Lead Generator roles all offshored for a saving of $255,000

Department	Marketing
Originally	• 2 Marketing Assistants • Marketing activities really just capturing activities of RTO for posting on social • Both Marketing Assistants did a bit of everything – copy, content, design, etc • Marketing didn't have explicit KPIs or expectations
Post Re-engineering	• 1 Performance Marketer – charged initially with executing Google AdWords and FB campaigns • 1 Content Lead responsible for setting the brand content strategy, setting the posting schedule and producing all copy and design briefs • 1 Multimedia Designer responsible for designing all ads, landing pages, content posts, brochures and video editing • 1 Marketing Assistant responsible for all social engagement across platforms + maintaining currency of website
Change	• In the 2nd month the team generated 10 appointments for the BDM and 15 direct student enquiries • All team members were 'specialised' and passionate about the tasks within their role • Whilst the team doubled in size from 2 to 4, all 4 new roles were offshored for a saving of $30,000

Department	Operations
Originally	• 3 admin staff worked across Enrolments, student enquiries, answering calls, liaising with AASNs, issuing certs and SOAs, AVETMISS reporting and resolving data errors, etc. • Attrition amongst these 3 admin roles had been the most destabilising – with no tenure longer than 6 months in the preceding 2 years • Constant attrition contributed to routine loss of institutional knowledge, so student records were a bit of a mess, and the student management system was riddled with miscategorised students, students who hadn't been cancelled properly, etc.
Post Re-engineering	• 1 Office Manager – a senior, experienced professional capable of rolling-up their sleeves to sort out the mess. Paid nearly double any prior admin role paid within the RTO to attract a high calibre person + aid retention • Rationalised to 2 Admin Assistants to support the Office Manager – but both resigned in quick succession because they were change adverse, so were replaced with 1 offshore Admin Assistants who had rich Axcelerate experience (this was the Student Management System of the RTO) • All existing student enquiries were now picked-up directly by the new Student Support Officers in the Training team
Change	• Doubling new business appointments • Staff operating in their passion zone – BDMs notoriously hate logging activities in CRM, they no longer must • Reduction in 1 FTE headcount for a saving of $120,000 • Reduction of 4 company cars for a saving of $60,000 • Sales Coordinator, Account Manager and Lead Generator roles all offshored for a saving of $255,000

Department	Finance
Originally	• The RTO just had 1 bookkeeper charged with all finance functions of the business e.g. Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, Payroll, monthly BASs, monthly management reporting, etc. • The role was BIG for just 1 person and the individual in the role was constantly stressed • Payroll had been late a couple of times and receivables had a swag over 60 and 90 days
Post Re-engineering	• Initially the RTO had no intention of re-engineering their Finance function, however during implementing other changes, the incumbent Finance team member had a medical emergency and was out of the office. It highlighted how vulnerable the RTO was, with no redundancy in this critical business function • After the medical emergency, the incumbent staff member advised they wanted to drop back to 2 days per week • 2 accountants were onboarded to cover the workload that couldn't obviously be completed in 2 days, and this also provided redundancy, with now 3 staff in the Finance team • New accountants' responsibilities were segmented: (i) Accounts Payable and Payroll; (ii) Accounts Receivable, BAS and Mgt Reports
Change	• Both new Accountants were offshore, so the RTO was able to build redundancy in their Finance team by expanding to 3 staff, yet were able to do so with the exact same labour budget • Incumbent bookkeeper was far happier as the extra staff collapsed their responsibilities and they were no longer so stressed • New accountants quickly got receivables under control (bringing in a chunk of extra cash which was appreciated) + ensured Payroll was never late

The benefits to the RTO through this Workforce Re-Engineering intervention were significant.

- Over $800,000 in direct expense savings
- Each role deliberately crafted to allow the staff member to operate in their strength and passion zone to aid job satisfaction and support long term tenure
- A sales team transitioned from relying on 'gun BDMs' to a system producing predictable results and helping the RTO scale significantly
- A training team delivering a better student experience, whilst producing more revenue and an agile structure to handle the impending growth
- A marketing team not just focussed on the vanity of posting activities to socials, but with KPIs to deliver appointments and student Enrolments
- A stable and solid Operations Team, keeping the house in order and ensuring all records and data are accurate, ultimately aiding the RTO be audit ready
- A Finance Team with redundancy and reliably delivering on all the critical finance functions

****If this tactic excites you, check-out peoplepartnersbpo.com/rto for case studies, information on roles, costs, etc. The Philippines has tens of thousands of professional staff with rich RTO and tertiary education experience – you likely need some of them working in your RTO!*

4. From Data to Dollars:

Leveraging Data-Driven Decision Making to Unleash Your RTO's Potential

Your RTO has lots of data flowing through it and no, I'm not just meaning AVETMISS data. RTOs routinely have more of an issue with indigestion – so much data they're not clear on what to look at or what it means. Enrolment and student data floating around in the Student Management System; marketing data in each of your advertising platforms; sales data in your CRM; financial data in your accounting software; etc. If this sounds familiar, you have an opportunity to implement advanced analytics to track sales, marketing, student performance, financial metrics, and operational efficiency.

Insights gained from such analytics can be used to optimize course offerings, pricing strategies, and marketing efforts for maximum profitability. Management guru Peter Drucker is famously quoted suggesting that “What gets measured, gets managed”. So, this is a big clue of where to start if you’re wrestling with indigestion -> where does your RTO most need improvement? Shining a spotlight on the area will yield improvement. Once set-up, you can then move to the next area needing most improvement or that is the most significant constraint in the RTO. Building your analytics dashboard in such an organic fashion allows you to systematically choose the order of the most important items you need to measure. Too often when RTOs are wrestling with indigestion of too much data and uncertainty of what and how to measure, they try to build an analytics dashboard featuring dozens of dashlets straight out of the gate – just moving the indigestion problem along into their dashboard, with so much displayed, no-one is clear what to focus on. When dozens of dashlets are built, they’ll also invariably have issues – so you’ll spend the next 6 months trying to correct, optimise and improve it so the presented information is reliable. This delay for meaningful data can also risk undermining your analytics dashboard because it gets written off early as being inaccurate or unreliable.

So, if we’re clear on the highest priority of what we’re going to measure, we then need to consider how we’ll measure and display such. The most obvious place to start is within your incumbent systems – be it your CRM, Student Management System, etc. Routinely these will have some native analytics features and capacity to build a dashboard to which you can add dashlets to. Alternatively, there’s dozens of cloud-based analytics platforms available on the market you could subscribe to and connect your data sources or of course there’s always the humble spreadsheet you could settle for too. The spreadsheet may be a great option initially because it’s not about having the world’s Sexiest Dashboard, you just need to get started in measuring and ensuring what you’re measuring is meaningful, before you consign it to a more sophisticated dashboard. I’ve certainly seen organisations theorise some amazing dashlets only to spend a chunk of time building them and realise the insights aren’t as valuable as they hoped. The spreadsheet can avoid this waste and then once measures are confirmed as valuable, you can then coordinate for them to be moved into an analytics dashboard.

So, if you've now decided what you're measuring and are clear on how and where, the final piece is ensuring you're leveraging the insights to make decisions. This step is so important because if you haven't had reliable, good data available at your fingertips before, you wouldn't have involved it in your decision-making processes. But all of a sudden you do, and ignorance isn't bliss, so you want to really take it in and understand the story it's telling you. Perhaps you now know objectively there's a stark contrast in the Cost of Student Acquisition from your differing marketing tactics; one salesperson is grossly underperforming compared to the balance; a Trainer hasn't yielded a unit completion in 6 weeks; 12% of your students didn't even log into your LMS last month; your general expenses jumped by over 5% last month; etc. Decisions now need to be made based on this information and actions formed to ensure improvement.

With valuable, accurate and accessible data analytic dashboards now coursing through your RTO, Managers who've been empowered to make good decisions from this data and a team now clear on what your RTO is measuring (thus where they need to perform), your RTO is primed to enjoy vastly improved profitability.

5. The Scalability Code:

How Leveraging Technology Will Transform Your RTO

"Don't throw labour at the problem or issue, firstly throw systems, technology and automation"

Is something I routinely challenge Leaders I work with to do. Too often as organisations scale, cracks appear, so we urgently wheel in a body to hold the pieces together. Before long, the headcount in the organisation has swelled disproportionately to growth, because part of it at least is linked to problems and issues, not growth. The swollen headcount creates yet more complexity for management and can even spill into management when incumbent Leaders feel more managers are needed to wrangle all the extra bodies. Scaling organisations often seem to have less inhibition about hiring extra staff, than they do for adding an extra software subscription license. To be clear, I'd recommend both come under scrutiny, but one of these is an order of magnitude (sometimes hundreds of folds) more costly to the organisation, so clearly deserves a higher level of restraint.

Properly diagnosing the challenge or issue is often the first step, so we know what we're really trying to solve with our intervention. But this intervention is going to be limited by our knowledge and experience — super difficult for us to prescribe a software integration, a workflow automation, a new piece of software, etc, if you're oblivious to what's available.

"I'm not techie" can't ever be something that escapes your lips, because every business in this day and age needs technology. This doesn't mean you have to be a super user, but at a minimum you have to know what is possible and available. Embrace technology, so if it's your passion zone — awesome, your curiosity will likely send you down rabbit holes that'll equip you well with knowledge of what's possible, but if not, you must carve out some deliberate time to learn. YouTube videos, LinkedIn, PD workshops, software vendors marketing into the RTO industry, etc, are all good places to start.

Perhaps you're thinking "my RTO has a cloud-based Student Management System (SMS) with an LMS integrated, so we're all over it!." Having a software platform is just the first step. Fully leveraging and optimising said platform is what's required to efficiently scale.

Review your RTO's processes involving the software, likely starting at enrolment — do you have a website plugin, integrated merchant facilities or digital enrolment forms with eSign configured so that data flows directly into your SMS with no manual data entry? Are USIs automatically validated? Do you have an automated email sequence to re-request the USI if it's not valid that doesn't require any manual work by your admin team? On enrolment, does the student automatically receive a copy of your Student Handbook, along with any instructions of how to access the LMS? Do you provide an instructional video of how to log into the LMS and navigate around or does someone have to manually show a student how to do so? Do results automatically flow from your LMS to your SMS without any manual data entry? Does your Trainer manually reach out to book a session with your new student or are they automatically sent a Calendly link to book in with their Trainer at a time convenient to them? Do you have reports highlighting any delinquent student behaviour i.e. haven't logged into the LMS in greater than X days or unit not completed in Y days? Do these students receive automatic notifications encouraging them to jump into the LMS to continue their studies or a reminder that they need to submit assessment or does a staff member have to manually phone them? Ask your Account Manager or the Customer Success team, whether this is Axcelerate, Vettrak, Tutis, etc, what's the best examples of automations, integrations or optimisations they've seen? Do they have any case studies they can point you to? Would they be open to introducing you to the RTO owner who they think has the most 'pimped out' set-up of their software that you could interview?

The above questions are just the tip of the iceberg though — such a review could equally be conducted across your marketing, finance, sales, compliance and resource development teams. Your role in Leading a scaling RTO is to constantly interrogate processes and agitate for further optimisation and automation. EdTech is a thriving area and with AI permeating all aspects of the industry, it's currently super dynamic, so you need to plug into good professional development opportunities to stay abreast of what's possible so you can really embrace technology to help you RTO scale efficiently and profitably.

6. Profit Multipliers:

Game-Changing Revenue Diversification Tactics for Your RTO

It may seem pretty obvious that skyrocketing profits in your RTO could be aided by new revenue streams beyond your traditional course fees. Of course, the ways you could do this are diverse and extensive, including offering specialized training modules, online courses, corporate training programs, consultancy services, developing educational products and resources, etc, etc.

More entrepreneurs die of indigestion than starvation; chase two rabbits, catch neither; you can't ride two horses with one behind; spreading yourself too thin is like trying to butter too much bread with too little butter...the metaphors are pretty cautionary on this topic. They all obviously emphasize the idea of focusing on one task at a time to ensure quality and success, rather than diluting your efforts across multiple objectives and failing to achieve any of them effectively. So, it's really important to not read 'diversify revenue streams' as 'start whole new business' and it's equally important to make important strategic decisions about what diversification you pursue.

It's critical to leverage your RTO's existing strengths and market position. Begin by conducting a thorough market analysis to identify unmet needs your clients or students have. This could involve direct feedback from current students, surveys of clients or an examination of trends in vocational education and training. By aligning new offerings with your core competencies and your existing market, you not only capitalize on your established reputation but also ensure a smoother integration of new services or products.

Technology could play a pivotal role in enabling you to expand your RTO's revenue streams efficiently. If you're delivering face to face, could you recycle your learning materials to build an online learning course, making it more accessible and scalable to a National or even an international audience? Perhaps you're still able to adequately assess online to ensure the course retains its Nationally Recognised status, but if not, is there still a market for it to be non-Nationally Recognised i.e. just a great course for learning the subject matter? Could the course be ranged on some of the

MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) marketplaces e.g. Udemy? Consider the specific needs of your online learners, the types of courses that best lend themselves to online delivery, and how you can maintain the quality and engagement levels of traditional face-to-face training.

Partnerships and collaborations offer another avenue for new revenue growth without overextending your resources because routinely your partner will deliver the product or service. Saving on this complexity can be a significant advantage and help reduce the 'metaphor risk' I identified earlier.

So, who else wants your students or clients as customers for their business? If you're in the Traineeship or Apprenticeship market or coordinate work placements, you likely already do Employer Resource Assessments or workplace assessments, giving you open access to the facilities of countless businesses — what do they need? Once you've identified what and have an appropriate partnership in place, framing a conversation about such items, can easily be initiated by simply including a question in your workplace assessment. For example, asking when their last office/shop fit out was completed or what level of insurance coverage they have, will open a discussion which could qualify them to be referred to your new partner. Typically, via such a strategy, you'll earn commissions on all sales your partner realises off the back of your Referrals, so clearly higher ticket items will yield you more revenue — so the example above of an office/shop refit or financial services, could be quite lucrative.

However, diversification could be 'closer to home' and even just involve innovation in or with your existing product offering. This could mean developing micro-credentials or short courses from your existing resources that address niche skills or emerging industry trends. Such offerings can attract a different demographic of learners and open up new revenue streams. They also provide an opportunity for your RTO to lead in specific areas of expertise, further differentiating your organization in a competitive market. If you're currently doing work-based training, employer sponsored training or have students undertaking work experience in businesses – could other staff in these businesses benefit from your micro-credentials? Perhaps as a bonus, you could offer un-restricted access to your entire catalogue of micro-credentials for 90 days for these businesses. During this time, they'll hopefully realise the amazing value and want to build your micro-credentials into their ongoing professional development strategies. In this scenario, you'd transition them to a monthly subscription model at the conclusion of their 90-day free bonus and so have just secured a new ongoing monthly source of revenue.

Lastly, while diversification is important, it's vital to maintain a clear focus on your value proposition and ensure that any new revenue strategy aligns with your mission and vision. Regularly review and assess the performance of new initiatives against set objectives and be prepared to make adjustments as necessary. This adaptive approach will help ensure that your efforts to diversify not only contribute to your RTO's financial health but also enhance its overall impact and sustainability in the long term.

7. Government Funding and Registrations:

The Winning Combo for Your RTO's Growth

Outsiders of the industry are routinely pretty oblivious to the diverse range of areas RTOs can operate in and across. Of course, this applies to scope of registration and geography, but also what types of registration and Government funding contracts you might enjoy. CRICOS, VSL or State Training Authority contracts are all examples. Now I'm not going to get into the politics or merits of the programs or dive into the crazy qualifying/application criteria some of them or individual States have. But I will say that under the banner of tactics to skyrocket profits in your RTO, you need to consider each of these opportunities. And you need to consider for 2 reasons: (i) the opportunity to generate new revenue and profitability via trading with these registrations and contracts; and (ii) the ability for these registrations and contracts to inflate the value of your RTO.

Clearly realising value through your RTO is paramount, because at some point you'll either want or need to sell. So spiking profitability to yield better EBITDA multipliers and the inflationary impact of additional registrations and funding contracts, can both contribute significantly to the valuation of your RTO. Let's say you're targeting an exit value of $2,000,000 but your business broker has suggested that your EBITDA multiplier currently only projects a value of $1,500,000. You could stick your head down, work phenomenally hard for the next year or two, to increase your EBITDA by ~33% to get to the $2M valuation OR the broker has suggested if you had CRICOS registration, along with your current domestic EBITDA they could sell it for $2M. Now I'll leave it with you to consider which is the best path to realise the goal, my point is to highlight the tactic and that as an RTO owner aiming to skyrocket profits, there are some strategic choices that can be made.

Now you may be reading and thinking "that's interesting, but I'm not interested in value boosting right now because an exit isn't on my radar – I just want $$$s" and of course the tactic of additional registrations and funding contracts can help deliver this. However, they do each come with additional complexity and compliance obligations, let alone some lengthy steps to prepare for application. State Training Authority contract requirements may predicate you having to move your principal place of business or enrol, plus train, students in the State for years just to meet qualifying criteria.

I recommend following a One-Three-Two strategy:
(One) is your current state, detailing exactly what and where your RTO is currently;
(Three) is your future state if you had the specific registration or contract; and
(Two) is everything in-between, what you'd have to do to get from your current state to the future state of having the contract/registration.

Obviously, you must do steps Three and Two for each contract or registration. Is Three compelling and exciting? Does Two seem realistic and achievable? Answering these questions will help you determine if you want, or even can, apply for State Training Authority contracts, VSL, CRICOS, etc. Beyond determining if you want and can, you should also use this process to prioritise based on how compelling Three is and/or how easy Two is. Prioritising is important, because applying and then commencing multiple new registrations or contracts concurrently can cause some major organisational indigestion (read as breaking staff and getting resignations ☹).

OK, so you've determined what you can and want to pursue, plus you've prioritised – now all that's left to do is cascade all the steps and actions from Two and manage their completion ahead of any deadlines. Taking this methodical and strategic process is your best way to help realise extra $$$s in your RTO from new registrations and contracts.

8. Connect and Conquer:

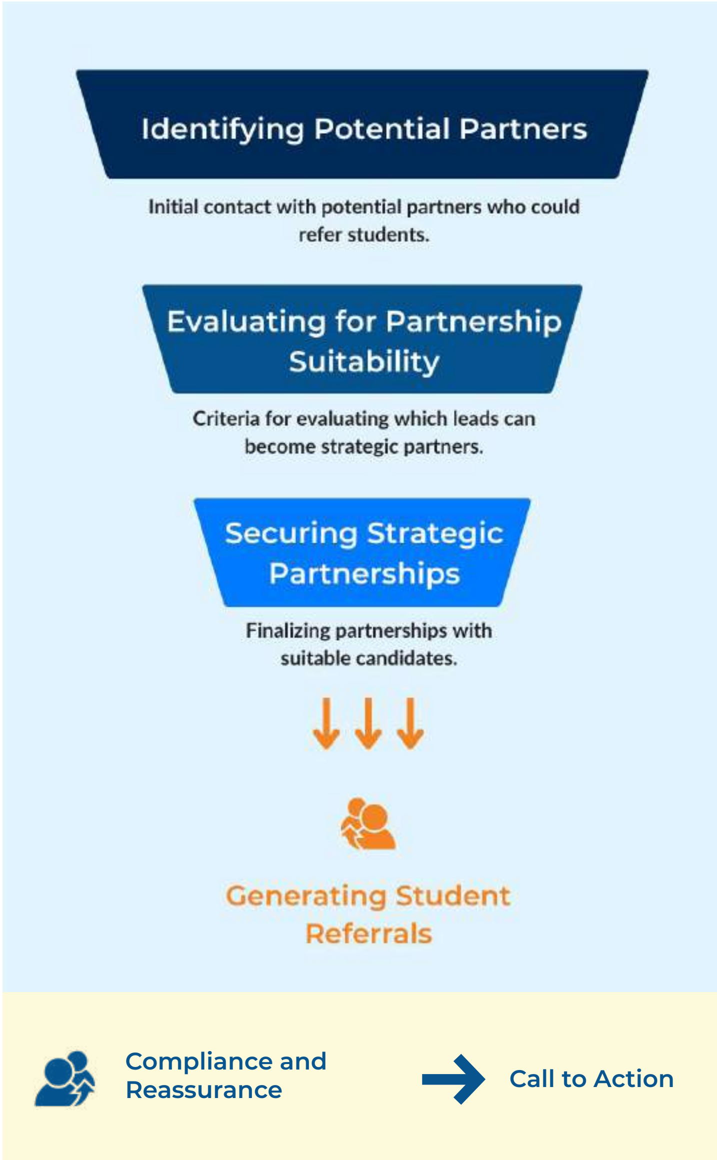
Building Strategic Partnerships That Catapult Your RTO

Who has your students? I'm not talking your competitors, I mean outside of RTOs. What other organisations or businesses have a warm audience FULL of people 'like' your students? Think about your best current or completed students:

- **What else are they buying?**
  — **Who is selling that?**
- **Where do they go? — What businesses are in those surrounding areas?**
- **What do they like to do? — Who provides these services?**
- **What types of businesses do they work for?**
- **What kinds of jobs do they have?**

You need to create a list of all these businesses. Chances are they'll likely fall into these categories: software; products; equipment; services; groups they belong to; events they attend; and employers. Once you have a list, the next step is to engage them to make an offer.

The pursuit of Strategic Partners should ultimately follow a similar process and trajectory to a normal sales process — your list is all the 'leads' at the top of the funnel and you want to prosecute them down the funnel to qualify some as new Strategic Partners. Ultimately, we want these Partners to provide us Student Referrals. Now I already feel some of you tensing-up, thinking "is this code for 3rd party arrangements, because they freak me out" — well it may or may not subject to the nuances of any arrangements or inducements. I'm certainly NOT proposing any non-compliance with ASQA or State Training Authority standards, but the purpose of this guide is to skyrocket profits in your RTO and this strategy WORKS, so you owe it to yourself to explore. My experience has shown some RTOs are all over 3rd parties, no problem and others are verging on scared, seeing it akin to painting a target on their back which says, 'Audit Me'. Talk to your Compliance Consultant – get peace of mind and then take massive action to get this Tactic producing for your RTO.



OK, so now we've set aside the whole 3rd Party obstacle, let's get back to what you're going to propose to this list of prospective partners. Now, as we described – your ultimate is obviously students you can immediately enrol, but this isn't going to be realistic for most prospective partners, because you can't make them enough of an expert to navigate the nuances of RTO land and your Compliance Consultant is likely going to be happier when you control a chunk of the process within your RTO anyway 😊. So, the step down from 'students you can immediately enrol' is student leads.

So, to generate student leads, you can either invite your Strategic Partner to engage their warm audience with your core offer i.e. courses your RTO offers and the benefits these will yield OR with a lead magnet you've developed that will be attractive to their audience.

(i) **Core Offer**

the easiest option, your Partner will simply advertise or promote your courses. Let's consider what this could look like across the Categories we introduced above:

a. Software

suppose you deliver the CIV and Diploma of Project Management, you're aware that many staff initially get pulled into a project, where they determine they really enjoy it or see a rich career path. It's a natural extension they'll be interested to learn more and expand their skillset in this area. So, what if you approached Project Management software vendors about advertising on their login page or including promotional copy in their New User confirmation email? All staff being pulled into a project that use this software, will be introduced to your brand and have the opportunity to click-through to learn more.

b. Products

suppose you deliver apprenticeships for traditional trades, but recognise that many staff start in the industry as a TA or Trade Assistant. They're not yet qualified in the trade so are a prospective student, who may definitely want to progress to get qualified. These TAs will firstly need to buy workwear before commencing on-site, so what if you approached the 7 workwear retailers in your geographical area about shopping bag stuffing a flyer about your Apprenticeship programs with every purchase in their stores? The bonus of this strategy is that qualified Trades will also receive (they'll likely need to bring on Apprentices at some stage). So now you'll have all new TAs + qualified trades aware of your RTO and reminded of such every time they purchase some new workwear, safety boots, etc.

c. Equipment

perhaps you deliver courses in Automotive and Panel Beating. You've noted just walking through your college carpark, that many of your current students have modified cars – they're car enthusiasts. So, you have an opportunity to contact the 13 auto parts and equipment retailers in your area to discuss advertising opportunities where you'll promote other enthusiasts convert their passion into a career through getting qualified at your RTO.

d. Services

Fitness and Personal Training quals are you RTOs specialty, so advertising within gyms within your local area is obvious, but you're wanting more leads. Sports Physios are typically treating people with injuries, that perhaps could have been avoided through a better conditioning program. An injury and recovery from such could prove a powerful motivator to help people avoid sustaining such, so your approach to all the Physios in your area and the subsequent advertising they agree to display for you should feature such messaging.

e. Groups they belong to

you deliver the CIV and Diploma in Youth Work and via a recent student survey, learned that over 80% of your current students regularly attend Church. Your opportunity is to contact every local church in your catchment to discuss meeting with their pastors/ministers/priests to make them aware of your RTO + coordinate to display posters and brochures somewhere prominently within the church.

f. Events they attend

as an RTO specialising in Hair, Beauty and Make-up you identify that your most passionate current students are competing or previously have competed in beauty pageants. You can contact local pageant organisers and National organisers to see if you can advertise or participate in their state-based heats and finals. Not only will competitors become brand aware of your RTO, but so will the audience who are likely full of your prospective students too.

g. Employers

First Aid courses are your RTOs core offering and you're aware many of your students get qualified because it's a mandatory obligation for their job. Updating your Enrolment Form to ask 'Are you undertaking this course as a mandatory job requirement – Yes / No', 'If Yes, who is your Employer', provides you a lead source of many Employers in your catchment area that are mandating such, so you can contact all of them to explore advertising opportunities to their staff to make it easier for them to complete this mandatory requirement.

(ii) **Lead Magnet**

something you develop specifically to inject somewhere into the processes of your Strategic Partner. However, as an RTO, you likely have SO much valuable content you can use as or in a Lead Magnet, so chances are you won't have to 'develop' as much as other businesses. Again, let's consider some examples across the Categories, remembering these are examples – clearly your RTO could specialise in different areas, so use the premise behind these examples to consider what it could look like for your RTO:

a. Software

Project Management software vendor wants all users to understand how to easily use their software so they're getting the most value and not peppering Customer Support with endless tickets. Their pain point is that many users don't have Project Management experience so don't understand foundational methodology. Your opportunity as an RTO specialising in Project Management is to slice-up a super valuable 'Project Management 101' course from your existing learning materials. Critical this course is amazing despite the fact you're going to give it away for FREE because it's essentially your advertising billboard for prospective students and even the companies they work for. The software vendor can then advertise that each software licensee is entitled to a FREE Project Management 101 course valued at $399, so it increases the perceived value of their software license. This is a win-win and has the opportunity to be a self-perpetuating Lead Magnet because it strongly benefits the Software Vendor, the Software users and ultimately you get every enrolee as a lead. Most enrolees won't be qualified, but their actions in undertaking the 101 courses are a clear signal they're interested in Project Management, so should be very strong leads for your Sales Team.

b. Products

as an RTO specialising in First Aid, you're learning content literally contains life changing information. Now developing a FREE online course (just via splicing up your current learning resources i.e. negligible new work) for a First aid kit retailer to give away with every purchase to increase the perceived value of their kits is an obvious opportunity, but might not produce a huge volume of leads. What other products sold in your areas use could lead to a first aid emergency? How about a pool maintenance shop? You've likely got a few of them in your catchment area – they sell chemicals, which improper use could require first aid AND all their products are used in a pool which is a drowning threat. Could you develop Lead Magnets involving stickers, posters and brochures sharing genuine and amazing first aid learning? These could also have a QR code embedded which links through to a Landing Page featuring training videos on CPR, eye flushing from chemicals, etc. This Landing Page and the other collateral (stickers, posters, etc.) should feature a strong Call to Action — "This is just 1 of 83 life changing skills we teach in our full First Aid Training. Get ALL these skills by booking TODAY". These Lead Magnets are offering great value to the pool maintenance shop, they're demonstrating your credibility to your prospective students and will deliver you strong leads or even direct Enrolments (if your Call to Action goes straight to your booking page).

c. Equipment

if you operate an RTO specialising in Commercial Cookery apprenticeships, there's a big opportunity to partner with local hospitality supplies retailers. Their business is either supplying your prospective students, the supervisors of your prospective students or the employer of your prospective students — all 3 are worthy leads that you can work with. What equipment are they selling that you could offer a Lead Magnet around? A FREE advanced knife skills workshop for every knife kit purchased? A FREE workshop to share the secret hints and tips to cooking using any new oven purchased? Interviewing the hospitality supplies retailer will provide insights i.e. asking what equipment, they get the most questions or the most after sales calls about. Providing you do an amazing job of these workshops, you'll enhance your reputation and credibility, so off the back of such is a perfect time to explore opportunities with these Leads.

d. Services

if you run an RTO specialising in fitness and personal training, clearly gyms are fertile ground for Student Acquisition. But how to add value to the gym and generate a steady stream of inbound leads? Your Lead Magnet could be posters of lifting technique at varying apparatus to avoid injury, complete with QR codes linking to Landing Pages with video demonstrations. This adds value to the gym, via reducing the risk of injury to their members and demonstrates your credibility to prospective students. You just need to ensure you have a compelling call to action at the bottom of your posters and landing pages.

e. Groups they belong to

if your RTO specialises in delivering across the BSB training package, chances are that local BNI groups (local business networking groups) in your catchment have your prospective students or their employer attending meetings/workshops. You could offer to run a presentation on reading and understanding financial statements, then avail a free course so that the attendees can review anytime and share with their staff. If you do an amazing job of your presentation and free course, you'll enhance your reputation, capture leads from the course, be referred to then run the same presentation at other BNI chapters and be invited back to the same BNI chapter to run presentations on other topics.

f. Events they attend

if your RTO specialises in floristry then there's a high probability that your prospective students are attending flower shows. Your Lead Magnet could be a short video course of how to arrange 3 basic bouquets that every attendee gets a free voucher to undertake. This is an add value to tickets for the organisers and when they undertake the course, they'll register their details and thus you generate a heap of Leads. Ensure your 3-bouquet short course is amazing, wowing the registrants and it leaves them wanting to learn more arrangements, ripe for then chatting with your sales team.

g. Employers

if your RTO specialises in Information Technology, chances are Cyber Security has been at the top of the list in all your recent industry engagement surveys or interviews. Take this industry engagement further, by availing a FREE Cyber Security Awareness work test to assess the risk within the business via screening all current staff and then it can remain as part of the onboarding process to continue screening all new staff. Any score below a set threshold should trigger as a Lead for you to contact the business to sound the alarm, offering to counter the risk by urgently enrolling the staff member in your Cyber Security Awareness short course / skillset. Providing there is authenticity in your work test (you don't have a 100% failure rate 😊), businesses will welcome the help to counter the risks via this work test. Once trust has been confirmed, you may be able to automate that below a threshold automatically gets directed to enrol in your course as a mandatory requirement of their employer. This is an example of a fully self-perpetuating and automated Lead Magnet, that could yield BIG student Enrolments for you.

With clarity around how your Strategic Partners can deliver you student leads, your challenge moves to how you get them committed and then how you keep them committed — because you want student leads delivered every week, every month, etc., not just a spurt of them over the next 2 weeks. To do this you'll have to reward your Partner, either with something that's really valuable to them or money. Now if they gain information or other high value from your lead magnet, you might be lucky enough to have an amazing self-perpetuating referral machine 😉 because they're motivated to continue using it because of the value they get, and this delivers you an amazing steady and ongoing stream of leads.

However, if money is to be the reward, you'll then have to determine what they get paid for and how much. Will they get paid for each lead? Will they only get paid if a students lead they generate converts to an enrolled student? Will they only get paid when the student completes a unit or passes a census / tranche date? This is a bit of a balancing act, juggling risk and motivation. Risk to your RTO if you pay for leads or Enrolments that don't crystalise into meaningful revenue or risk to your Strategic Partner because they make all the effort to feed you leads, only to wait forever to see if they'll get a reward, so their motivation wains. If you have data from other comparable lead sources to draw on, this'll be invaluable. If you know how many leads you typically convert to students, how many students progress to meaningful revenue and the average revenue yielded per enrolled student, it will dilute your risk and potentially give you the confidence to frontload the reward to maximise the motivation of your new Strategic Partner.

9. The Seamless RTO:

Mastering Enrolment and Operations for Peak Performance

Perhaps you're asking yourself how mastering enrolment and operations can serve as a 'Profit Blueprint' in your RTO? — well we want to explode profit, as this is sanity vs the vanity of revenue. So, we want to be leaner and more efficient. Improving efficiency in any process will obviously save labour hours and save money, but also likely enrich the student and client experience. No-one likes dealing with inefficient processes, redundant fields on forms or being asked to jump through 3 hoops, when they know 1 hoop would have sufficed.

This tactic involves rolling-up your sleeves and sitting shoulder to shoulder with your frontline staff, inviting them to show you, step by step exactly how they complete any and every practice in your RTO. Their default will be to quickly skip through and jump steps. You'll need to constantly ask the team member to slow down or ask them to go back to show you how they got from 'there to here'.

You should channel your inner detective, charged with finding any area of waste or any area that can be digitised and/or automated.

Do any of your team use spreadsheet 'trackers'? This invariably involves double data entry i.e. waste. Why do they use them – normally it's an education issue (that they don't know how to accomplish or report on something within your student management system (SMS) or CRM) OR it's a process gap (a required custom field is missing or saved report hasn't been configured to capture what they need)? Really diagnose why, so you can accurately action the fixes to make 'trackers' extinct in your RTO 😊

Do your team communicate, either internally or externally within the processes? This is likely the same communication each time — do they use a template to avoid manually typing the email or text message every time? Can the communication be automated, triggered by completion of the preceding activity?

Do you collect information from students or clients via forms? If not digital, can they be? If digital, can they be configured for eSignatures? If eForms with eSignatures, can their sending be automated, triggered by the preceding action so no manual data entry is required because the fields are automatically populated from the SMS or CRM? If automated, have you continued to configure a follow-up sequence to bring that form back completed without any manual intervention from a team member?

How are the team handling inbound communication i.e. phone calls, text messages, emails, web queries, social media DMs, etc? Is it haphazard, with high risk of messages slipping through the cracks, double handling or constant manual checking? Do your incumbent software systems offer any ticketing modules that could help? Do your volumes warrant exploring an omnichannel contact centre software solution to bring everything together for easy management and response?

Do your team routinely evaluate if active students should be active? Have they disengaged and should be managed through a failure to progress process? Has their enrolment term expired? Chances are you could be paying per student per year for your Student Management System, LMS and Learning Resource via usage licenses — so unless you have a routine process for clean-up, you're likely carrying forward inactive students that you're paying for i.e. WASTE.

How are you invoicing students or clients? Is your Student Management System integrated with your accounting software? Is all finance messaging templated? Are invoices sent automatically? Are accounts receivable reminders sent automatically?

Your shoulder to shoulder with your Finance team should extend to a secondary activity: Bill Busting. Ahead of your meeting, invite them to prepare a report of the last 3 months expenses, highlighting any recurring items and sorting from highest to lowest. Start at the top and assign someone to try to 'bust' each expense item – are we paying for too many of that software subscription, when was the last time we tendered our insurance, is marketing getting an ROI on that AdWords spend, does the office need to be professionally cleaned weekly, etc, etc, etc. Make a competition of it — who can be your Champion Bill Buster and save the most money? Repeat this competition at least every 12 months to ensure that any recurring expenses that sneak in are BUSTED.

Quick warning is to ensure your 'waste detective' focus, doesn't blind you from gold that may exist and be un-earthed in your Shoulder-to-Shoulder sessions. I've done these sessions and been blown-away by how a particular team member has innovated or improved their role. This improvement needs to be captured, documented, and shared with others doing the same role.

Set aside a chunk of time for this shoulder-to-shoulder exercise and ensure you take lots of notes, ultimately at the conclusion of each of your shoulder-to-shoulder sessions, you should be able to produce a report of all your observations, paired with Actions of how you can improve any particular aspect of a process. Make sure you then institute a way to monitor that all these Actions get completed.

Amazing, shoulder to shoulders completed, all actions DONE, your enrolment and operations systems are now perfect, forever! NO, unfortunately not ☹. Growth, staff turnover, software updates, laziness/attitude, etc, all have a habit of disrupting your perfectly optimised systems, so this shoulder-to-shoulder review process is something that you should repeat periodically – at least annually and more frequently if you're growing fast.

10. From Policy to Profit:

How Implementation Can Boost Your RTO's Financial Health

You know the Policies your initial registration consultant helped you write or even gave to you as part of their registration pack? Or maybe you're all over them, updating them regularly but are they religiously implemented? I was shocked when recently interviewing a number of RTOs who revealed they don't implement – they suggested 'oh, it's just a quick task to re-issue a certificate' or 'the student was getting close to the last few units, so they'll only need a few extra months to complete'. No! If your Fee Policy states, you charge for Certificate Re-Issuing and you charge for Extensions — then…charge for it!

Seriously, not doing so is diluting the value of you and your team's time, not the least of which it's costing you money. Not only for labour, but expense creeps in other areas too — take your Student Management System, LMS or Learning Resources – perhaps you pay per student per year, extending a student for an extra 2 months most likely is driving up your total student numbers so you're paying extra for this. Or do you phone Axcelerate, Canvas, CloudAssess, LearningVault, etc,etc, suggesting you've extended 223 students this year, but you did it for free out of the goodness of your heart, so don't expect to be charged? Of course, you don't and nor do I expect that call would be received well, because they're running a business and that would be driving up their costs. And that's the point, you're a business, not a charity – charge your fees! No more, but no less.

Perhaps you're reading this and thinking, 'C'mon, it can't be worth that much to me' and you may be right. But I challenge you to at least check per chance it's significant. I recently shared a conversation with an RTO specialising in short courses in the Resources sector. They too felt this was a negligible opportunity 'til they ran some reports revealing in the prior 12 months they'd re-issued 186 certificates and granted 84 extensions – all without charging a cent. Their fee policy stated a $50 and $200 charge for these two things respectively, don't worry – I'll do the math for you, it comes to $26,100 and they weren't a 'big' RTO. Run the reports, you deserve the $$s.

Conclusion

That's a wrap on the 'The RTO Profit Blueprint: 10 Revolutionary Secret Tactics to Skyrocket Your Profits'! We've delved deep into the core of what truly drives RTO growth, from unlocking new revenue streams to mastering the art of student acquisition and retention, these secrets are your keys to unlocking a future where your RTO doesn't just survive; it thrives. Each of the 10 was designed to be actionable and impactful to allow you to increase your profitability and operational efficiency. I hope it helped stimulate a raft of ideas, but of course ideas are worthless unless converted to actions for implementation. This is your opportunity, I hope you take it, and that the implementation of these tactics can add massive value to your RTO.

If you'd like to continue the journey together, my company, PeoplePartners, helps many, many RTOs with re-engineering their workforces and augmenting with highly qualified and skilled offshore staff.

PEOPLE PARTNERS™

This is a strategy that will massively move the dial on boosting your RTO's profitability, something I know you're clearly interested in – so if you'd like to learn more, let's chat — book a time here.

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