

Retreat, and grow



Deadline managing director Sean Heylen, right, meeting with staff, from left, Kate Pavlovs, Jodie Lunn, Mark Bishop, Nadia Moretti, Jamie Dollard, Muhammad Ali and Adil Riaz Khan.

Picture: Chris Mangan

ALEXANDRA ECONOMOU Business Reporter

INTERNET software and graphic design company Deadline considers the views of all its employees when making business planning decisions, even taking staff on “retreats” to discuss strategy.

Managing director Sean Heylen believes including the company’s 14 full-time employees in the planning process improves staff morale and helps develop their motivation.

“In my experience, the people who come and work for me are interested in achieving goals they set themselves,” Mr Heylen says.

“They are more motivated by (that) than by me saying ‘go and do that’.

“I want people to think for themselves and I have to give them a way to do that.”

Deadline is one of an increasing

GETTING AWAY

- Retreats can be held over one, two or three days.
- They are held away from the office at local or interstate holiday locations.
- Exercises vary from personal skills training in communication and management to professional skills training related to the industry to build the abilities of staff.

number of Adelaide companies which are taking staff on retreats.

The business development time away from the office allows employers to give staff skills training in an environment more conducive to learning or run development courses.

Research by US firm Novacrea Research Consulting found em-

ployees were more satisfied in their job if it involved a corporate retreat and were up to 75 per cent less likely to resign.

The idea of taking staff on retreats to discuss strategies for the future of Deadline had proven successful, Mr Heylen said.

“In smaller teams (like ours) it’s important to set realistic goals and goals that can be achieved with a degree of ease and that people are capable of,” he said.

“In a growing business, particularly a small business, it’s impossible to see any further than three months out and 90 days is far enough out for a business (like ours) to plan.”

Taking staff away from the office to discuss strategy also makes them more relaxed and likely to offer opinions.

“It’s quite arrogant, and actually foolish, for any individual or executive team to think they are a manager of good ideas and

solving problems,” Mr Heylen said. “Whenever we run our strategic retreats (we) find the best solutions and best ideas come from people who are the least experienced.

“Everyone is valuable and everyone needs to be given an opportunity to voice their opinion (on the business).”

This month, the company is taking its staff on a “mini-retreat”.

Each year, Deadline has two weekend-long retreats and another two day-long business planning sessions.

“From a business perspective, when you are working in an organisation day-in and day-out, you develop a degree of disconnection to the way the rest of the world perceives your company,” Mr Heylen says.

“You become too wrapped up in what’s going on (in the workplace) and it’s important to get out of the office.”