



Luke Howden

MAHRI

HR manager
Raytheon Australia

Education

I was born and educated in Canberra and completed an Advanced Diploma of Business Management (HR) while working full-time between 1999 and 2004. It was a great way to find balance between work, study and home life. The first 12 years of my career were in hospitality management, performing both operational and corporate roles.

First job

I began as a trainee manager with one of Canberra's largest hospitality organisations, Canberra Southern Cross Club. The job involved becoming familiar with operational management and the organisation's systems—with a particular focus on people. I progressed into running one of the Club's businesses incorporating food and gaming operations before moving into HR.

Hospitality was a great breeding ground for my tradecraft—understanding internal and external customers and building and fostering relationships. Dealing with a relatively young workforce, of which 90 per cent were casual, proved to be invaluable, particularly when it came to dealing with the challenges of Generation Y. In 2003, I transferred to HR with the same

company, and two years later moved to Raytheon Australia—a mission systems integration leader in the defence industry.

Why HR?

The move into HR was a natural step for me. Having a great understanding of what the hospitality industry does on a day-to-day level meant I could see the strengths and weaknesses of the business and add value at an operational level, such as in recruitment, or in workforce planning on a strategic level.

I made a conscious effort to move from hospitality into professional HR at Raytheon. The transition to a larger and more professional HR team has been hugely beneficial for my professional development. It was an eye-opener to see what HR could achieve when partnered at a senior level in the business.

Current duties

I work as the corporate headquarters HR manager and also in our technical support business. I work with six other HR professionals who provide direct support to the business across the country.

I get the best of both worlds with both operational and strategic work. I am involved in providing recruitment support to niche programs, performance management, succession-planning and mentoring programs. I also team with our business leaders to provide strategic support. The key aspect of my role is ensuring the HR team maintain and build relationships to support multiple programs for Raytheon.

Challenges

HR has challenged me to maintain a strategic approach. Raytheon has grown from 12 staff in 1999 to more than 1,200, with that growth cycle set to continue. It's fantastic to be part of it—personally and professionally—because opportunities don't come up like this very often.

It's difficult to find the right people with specialised skills in systems and software engineering. We have employee programs that focus not only on attracting and retaining our people, but reflect the importance of people to the company. It is essential that we continue working to ensure our employee programs present Raytheon as an employer of choice. Our staff really make a difference as they work alongside our customers each day. I believe our reputation will attract the right people, and the opportunities are only limited by the individual.

Lessons

Good leaders learn from their mistakes and are not afraid to admit they've made a mistake. It's important that you value the people you work with at all levels, particularly those under

you. You are only as good as the people you lead and success is a result of that. I think people need to walk their own path, it's okay for them to make mistakes but they need to be supported.

Professional development

I have been a member of AHRI for two years and I am in the third semester of the AHRI Professional Diploma (HR) through Deakin University via correspondence. It requires motivation and time and finding the right balance between family and work.

I am able to network with people across the country and with colleagues, which I find beneficial. It's great to be able to share thoughts, ideas and frustrations with a wide range of people. You quickly gain an appreciation of how good you have it in your own job and that you are never alone in the challenges that you face.

10-year-plan

Raytheon is a dynamic organisation that exposes me to multiple sectors, so I'd like to consolidate my current role. I would like to move into business development or program management—I am fortunate enough that I don't have to leave Raytheon to do so. I'm excited to get out of bed each morning. I work with great professional people who understand that what we do impacts on the customer and we strive towards a common goal. That makes coming to work easy and makes the future look bright. ☒

Luke Howden spoke with Christine Antoniou.

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