



EEO TRUST
Work & Life Bulletin
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EEO Trust Work & Life Awards

Organisations recognised at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards on 31 August 2006 have approached challenging work situations with enthusiasm and creativity.

Initiatives that create flexible work environments tend to attract and retain quality staff. These strategies acknowledge the range of commitments employees have outside of the workplace, whether family, social or community based.

This issue of the Work & Life Bulletin focuses on the successful initiatives being implemented by EEO Trust Work & Life winners.

EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2006 Winners

Large Organisation Award
Winner **Meredith Connell**

Small to Medium Organisation Award
Winner **Conversa Global**

First Steps Award
Winner **ABB Kinleith**

Manāki Tangata Innovation Award
Winner **The University of Auckland Women in Leadership Programme**

Walk the Talk
Winner **Lester Oakes (Career Services)**



IBM New Zealand supports the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.



Philippa Reed, CE of the EEO Trust, with Steve Murray and Michael Barnett, Trustee and Chair of the EEO Trust board.

For details of all the entries in the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2006, you can purchase *A Question of Balance* from the EEO Trust for \$35. admin@eeotrust.org.nz

Flexible working options lead the way for businesses

Many of the entrants and winners in this year's EEO Trust's Work & Life Awards have implemented flexible working arrangements in their organisations. By accommodating employees' needs they have managed to retain valued and skilled staff.

Retention helps solve crimes

Meredith Connell, a specialised Auckland law firm that deals with litigation, won the Large Organisation Award at this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

As Office of the Crown Solicitor in Auckland, Meredith Connell undertakes all indictable prosecution cases in the region.

Staff retention is critical to Meredith Connell as it takes seven years of on-the-job training to acquire the skills to prosecute jury trials in the High Court, experience which can be attained in few legal environments. Prosecutors and support staff deal with prosecution material of serious crime including murder, manslaughter, rape, fraud or serious drug charges. The taxing nature of this type of work, and employees' changing circumstances outside of the

workplace, led the company to pursue ways to consider individuals' needs and retain valued staff.

Of the 139 staff at Meredith Connell, 69% of all partners and staff are women. Currently, more than half of women partners and staff, and nearly a third of men, have working patterns that take into account their work-life balance needs. Of the 18 women who have taken up the firm's parental leave provisions in the last three years, 17 have returned to work, one deciding to leave Auckland for lifestyle reasons.

Susan Gray has been with the company for 15 years and has taken parental leave three times. During her tenure she has worked as a criminal trial lawyer, is a partner with the firm, and now manages the administration of Auckland district's jury trials.

Susan's decision to work three days a week allows her to schedule after-

school activities for her older two children Claudia (12) and James (6) on the two days she is not in the office, and enables her to spend quality time with her two-year-old twins Kate and Amelia. Although she still touches base with the jury trial admin team twice a day, she enjoys the flexibility available to her.

"Criminal law and trials can be stressful, you are dealing with people's lives. I keep coming back to Meredith Connell because I love the work. It is interesting and rewarding, and I enjoy the flexibility and support the firm offers," says Susan. When she was involved with the criminal trials it was important that she could come back to the office and debrief with colleagues before going home. "There is no switch-on or switch-off button, but the more experienced you get the better you learn to do it. You can be a more effective advocate by being able to go home and refresh for the next day."

Likewise, it is good to know that her children are welcome in the office, whether during school holidays or term time, and that they are included in Christmas or social functions.



Some of Meredith Connell's employees in their Auckland office.

Work-life initiatives offered by Meredith Connell include: ten days special leave; paid study leave; free income protection insurance for professional staff; free legal services to staff buying or selling a home; EAP Support; weekly subsidised yoga on site; flu vaccinations; social functions and sport events; and the David Foster Memorial Award - an annual award worth \$2,000 for an employee who has displayed exemplary service and/or loyalty.

Independent work schedules lead to growth

Retention is also an important issue for winner of the Small to Medium Organisation Award, **Conversa Global**. This global research consultancy employs 18 full-time staff and up to 400 sub-contractors in 55 countries.

Flexibility is key to Conversa Global's success as staff regularly meet work commitments outside of normal office hours. The company has created a system so that staff can set their own work targets and determine their work schedule. They are paid a base salary and personal bonuses are then linked to individual daily outputs. Communicating goals and expectations, coaching, and strong performance management ensure that these targets are met.

The company sees training as critical to retaining and motivating valued employees. An annual education budget is available for personal or professional development, or for areas that support work-life balance.

The company has benefited from outstanding performance; in the last five years the company has grown by nearly 500%, and last year it was listed as one of the fastest growing companies in New Zealand in *Unlimited* magazine's "Fast 50".

Work-life initiatives offered by

Conversa Global include: innovative remuneration system; performance-based bonuses; education budgets; staff can define exactly when they will and will not be available for work (from home or the office); health insurance and travel insurance for employees and immediate families; support for families to join employees on work travel; birthday off; mobile and remote access: training and education budgets can be spent on personal and professional development; a nutritionist is available; fresh fruit at work; and gym membership.

ABB Kinleith no run of the mill organisation

ABB Kinleith won the First Steps Award. The company, which employs 175 people, has provided all the maintenance and the majority of stores-related services to the

Kinleith Pulp and Paper Mill since Carter Holt Harvey outsourced this work in 2003.

Outsourcing on this scale was completely new to Australasia and represented a significant risk for ABB Kinleith and its staff. However, by getting people involved in the creation of the workplace culture, ABB Kinleith has improved working arrangements, reduced maintenance costs and increased productivity. It has also enabled the company to move from a culture of confrontation to one of co-operation between management, staff and unions.

Employees from a cross-section of the organisation attended "Forest Camps" where they took part in team building and goal setting activities, which helped identify team values. From these sessions, ABB Kinleith's vision, mission statement, values and goals were developed. A group called "Pathfinders" evolved and it focuses on workplace initiatives and site communication.

Like other manufacturing and production sites, ABB Kinleith faces the challenge of providing flexibility around shift work, but by involving staff in shift design, ABB Kinleith has developed a system that gives workers more control over when they work. Employees have the choice of two structured rosters: a four 10-hour day shift and a five 8-hour day shift. Staff can change from one roster to another, and can vary start and finish times to accommodate operational and personal needs.

ABB Kinleith management believe that the work-life initiatives have significantly increased employee ownership of ABB Kinleith's goals and vision, resulting in increased productivity and lower maintenance costs. This is reflected in the total output of the Kinleith mill, which has increased by more than 17% over the last three years. The mill is outstripping its production goals in key areas, with 19 production records broken in 2005, and sick leave has decreased from 11% in 2002 to 3.7% in 2005.

One father's comments about the four-day roster: "I get to take my boys to school and kindy on my days off. I get to see who their teacher is and who their friends are; I often sit in the back of the class and enjoy that moment of my child's life".

Work-life initiatives offered by ABB

Kinleith include: extended leave under special circumstances; flu vaccine; melanoma checks; free annual medical check-up; on-site gym; on-site canteen; family fun day at Christmas; business units celebrate their own milestones; an employee function after the two annual maintenance shut-downs; employees can spend one working day a year on a community project; during each nine-day maintenance shutdown, ABB donates \$500 to two charities each day if no-one is injured during the period; sponsorship of local sports teams; medical insurance, including families; company super scheme and death benefit scheme; contribution to study fees and study leave for exams; on average 4% of hours worked is spent in training.

More women in senior positions at the University of Auckland

Development and promotion of women in leadership roles is the main focus of the **University of Auckland's Women in Leadership Programme**, which won the Manāki Tangata Innovation Award.

The programme aims to redress historically low numbers of women in senior positions at the University. In 2000, academic women made up 38% of all academic staff, but only 16% held senior academic positions. Māori and Pacific women were also under-represented.

As academic reputation is often linked to international benchmarks for research performance, part-time employment for mid-career academics can be problematic. The leadership programme was developed to increase the numbers of women in senior positions and to foster training, mentoring and career development for academic and general staff. This programme is being adapted for other groups.

In the past three years, nearly two-thirds of participants have said they have experienced a new professional opportunity. Participants have increased their networks, and mentoring has meant they have been able to share problems and concerns.



Prue Toft, University of Auckland's EEO Manager, receives the Manāki Tangata Innovation Award from the Prime Minister, Helen Clark.

The programme has translated to a higher number of women in senior roles: in 2005, 43% of senior lecturers were women compared to 29% in 2000. Similarly the number of women associate professors has increased from 15% to 24%.

One mentor described the benefits of being involved in the programme: "The satisfaction of helping someone else resolving issues that you have had to resolve in the past, my own growth in confidence, and self-affirmation"

Lester Oakes, Career Services

The Walk the Talk award went to **Lester Oakes**, Chief Executive of Career Services, a government organisation employing 170 staff at 15 locations.

Lester has been with Career Services since 1990 and was appointed Chief Executive eight years ago. With more responsibilities and demands on his time, Lester realised he needed to make a concerted effort to incorporate a sense of wellbeing and balance into his work schedule. "I purposefully take public transport to the railway station and walk the rest of the way," says Lester. "This creates a space in my day and enables me to get some exercise into my routine."

The organisation's values explicitly include work-life balance, resilience and manaaki me te tiaki tangata – welcoming and supporting one another. Lester models and communicates these values and employees often feel there

is a whanau approach about the way he manages the office.

"I spend a lot of time talking and connecting with people, and genuinely understanding what is working for them or how things could be done differently," says Lester. "You can't just do that when things are going wrong. It needs to be part of a climate of trust and openness that has been developed over time."

Lester's motto is "long hours are not a badge of honour" and this exemplifies his attitude to work. He encourages staff to make time for family and other interests outside of the workplace. Lester believes that often the things that have a small impact on an organisation can have a significant impact on people's lives. Managers have the discretion to agree to

employees' taking sick kids to the doctor, attending school activities, sharing a special occasion etc.

"The minute you have to take the rule book out it defeats the purpose," he says. "People need to feel that they can approach you and these requests can be accommodated. We have reporting targets that need to be met but I don't believe long hours and outcomes necessarily go together."

Training and development is important, as are recognition and celebration of successes. Lester is personally involved in all staff induction programmes so that new employees understand the people-focused culture he supports.

Lester is Vice President of the International Association of Education and Vocational Guidance, and is involved in Wellington's musical theatre productions.

"As CE I can make things happen in the organisation, but I also realise that people take particular notice of what I do and say. If I am not living the philosophy myself, people see through it very quickly."

For more information on the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards winners, see www.eeotrust.org.nz/awards/leaders.cfm. Details of all winners' and entrants' work-life balance initiatives and strategies are available in our publication *A Question of Balance 2006*. You can purchase this from our office for \$35.



Lester Oakes from Career Services walks to work along the Wellington waterfront.

Work-Life Survey reveals business benefits

The EEO Trust's first Work-Life Survey has found that employers who systematically implement work-life strategies are more likely to report a decrease in staff turnover and absenteeism and an increase in return rates from parental leave in the last 12 months.

The Work-Life Survey was conducted in May this year and included questions on what work-life initiatives are available and how they are developed, role modelled and communicated.

It was completed by 462 organisations, including 326 EEO Employers Group members. The survey sample is likely to be biased toward employers with an interest in work-life issues. It is also biased towards larger organisations.

Nearly 263,000 people are employed by respondent organisations, representing 13% of all employees in New Zealand as at March 2005 according to Statistics NZ data.

Flexible work hours and general domestic or special leave are the most commonly provided work-life initiatives. Other initiatives provided by more than half the respondents were: discouraging long hours, support for carers, family-oriented social events, flexible work location, the ability to shift between part-time and full-time work in the same position, part-time work at senior levels, job sharing, information on work-life balance and children being welcome in the workplace when necessary.

Most work-life initiatives are provided on an informal basis, with only the leave options being more likely to be formalised.

Most of the organisations participating in the survey (62%) have a work-life strategy or policy, mainly in order to attract and recruit the best talent. Other reasons were to improve productivity, general business benefits and social responsibility.

The Work-Life Survey results indicate that there is a high level of commitment from senior management, mainly through role modelling, but a relatively low level of resourcing for awareness and training.

Communication of policies/strategies was also high and a wide range of methods were used.

While two-thirds of the respondents carry out staff satisfaction surveys, only a quarter have specifically surveyed their staff to find out about their work-life balance needs.

Just over half the respondents have a health and wellness programme and, while many have had a programme for many years, the number of organisations offering them is increasing.

The most common health and wellness provisions are workstation assessments, flu vaccinations, stress management information/support, vision checks and information on physical activity.

Organisations with health and wellness programmes were more likely to report reduced time off work due to injury, reduced absenteeism and improved staff retention during the past 12 months.

Effects of encouraging work-life balance

In analysing the results of the survey, the EEO Trust developed a work-life balance score to gauge whether the implementation of work-life strategies or policies and the provision of work-life initiatives resulted in desirable outcomes for the workplaces.

We found that the best practice organisations, which systematically implemented work-life strategies and had a higher number of initiatives, also had higher proportions of all the desirable outcome measures: increased uptake of work-life initiatives, decreased staff turnover, decreased absenteeism, and an improved parental leave return rate over the last 12 months.

When asked about the benefits of work-life initiatives, respondents mainly referred to attraction or retention of staff, particularly those with special skills. Reduced absenteeism and injury rates, increased staff loyalty, commitment, morale and discretionary effort, and improved parental leave return rates were also commonly mentioned.

Workplace barriers and solutions

The main barriers to implementing work-life balance policies are lack of support from managers, lack of time and resources to formalise policies or introduce new initiatives, lack of interest or resistance from staff, meeting client needs, heavy workloads, covering absent staff, and equity of access to provisions for all staff.

When asked how they overcame these barriers respondents described communicating to managers and staff the benefits of work-life balance, training managers in new ways of working, building accountability for implementation into managers' performance reviews, and contracts and redesigning jobs.

Small organisations employing fewer than 10 people reported that the barriers to implementing work-life balance included meeting deadlines, limited resources, employee abuse of provisions, and ensuring equitable access.

Solutions included good communication with clients and staff, all staff having a project partner, and offering initiatives that do not require funding.

In small organisations flexible work hours and locations, general domestic and special leave, discouragement of long work hours, welcoming children at work when necessary, and support for those caring for family or friends were the most common work-life initiatives. About half the small organisations provide initiatives to support employees' health and wellness.

One respondent described why work-life balance initiatives are important to their small business: "A key focus of our organisation is identifying both personal and business values. Through sharing these values the aim is always to align both business and personal. It is the fulfilled employee who will give that additional discretionary effort, which leads to improved productivity."

The full report will be available on our website in October.

Flexible work solutions – what leading employers say

EEO Trust research consistently finds that a wide range of people want flexible working arrangements to help them balance their working lives with their interests and commitments outside the workplace.

An EEO Trust online survey of parents last year found that for 93% of the 4,475 respondents, flexible start and finish times were “very important” or “important” in helping them combine paid work with parenting. The ability to occasionally change working hours was rated “very important” or “important” by 92% of respondents.

Similarly, the EEO Trust’s Work and Age Survey in April 2006 found flexible working hours would encourage 64% of respondents to work past their expected retirement date.

To further explore this area of flexible working options the EEO Trust interviewed ten previous entrants in the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards to see what arrangements are being offered by these leading New Zealand employers.

The interviewees were mainly senior HR managers or business owners. Their organisations employ around 10,000 people combined: the largest, Westpac, employing 6,000 and the smallest, Strategy Recruitment, employing 28.

Many of the workplaces said that the uptake, formalisation and extension of flexible working arrangements had increased in the past five or six years, particularly in relation to flexible work locations. EDS New Zealand said flexible working arrangements had always been available in the company but, two to three years ago management had a closer look at the policies to see where more clarity and definition could be applied.

Improved staff retention is the primary reason for offering flexibility, particularly in relation to creating appropriate working arrangements for mothers returning to work after paid parental leave. A number of employers offer flexible or part-time work to help retain senior staff approaching retirement.

Harrison Grierson, engineering consultants, have a number of older staff that would prefer to work two, three or four days a week. The company is keen to keep these people, particularly in terms of mentoring junior staff.

Buller District Council offers flexible work options to assist with recruitment and retention, particularly as it can be difficult to attract staff to the relatively remote Westport location. Health care provider, Enable New Zealand, also mentioned the value that flexibility added to the employment package offered to new staff.

Formalisation of arrangements

While requests from individuals often prompt the establishment of flexible working arrangements, many organisations formalise the arrangements to ensure a degree of consistency.

EDS New Zealand has detailed procedures for managers to follow when implementing flexible working arrangements. An agreement is drawn up when a manager agrees that an employee can work from home, and the arrangement is regularly reviewed.

Other employers negotiate the basis of flexible working arrangements with unions, and they are subsequently incorporated in collective contracts. Even in these situations there tends to be a great degree of flexibility and manager discretion used when approving requests.

Smaller organisations generally respond to each request as it arises without any formal process in place, and, according to the EEO Trust’s Work-Life Survey 2006, large organisations are more likely to have formal policies detailing flexible working arrangements.

Formal approval processes are usually only needed to deal with requests to permanently change working hours or for work-from-home arrangements, and flexible starting and finishing times are taken for granted in most of the workplaces interviewed.

Communicating options

Communicating these arrangements is important to successful uptake. INSIGHT, which offers rehabilitation services to ACC clients in the South Island, mentioned the challenge of demonstrating to staff the amount of flexibility available to them, and plans to improve its induction process so that new employees clearly understand the working options available.

Many of the managers interviewed stressed the importance of keeping an open mind to flexible working arrangements so they can be adjusted to meet people’s changing needs.

For example at Enable New Zealand, an 80-hour fortnight is very popular with the wheelchair technicians but the office staff prefer a range of part-time working or work-from-home options.

All the interviewees said the type of work, not the level of seniority, restricted employees’ access to flexible arrangements.

Employers interviewed were hard pressed to find any costs associated with flexible working. A number mentioned the cost of technology needed to implement remote access, and one said managing a number of part-time staff involved extra administrative time, but all stated that the costs were small in relation to the benefits of retaining skilled staff.

As Marianne Wilkinson of Westpac said the costs are in **not** doing it, especially in this employment market.

With its focus on leading employers, this research does not provide a comprehensive summary of flexible working arrangements but it does show that such arrangements are becoming increasingly common. They are likely to continue to increase as a result of employees’ changing expectations and the recognition from employers that these initiatives bring worthwhile benefits and are not “too hard” to manage.

Latest research

Work-Life Balance in New Zealand: A snapshot of employee and employer attitudes and experiences

The Department of Labour's report incorporates results from two national surveys conducted in 2005 that focused on work-life balance. Key findings indicated that employees want flexible working options including start and finish times, and more paid and unpaid leave. They would also prefer more input in the way they work and the number of hours they work.

<http://www.dol.govt.nz/worklife/snapshot.asp>

The Work/Life Balance Benchmarking Survey

The report measures the progress Australian organisations are making with regards to work-life strategies. It discusses flexible working options, best practice organisations, organisational culture, and provides recommendations for the future.

<http://www.worklifebalance.com.au/pdfs/mwlb2006execsum.pdf>

Telework for Australian Employees and Businesses: Maximising the Economic and Social Benefits of Flexible Working Practices

The Australian Teleworking Advisory Committee to the Australian Government outlines the benefits and barriers of teleworking, as well as potential information technology issues.

http://www.dcita.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/37022/ATAC_REPORT.pdf

Older workers and work life balance

This UK report provides information about older workers and their lives outside the workplace. It reviews both older workers' and employers' attitudes to employment and retirement, and explores the nature of workplace tensions for older workers.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/ebooks/1859353444.pdf>

Please read on...

Downshifting: how to work less and enjoy life more

John Drake's workbook-type publication is for people wanting a shift in their working responsibilities and lifestyles. Self-reflective and leading questions prompt readers to analyse current practices that are affecting their work-life balance, and changes they can initiate. Drake suggests readers research company HR policies, options available that could accommodate their downshift, and develop alternative plans if these are not successful. Downshifting also need to consider how transitions will affect their relationships and personal beliefs.

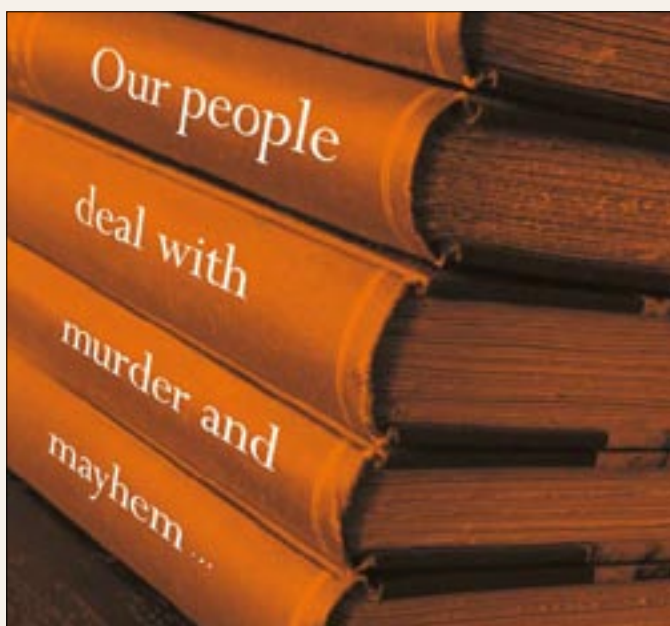
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc. 2000. ISBN 1-57675-116-3.

Work+life: finding the fit that is right for you

This three-step guide by Cali Williams Yost walks readers through how to change a mind-set, develop a strategy, and implement flexible working arrangements. It encourages employees to create a business case for the initiative and overcome roadblocks. It also has a Work+Life Fit "Quick Fix" checklist and resource section with relevant websites.

Published by Berkley Publishing Group, Penguin Group, USA. 2004. ISBN 1-59448-065-6.

You can access the on-line EEO Library catalogue at <http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/library/index.cfm>. The catalogue has over 5,000 research articles, papers and books on EEO, diversity, work-life balance and employment. Members of the EEO Employers Group can borrow books at no charge, so if you are a member and have not ordered your library card, please contact [Renee Schick](#).



...it would be a crime to lose them.

Meredith Connell is an Auckland law firm that prosecutes serious crime. It recruits lawyers and staff of exceptional calibre. And to keep them it has taken a remarkable approach to work-life balance. Turnover of professional staff for the 2005-2006 year was half of legal industry norms.

The partners see a direct link between the flexibility available at Meredith Connell and the low staff turnover. For example, of the 18 women who have taken parental leave over the last three years, 17 have returned to Meredith Connell, one leaving Auckland for lifestyle reasons. Low staff turnover saves Meredith Connell \$360,000 per annum.

The EEO Trust works closely with New Zealand employers to enable and encourage diversity in the workplace. The EEO Employers Group logo recognises employers who respect the needs and capacities of a diverse workforce. Employers committed to EEO benefit through improved recruitment and retention, and increased staff morale and productivity. Read about Meredith Connell's initiatives on our website.

www.eeotrust.org.nz



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