

Versatile workplace BUSINESS SUCCESS

Maximise your business
potential with a diverse workforce



Deliver opportunities
for your people to thrive.
Harness talent for your
business success.

Welcome

Whether you lead a team of five staff or 5000, encouraging and effectively managing equal opportunities in your workplace is more than the right thing to do. It's also a powerful way to increase your business efficiency, competitiveness and profitability. At the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust we're here to help you introduce and manage proven EEO thinking and practices across your workplace so you can encourage diversity in your staff, and benefit from the rewards of a more versatile business.



Show commitment
to all your employees
and they'll return
commitment to
your business.

The time is right

New Zealand's workforce is more diverse than ever. The average age of workers is older. There are more women, a greater variety of ethnic groups, more people with disabilities. Many workers are part-time, often with family responsibilities.

By supporting equal employment opportunities across your workplace you reflect the needs and values of all your staff. By doing so, you're being a responsible employer. Further, as numerous studies and surveys demonstrate, the business benefits are significant. Encouraging diversity in your workplace can lead to greater staff commitment, lower absenteeism, new customers, increased profit and more.

The diversity of a workforce can relate to all sorts of factors that people bring to a job including their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, and disability as well as responsibilities for family and other personal commitments.

For Christchurch-based TL Jones, having a diverse workforce has given the company an undeniable competitive advantage. TL Jones has serviced the elevator industry since the 1920s and exporting now accounts for 90% of its business. The company's 25 Christchurch staff include a wide range of nationalities, most of whom were recruited locally.

"When recruiting staff our first

consideration is whether the person possesses the appropriate core competencies," says managing director, Chris Stoelhorst. "We also take into account how the person will fit within the organisation, their language skills, and their experience at a commercial level in offshore markets. The 'X' factor is the language."

The company has 15 languages covered, in addition to English.

"Our French PA/marketing coordinator is an example of the benefits of employing an ethnically diverse staff," says Stoelhorst. "She came to us from the UK, where she lived for a number of years working in marketing and commercial roles that covered most of Europe, and she speaks four European languages."

The staff covers a range of ages.

At senior technical levels, they have mature staff in their 50s whom TL Jones consider the custodians of their technology. In other roles they have a spread that is representative of the population as a whole.

Thirty-five per cent of the staff are women - high for the technology and engineering area. Of the six key business development roles, the two who hold the biggest portfolios are women, both of whom are extremely capable, Stoelhorst says.

What counts as workplace discrimination?

Discrimination occurs when factors or personal characteristics which aren't relevant to the job are used in any aspect of people management. This includes direct discrimination, such as the refusal to hire people with disabilities. More commonly, it is indirect: people appear to be treated the same, but in reality some are denied equal opportunities.

Even if discrimination is unconscious, it affects staff performance. People who feel vulnerable or discriminated against won't give you the benefit of their full potential.

Good EEO in action

Good equal employment opportunities:

- remove barriers so all staff have the chance to perform to their best
- ensure fair treatment of everyone who has a job or is trying to get one
- ensure you get the best person or team on the job
- motivate staff to be loyal and committed to your business
- promote understanding between your staff, supporting a stronger and more focused team.

One way of enabling people to make a positive contribution at work is to be responsive to the different elements of their personal lives. For Auckland-based temporary recruitment agency KC Temps, business success depends on retaining people who have developed long-term relationships with clients and candidates and showing potential job applicants that KC Temps is an employer of choice.

“Our work and life policies, which are a strategic part of our competitive differential as an employer of choice, have helped us to achieve these goals,” say the directors.

The work-life policies include flexibility around working hours, an annual health and wellbeing allowance and financial help with study.

One team member says that flexibility around hours enabled her to manage the complexities of building a house while another is able to finish early one day a week.

KC Temps’ directors say the benefits of these types of measures include a reduction in special leave and sick leave, client support, high staff retention, performance and productivity, high client satisfaction and high staff.

One team member puts it in a nutshell: “In return for their support and flexibility in supporting my work-life balance, they have my dedication and loyalty.”

KC Temps won the Small to Medium Organisation Award at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2004.

Key business benefits

Increase staff retention

EEO practices encourage loyalty which helps to reduce turnover. As well as saving on the cost of recruiting, you ensure a better return on skills investment, and maximise organisational knowledge.

Reduce absenteeism

In numerous New Zealand and overseas businesses, flexible time, leave and sickness policies have been proven to reduce staff absenteeism.

Source the best available talent

EEO helps you to attract staff from the widest possible pool of talent.

Lift business productivity

EEO practices encourage staff commitment, increasing productivity, creativity and loyalty.

First Steps Award winner at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2004 was IT provider Oxygen Business Solutions. Oxygen says the business benefits of its work-life strategy have been numerous. Staff engagement has increased from 25% in 2002 to 40% last year, its financial results improved markedly, and its reputation as an employer of choice has helped significantly in attracting and retaining the best people.

Attract new customers

EEO can be a powerful way to differentiate your business to attract new customers, both in New Zealand and internationally. For example, those most likely to have the knowledge and experience to tap into Asian markets are likely to be Asian. In New Zealand, unless Maori are in key positions in your organisation, you are unlikely to be in a position to readily tap into the development of new Maori businesses and investment initiatives.

Deliver better customer service

The happier your staff, the better the service they will deliver to your customers. EEO policies have been proven to improve staff satisfaction, and ultimately sales.

Enhance your company image

Having good EEO practices helps your company to be seen as a good corporate citizen. If your company is seeking investors, EEO practices have been shown to help deliver a higher average return on investment.

Reduce the risk of claims

A good EEO programme helps to ensure discrimination does not occur. However, if it does occur, your programme may well be a legal defence against liability (penalties in workplace discrimination cases can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars).

Promote health and safety

Workplace discrimination leads to stress for all involved, increasing the risk of health and safety issues. Stress contributes to an estimated 85 per cent of work accidents, so good EEO practices offer major opportunities for a healthier, safer workplace.

Auckland company ACI Glass Packaging has found that since it brought in training, education and health programmes, absenteeism and overtime hours worked at its Penrose factory have been reduced.

Health and safety have improved enormously too. As a result of increased employee literacy, and workers' involvement in safety committees and audits, the company has had one lost-time injury in four years.

ACI Glass Packaging employs six women on the factory floor and its first glass technology apprentice was a woman. The company just wants to employ the best person for the job.

"We're slowly breaking down traditional barriers and we employ solely on the basis of merit," says Human Resources Manager Bruce Woodcock. "If the best person needs to be accommodated in some way, we'll try to do that."



The most important
step to success with EEO
is commitment.

Introducing EEO into your workplace

Every workplace will need to take a slightly different approach to becoming an equal opportunity employer. However, consultation and commitment are critical to effectively introducing EEO throughout a workplace.

Depending on the size of the workplace this could involve holding meetings with staff to explore the benefits of EEO and discuss the workplace's commitment to it. Staff are likely to have valuable insights into how EEO can be implemented in their area and what the impact is likely to be. Senior management will need to be involved in these discussions to ensure that people know that EEO is a high priority for the whole organisation. Unions, employer associations, other organisations which have already adopted EEO and the EEO Trust could also be involved in the consultation process.

Large workplaces could also support consultation by:

- Supporting staff to network with people inside and outside the workplace who have an insight into EEO
- Asking for feedback from staff networks eg. Maori networks etc

- Run a staff survey to determine understanding of and support of EEO

It may be worth developing a draft EEO statement to act as a starting point for discussion about EEO and its place in your workplace. The statement could say, for example:

"[Business name] supports the principles and practices of equal employment opportunities (EEO) as a means of ensuring all job applicants and employees have equal opportunity to achieve their potential. We are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and reject discrimination on any grounds."

Further detail about the benefits of EEO could be provided, along with the actions that will be taken in light of the workplace's commitment to EEO. For example:

"EEO is good business practice. We believe that [business name] will benefit from a diverse workforce. We are committed to recognising and valuing the different skills, talents, experiences and perspectives of our employees.

"We will consult with employees to integrate EEO into our Business Plan (or business activities). We will have clear and measurable EEO objectives while we will monitor and evaluate regularly."

This type of statement could be the beginnings of documenting your commitment to EEO in an EEO policy or strategy. Smaller workplaces may not need much written documentation, just a clear statement that EEO is important and will benefit the workplace. For larger organisations, particularly those with a statutory requirement to EEO, a written commitment to the principles of EEO is the starting point for developing an EEO Action Plan.

Larger organisations may also need to appoint someone to manage the introduction of EEO into your workplace. They could have an on-going role co-ordinating EEO activities like training for managers and regular communications with staff, and they could also be responsible for measuring the results of EEO.



Your EEO commitments
are important. Be proud
of them.

Driving success

Tell everyone

EEO is a powerful business tool for your staff and your business as a whole. Communicate your commitment to EEO widely:

- put a statement of your commitment on staff noticeboards and in company newsletters and handbooks
- give the statement to ALL current and new staff – and consider translations
- issue a press release to trade or other publications
- include the statement in your brief to recruitment and other consultants
- ensure all job applicants know about your commitment to EEO
- cover the key points in job advertisements, marketing material and your annual report.

Develop an EEO action plan

An action plan sets out how you are going to implement your commitment to EEO.

Ongoing input from staff is essential. Depending on the size of your workplace, this may work best with a group or project team with representatives from management and staff.

Include in the plan:

- a brief description of the development and consultation process
- what's going to happen – goals, objectives and actions
- people responsible
- timing for action
- method of review.

Get more information

Collecting EEO data in line with the Privacy Act will give you a profile of people working for your organisation. Analysing this data may show a higher turnover or absenteeism rate for particular groups of people. This may identify problems such as sexual or racial harassment which are causing you to lose skilled staff.

Collection of data is sensitive and confidentiality is essential.

Ways to collect data:

- questionnaire or survey
- exit interviews with staff who are leaving
- feedback from networks
- organisational review.

Provide training and advice

EEO training can be helpful to:

- explain what EEO is and how it can benefit your organisation
- gain support for EEO
- give technical advice (such as data collection)
- give legal advice (such as grievance procedures)
- help dispel the myths.

Training may cover general awareness or specific training on issues such as prevention of sexual, racial or other harassment.

Celebrate successes

Success with EEO is ongoing. Even small initiatives are valuable, so make sure recognition is given. Record progress by:

- reporting to employees on specific outcomes (such as a survey on a literacy or career development programme)
- sending information to the EEO Trust. The EEO Trust Newsletter, Work & Life Bulletin, and website can share your success stories with other organisations.

Helpful thinking for a more versatile team

The diverse New Zealand population

- More women continue to take up paid employment and their level of education continues to rise.
 - By 2020 half the workforce will be 40 years or older compared with 35-years-old in 2004.
 - Many employees now want greater involvement with children and other family members.
 - The Maori population rose from 12.9 per cent in 1991 to 14 per cent in 2001 and is projected to grow to 16 per cent by 2021.
 - The Pacific Islands population rose from 4.9 per cent in 1991 to 6 per cent in 2001 and continues to rise.
 - New Zealand is becoming more ethnically diverse, with increasing numbers of Asian and other ethnic groups.
 - Up to 10 per cent of the population are lesbians or gay men.
 - One in five people has a disability.
- (Data mainly from Statistics New Zealand)*

Recruitment and selection

- Make the most of your recruiting opportunities. These are chances to increase your workplace diversity.
- EEO employers base selection on merit, using clear and fair job criteria which are as objective as possible.

Irrelevant personal characteristics should not be taken into account. It's pointless to exclude those who could do the job but have not gained skills through formal training.

Mechanics from far-flung corners of the world have proven a boon for a Christchurch vehicle testing station facing a number of staff vacancies after the merger of two testing stations and the opening of the aircraft engine rebuilding centre at Christchurch airport. "It's worked well for us. We struggled for many months to find qualified people and were pleased to welcome people from all over the world. They work well as a team and there haven't been any issues around the mixed ethnicity," says Area Manager Brian Smith.

- When choosing a recruitment consultant, consider a member of the EEO Employers Group, which signifies they are committed to EEO best practice.
- If the applicant is from a minority group, try to have at least one of the interviewers from that group.
- Ensure you appoint people at a level matching their skills and experiences. Women who re-enter the paid workforce often start on

lower salaries, disregarding their skills and experiences gained outside the paid workforce.

- Consider allowing interviewees to have whanau (family) support with them.

Offering flexible work conditions

More flexible work conditions include:

- flexitime
- compressed work week such as four 10-hour days
- part-time work at all levels (permanent part-time work has an ongoing contract of employment so employees accrue benefits such as annual and sick leave)
- term-time working – a parent does not work school holidays
- job-sharing, where two or more employees share a job
- job-splitting, where one job is split into two or more part-time positions
- flexible leave provisions, including career breaks and domestic leave
- flexible workplaces, such as working from home.

Bank manager Neil Savage took early retirement at 55 because work stress was affecting his health. Despite his age and having never working on a farm before, Savage is now a respected member of the team at Karainga Poultry farm in the Manawatu.

“Neil is a good worker,” says Kairanga Poultry owner Jim Collin. “He’s a fellow who’s deeply interested in his work. He gets on well with everyone, always turns up on time, works at his peak, and pushes on when he has to. A mature man like Neil is more reliable to work with. He’ll accept instruction more willingly than a young person and he’s got a good brain.”

Creating a better workplace environment

- Many workplaces are not designed for staff with mobility issues. Doorways, for instance, are often not wide enough for a person who uses a wheelchair. Simple changes can have major benefits for staff and customers. Banks which installed ramps reported improved customer satisfaction from those who use wheelchairs and also from parents with pushchairs.
- Check when people enter a workplace for the first time that they have suitable equipment. Women working in non-traditional areas sometimes find that no safety equipment fits them. Ensure the workplace is physically safe for all employees. Do you need translations of safety information on noticeboards?
- Workplace social functions should take account of varying religious

groups who may prefer different food and follow different customs.

- Using inclusive language (language which includes groups other than the speaker or the dominant group) is very important. Referring to people with disabilities, for instance, as “the handicapped” or “cripples” is offensive, whereas “people with disabilities” puts the person first.
- Those who object to such change often say it’s trivial. But inclusive language is more efficient and effective. It makes sense to ensure that all company communications, written and spoken, help to make everyone on staff feel included, not excluded.

Diversity makes for a more able workplace

Harnessing diversity is just part of the day-to-day work of Land Information New Zealand (LINZ).

Leon Sullivan is a gay man who “does drag”. His team of 18 people includes a wide range of ethnicities, as well as a woman with very little hearing.

“Diversity makes us a stronger team,” says Sullivan. “We’re all familiar with differences so we’re prepared for any type of client or question.”

Preventing harassment

Harassment is any unwanted and offensive verbal or physical behaviour that has a detrimental effect in the workplace based on sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation or other factors. Such harassment is against the law and employers have legal obligations to prevent and/or deal with complaints of harassment.

Problems with harassment have major economic as well as personal consequences. They can cost a business thousands of dollars in unnecessary distractions, loss of customers, high employee turnover, low motivation and reduced productivity. Costs can include legal expense, time to deal with the complaint, negative PR and bad employee relations.

Positive action

This is not reverse discrimination.

It is designed to overcome past discrimination and prevent it happening again, without creating new injustices.

Examples of positive action strategies:

- encouraging particular people to apply for jobs or training opportunities
- wording advertisements to encourage applications from particular people
- providing network opportunities for staff



Leon Sullivan, Photographer David Hamilton, courtesy of Department of Labour.

- mentoring
- training programmes on cultural perspectives
- literacy development
- assertiveness training
- career development designed for particular people
- childcare facilities or meeting family needs
- scholarships for particular groups
- work experience programmes
- sponsorship.

Wanganui landscaping business Horticultural Services is a thriving operation with people working from Taupo through to Wellington, mainly looking after civic and rest home facilities.

Director Graeme Musson employs several disabled people, including two deaf workers, one of whom has only one arm. He is convinced his disabled workers do at least as good a job as his other workers. "They tend to be more motivated as they've always been at the bottom of the heap."

He recounts the satisfaction he felt on employing one of the disabled men, "When I employed him he was so pleased to get a job he had tears in his eyes. To see him in action is fantastic. He's fully motivated and on the go all the time. He communicates with the rest home residents and they love him to bits."

Tools for versatile workplaces

The EEO Trust provides a wide range of information and tools to help organisations create versatile workplaces. Many of these are freely available from our website (www.eeotrust.org.nz).

Resource Centre

At our on-line Resource Centre you'll find:

PeoplePower – Diversity success stories from more than 60 New Zealand workplaces. They tell the stories of employers who have benefited from having a diverse workforce

Tools for Tapping into Talent – This unique recruitment training tool comes in six modules designed specifically for people in New Zealand involved in recruiting staff. It includes ideas, exercises and discussion starters to enable business to:

- Recruit more effectively
- Stay within the law
- Deal with managers or clients who want to discriminate
- Tap the diverse talent pool

Fathers and Paid Work, Relationships and Paid Work – These are tools for employers to research the personal and working relationships in their workplace and create a more productive workplace.

Work & Life Bulletin – This quarterly publication includes the latest work-life research and practice from around the world as well as local best practice case studies.

EEO Library – The EEO Trust has an extensive collection of publications on EEO, diversity and related issues. The EEO Library search tool scans the collection for relevant items and provides a list of search results, including a brief summary and source information. The electronic items in the collection can be downloaded directly, and EEO Employers Group members can borrow almost any item from the library.

EEO consultants and trainers – A list of consultants and trainers who can work with employers to help ensure they are effectively harnessing the diverse workforce.

EEO/diversity research – If you need data to inform your choices around EEO and diversity try our website first. We hold a wide range of research resources and commission our own research on current business issues.

Playing with diversity

The EEO Trust also promotes the Diversity Game, an internationally proven training tool on diversity issues. The Diversity Game won an award as one of the top ten training tools in the US in the 1990s. It has been completely revised for the New Zealand context and is played by workplace teams to challenge people to explore their knowledge around diversity issues and determine how to handle common diversity issues.

Sharing diversity success stories

The EEO Trust is committed to enabling New Zealand workplaces to learn from each other's experience of managing a diverse workforce. Our website and publications, as well as our on-going personal contact with employers committed to diversity enable us to communicate uniquely New Zealand solutions to managing diversity. Contact us to share your success story.

