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Learning to Elearn Case Study 10

Byzedium: Building Emotional Capital

by Marcus Bowles⁺

1. Summary

Byzedium Pty Ltd, based in Melbourne, Australia, is a commercial learning and development company. It has responded to market demand from local and global organisations for the increasing need to develop ‘soft skills’ in the workplace that create relationships as assets. In contrast to the availability of training that builds skills and performance as part of human capital in organisations, Byzedium responded to the gap in the market for learning that builds emotional intelligence — the emotional and social competencies that support high performance. These considerations led the company to adopt state-of-the-art delivery methods.

Servicing a global market, Byzedium co-founder and director Gregg Ainsworth announced:

‘A true world first — a holistic, blended system that measures and then develops Emotional Intelligence in individuals, teams and organisations.’

2. Introduction

Byzedium Pty Ltd was founded in March 2002 by Kristi Russell, Martyn Newman and Gregg Ainsworth — partners with backgrounds in business, psychology, human resources (HR) and elearning. Having determined that emotional intelligence would be the niche for Byzedium’s competency-based development solutions, the founders interviewed a significant number of senior figures in the HR, learning and development sectors in Australia and beyond, in order to benchmark the key issues related to delivery.

The Byzedium principals recognised that a strategic opportunity existed to develop a suite of development solutions that addressed the following challenges:

- Learning and development programs that involved travel and downtime were being increasingly viewed as time-intensive, costly, impractical, undesirable and, especially in the post-9–11 environment, potentially risky;

⁺ When quoting this case study, use as reference: Marcus Bowles. (July 2003). *Byzedium: Building Emotional Capital: Learning to Elearn Case Study 10*. Hobart, Australia: Unitas Company Ltd.

- Learning and development programs that relied predominantly on seminar and workshop delivery rarely offered follow-up, with the result that:
- ‘Learning’ was not adapted to personal specific needs; and
- New behaviours were not practised in the real world and thus change was not effected; and
- Learning and development programs that failed to ‘lock in’ desired learning and were not able to create organisation-wide change because they addressed only a very limited number of the prerequisite factors that contribute to positive change. By contrast, Byzedium’s solution adopts a blended, systematic methodology that maximises the value of elearning by addressing the single most important factor in supporting change, the client’s engagement in the change process.

3. The Elearning Challenge

Byzedium determined at an early stage that a ‘pure’ elearning approach was not sufficient in itself for developing emotional intelligence (EQ) in individuals, teams and organisations. Rather, the elearning platform needed a broader approach to maximise its effectiveness. Accordingly, Byzedium’s blended approach involves creating a supportive learning environment and gauging readiness, including helping learners recognise the benefits of EQ and assess their emotional and social competencies and providing feedback prior to commencing elearning. Byzedium’s blended approach also marries interactive Flash modules to face-to-face and telephone coaching, all of which focus on making learning self-directed, developing positive expectations of success, helping learners create manageable goals, modelling desired skills, and encouraging practice of new skills. In addition, the company developed its innovative proprietary Intrusive Learning™ process based on established SMS technology. This process provides feedback and challenges that reinforce learning and reflection (of module and coaching material) once people ‘leave their desk’.



Research on maintenance following behaviour change efforts suggests that a large percentage of individuals gradually stop using their new skills (Marlatt & Gordon, 1985). Byzedium has responded to this challenge, firstly, through its Transformational Assessment procedure (discussed later), and secondly, by adopting rigorous follow-up support practices including continuous evaluation and feedback. Both strategies are designed to inoculate learners against setbacks once they have mastered the new competencies in the training setting. Byzedium's methodology delivers emotional and social competencies to people for use in the workplace using practical tools, products, services and programs that assess, develop, train, coach and evaluate outcomes. The service delivery process ensures that organisations build emotional intelligence competencies at all levels to meet a variety of organisational needs.

4. The Emotional Intelligence Platform

Research has established that building emotional intelligence (EQ) — the social and emotional competencies that support superior performance — is a better predictor of success in the workplace than the more traditional measures of cognitive intelligence (IQ). Of the several models of emotional intelligence developed over the past twenty years, Reuven Bar-On's model is the most thoroughly developed and the *BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory* (EQ-i) remains by far the most extensively validated and researched measure of emotional intelligence.

Bar-On's model describes five major areas of EQ and 15 specific emotional and social competencies. The data documenting the importance of outstanding performance for all 15 emotional intelligence competencies has been increasing for more than two decades. David McClelland (1998) reviewed data for more than thirty different organisations and for executive positions in many professions, from banking and managing to mining and sales. He showed that a wide range of EQ competencies (and a narrow range of cognitive ones) distinguished top performers from average ones. Similarly, a recent study comparing emotional intelligence and cognitive intelligence as measures of work performance was completed by Joseph Hee-Woo Jae at Manila University, the Philippines. The study found that IQ scores accounted for less than 1% of job success while EQ-i scores accounted for an impressive 27% of job performance.

Accordingly, competencies that build emotional intelligence are highly influential determinants of personal and corporate competitive advantage. Emotional competencies are job skills that can, and indeed must, be learned. An underlying EQ ability is necessary, though not sufficient in itself, to demonstrate competence in any of the five major areas of emotional intelligence. For example, a person can be highly empathic yet be poor at handling customers if he or she has not learned competence in customer service. Although emotional intelligence determines a person's potential for learning the practical skills that underlie the five major areas of EQ, emotional competence also shows how much of that potential has been realised by learning and mastering skills. The Byzedium program is specifically designed to map the emotional intelligence factors that underlie emotionally competent behaviours and translate these into workplace performance.

Byzedium's core challenge was to distil the building blocks of these emotional and social competencies and build a suite of online modules that would assist professional people to acquire the competencies effectively and efficiently. As people learn to build and maintain workplace relationships they improve not only their individual

value as a capital asset, but also the collective human capital assets available to the organisation. This is because people with higher EQ become more effective as tools of change, which in turn increases performance and directly impacts the bottom line.

Byzedium's elearning modules are designed to be flexible and mobile, and delivered via the Internet using a range of leading-edge technologies and coaching methodologies. This blended approach facilitates both face-to-face and electronically enabled engagement.

5. Analysis of Elearning Strategies and Actions

The Byzedium Leadership Development Program©

Byzedium's seven-phase model, which draws in part on the work of Prochaska (1999), ensures an integrated, systematic approach to the construction of EQ within a leadership program. The model is also designed to create sustainable change. Phases 1 to 3 include assessment and feedback known as Transformational Assessment. Byzedium director Dr Martyn Newman was one of the first psychologists in the world to conduct empirical research on the effectiveness of this transformational process for building emotional competencies while at the same time decreasing destructive emotions that hinder performance. His research has been published by the American Psychological Association (Newman & Greenway, 1997). Phases 4 to 7 are built on principles referred to earlier that support change such as gauging readiness; self-directed learning; developing positive expectations of success; setting clear, manageable goals; modelling desired skills; creating opportunities for distributed practice and providing support and feedback on performance; and finally consolidating and evaluating change. While designed for leaders, the program targets all employees, irrespective of their level of employment or team membership.

Phase 1: Taking the Brief

Byzedium takes a full brief from clients and completes a needs audit to ascertain business objectives alongside training and development needs. This can be done for individuals, teams or the organisation as a whole. The aim is also to ensure that the Byzedium program works with and/or reinforces existing courses and content.

Phase 2: EQ Assessment and Profile Design

Participants complete the following online assessments (see the Byzedium Assessment Tools section for further explanations of these tools and their publishers).

- **The BarOn EQ-i™** — an assessment of emotional intelligence;
- **The Spectrum CPI 260** — identification of leadership style; and
- **The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)** — a personality questionnaire; as well as
- **BarOn EQ-360** (used to supplement the assessment process where appropriate).

Together, these first three tools provide a comprehensive assessment of emotional assets and developmental needs relevant to professional business objectives and personal style.

A comprehensive and highly individualised Byzedium Leadership Development Profile is then developed identifying strengths, gaps and training needs.

Phase 3: Byzedium Leadership Development Profile and Feedback Session

Once participants complete assessments and the Byzedium Leadership Development Report has been developed, individuals receive personal feedback relating to their leadership development profile from an accredited psychologist. The session is conducted face to face or via a videoconferencing or webconferencing/broadband synchronous connection.

Participants also are briefed on the recommended individualised modules to meet developmental needs and form a plan of action to move forward. This report can also be developed to meet collective team or organisational needs.

Phase 4: Delivery of EQ Modules Online

The feedback session offers participants an orientation to the online EQ modules, which can be accessed from any Internet-connected computer via the Byzedium website.

Modules are flexible and scaleable and individuals progress through the program at their own pace. This self-paced learning approach has been designed to overcome some persistent challenges in acquiring social and emotional competencies. Of particular import was the inability of the traditional seminar-only delivery approach to 'lock in' the required behavioural learning. Research on learning theory indicates that 'massed practice' (classroom-based, collective learning) approaches, while successful in establishing momentum, do not provide the opportunity for the frequent practice of learned behaviours necessary to create change. A 'distributed practice' approach that enables learning to be assimilated over time has been demonstrated to be more effective.

Each Byzedium EQ module takes approximately 30 minutes to complete; however, to ensure that learning outcomes and behaviours are met, participants are encouraged to review modules two or three times a week over a two- to three-week period.

Phase 5: Byzedium Coaching

Once modules have been determined, an accredited coach is assigned and contacts the participant. Coaches and candidates are matched as closely as possible.

Coaching, which is provided by telephone or face to face throughout the program, promotes integrated learning for each module and addresses other issues that may arise from assessment and feedback. Coaching also can reinforce behaviours and assist individual participants to maximise learning transfer across both electronic and physical interaction.

The amount of coaching required, determined in the feedback session, depends on the participant's development needs. *(Please see the section on the coaching process.)*

Phase 6: Byzedium Intrusive Learning™

While they are working on the EQ modules, participants also receive prompts via GSM mobile telephone to support learning outcomes and embed learning behaviours.

By 2004, the delivery of modules will extend beyond GSM to include CDMA devices and PDAs with mobile data and voice connections (non-wireless). Access will permit synchronisation and web-delivered data.

This phase is designed to take advantage of SMS text-messaging technology in order to force thought and reflection about module learning topics away from the PC and into the very situations that will benefit from these new learned behaviours.

Phase 7: Evaluation

A comprehensive report is prepared, evaluating program outcomes for individuals and also, if required, for the team or organisation. It indicates each participant's growth and development.

6. Elearning and the Implications of the Byzedium Approach

A number of features of the Byzedium approach are noteworthy. The approach is:

- Supported by a robust scientific measure of emotional intelligence, the BarOn EQ-i™;
- Designed with elearning modules that not only meet the development needs identified by EQ assessment but also are simple tools of change that increase emotional intelligence while also improving performance in the workplace;
- Developed specifically to reflect the real challenges faced by leaders in the workplace, geared to each participant's emotional intelligence profile;
- Deployed using state-of-the-art elearning and delivery methods designed for flexibility; creating change; capturing data and knowledge; and measuring tangible growth and outcomes;
- Implemented using flexible and self-paced learning where participants can be involved according to their schedule and business needs without having to make overly ambitious or unachievable time commitments;
- Based on extensive research completed over more than two decades that confirms the importance for outstanding performance of each of the emotional competencies targeted by Byzedium products and services.

Cross cultures and national boundaries

Byzedium is currently offering a customised training program to the senior staff at the Asia Pacific office of Edelman, the world's largest independent public relations firm. This program addresses cross-cultural issues. Alan VanderMolen, Edelman's Asia Pacific president, says his team needs significant personal resources to work across borders and across different practices. VanderMolen adds that when working across borders and cultures:

. . . We have to have a high degree of emotional intelligence across our managers because we are working in an organisation where our senior people have to negotiate with each other. They need to be equipped with a certain degree of emotional intelligence in addressing what could be conflicting points of view on a regional basis.

After assessing other programs that Edelman uses internationally, VanderMolen chose Byzedium because of its use of a recognised measurement tool (BarOn's EQ-i and others), its tailored approach, and its use of technology for delivery and feedback.

Technical Development — Proprietary Products and Tools **©Byzedium EQ Modules**

The Byzedium EQ modules develop the competencies required for successful performance in contemporary organisations. Participants are led through a simple, interactive and personal process based on real-life scenarios that highlight the emotional skills essential to meet the demands of organisational and individual performance. This process encourages the participant to consider how they think, communicate and have influence across the organisation. Such an approach translates EQ learning into tangible benefits for individuals and the organisation as a whole.

Designed to meet the development needs identified by the EQ assessment, the Byzedium elearning modules are then selected and delivered to meet the participant's personal EQ learning needs. Modules deliver a step-by-step guide for acquiring the competencies necessary to increase emotional intelligence and are constructed as a series of dynamic interactive elearning exercises that systematically build emotional intelligence.

Participants are exposed to real-life organisational situations and are provided with opportunities to consider the impact of a variety of alternative behaviours. The online simulations are text-based scenarios tailored to the individual's learning needs and have a variety of multiple choice options with different behaviours and possible outcomes and effects. Participants can experiment with responses and examine the consequences of their choices in an engaging and motivating delivery mode. Emotional competencies are deconstructed, modelled, illustrated and systematically reconstructed to maximise understanding. Learning is delivered in concentrated, time-efficient 30-minute blocks and reinforced by a variety of methods.

While the modules are designed to be effective as stand-alone products, the extent to which and the speed with which individuals are able to master the associated behaviours are enhanced significantly by module-specific coaching.

Byzedium Coaching

Byzedium coaching is designed to support the elearning modules and business objectives of the client company, team and/or individual participant. It is delivered by telephone, face to face or via online video streaming. The coaching plan is tailored to the participant's individual needs and is scaleable.

Byzedium-accredited coaches provide a repertoire of ideas, experience and information that support clients as they work their way through the stages of each module. Coaches have access to the system back-end facilitating real-time progress tracking (modules accessed, completed, module evaluation scores, SMS Intrusive

Learning scores). Interaction is currently offline, though online options and data capture are available to facilitate this mode of coaching. Core performance issues are clarified and strategies developed to assist the assimilation of information and acquisition of core competencies. In addition to facilitating and enhancing rapid learning, executive coaching provides sustained, focused motivation to achieve the targeted outcomes and an objective evaluation of performance throughout the learning experience.

Intrusive Learning™

Intrusive Learning™ is intended to achieve two objectives:

- To shift the process of thinking and learning about the module content from the computer into ‘real life’; and
- To ensure that when learned behaviours are practised that module information is accessible — anywhere and anytime.

Intrusive Learning™ embodies two essential mechanisms:

1. Module-related questions, delivered to mobile phones via SMS. Most questions are multiple-choice but some may be open-ended. These will often arrive at unexpected times and for maximum scores should be answered as quickly as possible. SMS Intrusive Learning is fully operational. Subject to cost and availability of services in their area clients can access this service from 3G and other technologies, especially those in the wireless arena. Byzedium believes that to achieve maximum benefit, technology with real practical penetration and usage (i.e. 2G not 3G) must be used.
2. Byzedium’s proprietary Cheat Sheets™. Most of the situations that require participants to practise and take advantage of new skills and behaviours occur away from the computer or even away from the office. These summaries of module information, available either as SMS, email or Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format (once a module has been completed), provide participants with hints, prompts and guides related to module learning content. This approach encourages accessibility and maximises portability of the elearning experience.

Recruitment: Screening and Executive Selection

In addition to evaluating emotional intelligence, Byzedium’s competency-based model assesses a range of critical leadership and management behaviours. The approach is based on research that supports the value of including psychological profiling in the interview process to predict and describe an individual and a team’s performance.

Byzedium’s process is tailored to the client’s needs to predict required managerial and leadership potential. Byzedium works with organisations to create profiles of top performers that will determine the most valuable skill sets and competencies. Competencies associated with emotional intelligence can be developed and improved through training — this makes assessment tools and feedback reports/profiles highly valuable instruments for identifying areas for improvement in both individuals and the organisation.

Technical Details of Modules and Intrusive Learning™

Byzedium EQ Modules

Byzedium's 30-minute online modules are building blocks designed to demystify areas and equip participants to use emotions more intelligently in the workplace.

Byzedium's modules are customised to meet the development needs identified by a participant's EQ assessment and outlined in their Leadership Development Profile. Each EQ module can be dynamically configured to present exercises and assessment events tailored to systematically build each individual's emotional intelligence.

Emotional competencies are deconstructed, modelled, illustrated and systematically reconstructed to maximise understanding. This occurs through intensive 'bite-sized' blocks of *Intrusive Learning™* and *Coaching*.

The modules meet the following specifications:

1. AICC standards of instructional design, which are user-friendly and accessible; and
2. Flash technology, which affords rich graphical content and a variety of exercise formats combined with easy downloading even via 56 kbps dial-up modems.

Subject to input and feedback from the coach (and the participant's agreement), modules may be deleted from and/or added to the schedule, and dates may be modified in order to accommodate the participant's specific and changing needs.

7. Contact Information

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9. Addendum — Research Implications

While this case study does not explicitly align its findings to the eight Unitas principles derived through the initial Learning to Elearn research, such an alignment has been provided by the research team.

Byzedium appears to implement processes of elearning that are designed to enhance the emotional intelligence of the individual or the employee's organisation. Because the topic and task are the same, designing how individuals learn emotional intelligence also means recognising the need to build emotional intelligence through the process of learning as much as through assessed tasks (Elearning Principle 2: *Effective elearning occurs when technology and processes are built to enable improved individual learning*).

Because of the direct relationship between emotional intelligence and human interaction/service, many of the leaders enrolled in the Byzedium programs are from service organisations. The design of the modules, the online interfaces and the coaching support all have seemingly been framed to reinforce not only the transfer of emotional intelligence learning outcomes, but also mechanisms that enhance the learner-directed nature of the exchange (when, where and how a learner accesses the service) (Principle 7: *Elearning is an activity that inherently involves service exchanges between humans moderated by technology in an electronic context*).

This study suggests that the Byzedium approach inherently recognises that emotional intelligence requires attributes beyond those normally encompassed within skills-based training (Elearning Principle 1: *Elearning has maximum strategic impact when it is used to enhance both performance and thinking*). The espoused approach to elearning teaches learners to:

- Develop high self-awareness that facilitates self-reflection and ultimately the ability to work more consciously towards their own and their organisation's benefit;
- Take charge of emotions and use them intelligently to solve problems and innovate new ideas;
- Build self-confidence, optimism, tenacity, enthusiasm and stress resilience to handle daily workplace challenges;
- Increase the ability to communicate effectively, resolve conflict, assert themselves, listen accurately, deliver criticism and build high-performance teams;
- Develop interpersonal expertise to influence others most effectively and create buy-in to ideas and vision; and
- Identify untapped resources and develop a blueprint to accelerate personal and professional growth.

By blending elearning (intrusive learning) and personal coaching, Byzedium has designed learning to maximise learning transfer that will meet the business objectives of the client company, team and/or individual participant.

Deployed using a mix of state-of-the-art elearning and other delivery methods, the Byzedium modules are designed to be customisable and tailored to the individuals'

development needs. This customisation is determined through a structured EQ assessment using agreed tools. While cultural differences and individual sensitivities can be assessed, all learners undertake an assessment process to reinforce the application of behaviours appropriate to the workplace context. Deliberate strategies are used such as using SMS via mobile telephones to access busy executives and ensure that learning and assessment is not a once-off event. This is important as the Byzedium service is designed not only to lock in improved emotional intelligence to affect performance, but also to raise emotional capital available to an organisation to undertake change and lead transformations (Elearning Principle 4: *There is a direct and proven correlation between the variables limiting the optimisation of individual and collaborative elearning outcomes and the variables affecting organisational learning, agility and competent performance*).