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The CEO Magazine
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“Our business is sitting in a really sweet spot.”

Jason Beutel is the graduate recruit who became CEO of one of Australia’s leading structural, civil and construction engineering consultancies, Robert Bird Group.

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It’s obvious that Jason Beutel has never once regretted his decision to become a civil engineer. “We’re doing something meaningful. What we work on is actually physically built, and we are a vital part of creating spaces for people to live in, work in, and enjoy. Our industry creates the very fabric of our cities,” the CEO of Robert Bird Group enthuses.

It’s also clear he’s never regretted his decision to join the structural, civil and specialist construction engineering consultancy fresh after graduating from the Queensland University of Technology in 1994. “I guess these days it’s rare to find people who’ve spent their careers working for just one business. But I can truthfully

say I’ve never considered shifting. I’ve never had reason to.” In the 23 years he’s been with the company, he’s seen it grow from a single office in Brisbane to a name synonymous with engineering excellence around the world. Outside of the major Australian cities, it has offices in London, Dubai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Bangalore and Wellington. Jason attributes this success to the Group’s eponymous founder and executive chairman, Robert Bird. “Robert has been inspirational, and he’s a true entrepreneur and trailblazer.”

Jason adds that Robert has been more than just a mentor. “He has created a culture in the business where people do come first, and that’s incredibly important,” he explains, and has shown »

him that passion equates to success. It's a lesson Jason has taken on board: in 2003, he became structural principal in the Brisbane office, before being promoted to Queensland structures manager in 2004 and Australian structures managing director in 2006. Three years later, he relocated with his young family to London to take up the position of managing director UK and MENA. Then, in 2010 while in the UK, he received the call to take up the position of CEO, and he returned to Australia in 2013.

His time overseas gave him a new perspective on the Group's operations in Australia. "When you enter into a brand-new market, you need to be very focused on your true USP – your value in the market, what makes you different," he says. "So you actually have something to take to the market that is real and generates value for your clients. And you must believe it and be structured to deliver it." On his return to Australia, he undertook

"a substantial restructure of the Australian business," as he refers to it. "I think we had lost sight of what made us so good here, and we needed to refocus the business back to delivering our true value to the market."

So what does Jason identify as the Group's USP? "If there's a tagline that I use, it's 'Designed for Delivery'," he says. "And, depending on who our client is, delivery and the value placed upon what we deliver is different, but with a common thread. For contractors, our designs must be built in an efficient, cost-effective and safe manner; for our design partners, we must deliver as a team to achieve their vision and brief requirements; while developers require a design that is efficient, achieves their cost plan and program needs while delivering to the market the product they need; and for authorities and the public sector, delivering certainty of outcome to the community is vitally important."

"Our business has a unique focus that considers and delivers both design and construction requirements, which in turn delivers this certainty."

It's an expression Jason draws upon as he looks to capitalise on the exciting growth opportunities he sees across all the markets and sectors the Group has or is now developing a presence in.

"Even in Australia, where we are so well established," he says, "there's currently an unprecedented level of activity and commitment on infrastructure projects to improve and develop the function and fabric of our cities around the world."

"The construction environment has become much more complicated, so all of our clients are now facing complex engineering and construction challenges. Given our USP, and our international experience, expertise and capability, I think currently our business is sitting in a really sweet spot." ■



"This year's Federal Budget is the Government's opportunity to stabilise the future for Australia's families and businesses. Holistic tax reform must remain a focus."

Tony Schiffmann, Managing Partner, BDO

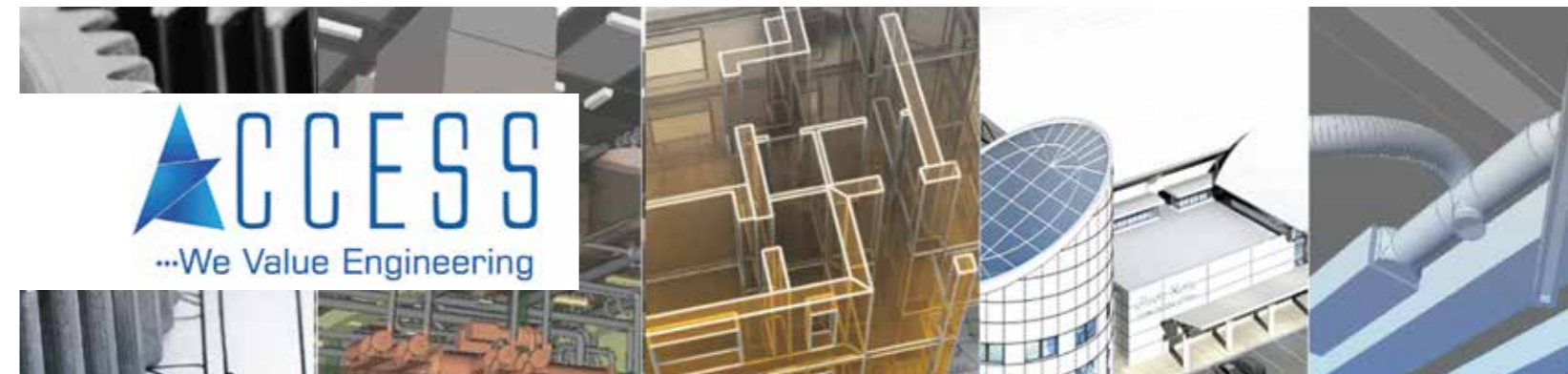
At BDO, we are dedicated to driving meaningful tax reform - for businesses, individuals and the community as a whole. The results of our recent Federal Budget quick poll revealed that Australian taxpayers share this view, with almost 83% of respondents agreeing the Government should reintroduce a broad tax reform process.

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