

**You have to
grow up quick
to fit into
the working
world.**

Maximum talent

Young people are the workforce of the future but many are getting left behind from day one. CadetMax is turning unskilled young people into able employees.

Last July, 19-year-old Peter Reti was so shy he wouldn't look at you while speaking, having to join groups of strangers terrified him, and he "wasn't the best talking on the phone". Behind him was a lacklustre school record ("I didn't really try"), a general job-skills course and six months of computer training – but he hadn't been able to land a job and was feeling down about it.

now has pride and purpose. And most important, he's got a skilled job.

Peter is an alarm monitoring operator at Country Wide Monitoring Services Ltd, and his employer, company owner Frank Bennett, says he's doing well handling incoming calls and alerts on the 13,000 alarms the company oversees.

"We need operators who are

"We need operators who are sharp, tech-savvy, are good at data entry, can think on their feet, and communicate calmly and confidently – in some situations, people are panicking."

Frank Bennett

Nine months on, the Papakura teenager is a different person, chatting away quite happily to a journalist he's just met and unfazed by a hovering photographer. He

sharp, tech-savvy, are good at data entry, can think on their feet, and communicate calmly and confidently – in some situations, people are panicking."

Peter's transformation is thanks to CadetMax, one of a number of government-supported schemes to help young people make the often difficult transition from school to that critical first job, building their confidence, skills and motivation and helping them develop a job-search strategy.

CadetMax, based in Manukau, is a partnership between the Auckland Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Social Development, its target South Auckland 16- to 19-year-olds. Potential cadets are lured by word-of-mouth, or referred by their last school or government agencies. They have to get through an application process, with just three in 10 accepted.

The cadets' two-week induction course includes literacy and numeracy training, workplace and paperwork norms and, for nearly all the cadets, training to get a restricted driver licence. Cadets also earn the Site Safe Passport, which is a basic health and safety qualification, and learn about the value of teamwork. They complete a week of work experience with a wide range of



local employers before starting to job-hunt with an in-house mentor for however long that takes (for Peter, three months).

After starting work, the mentor acts as a guide, meeting the cadet every month and supporting the cadet-employer relationship for a year. For each teenager, it's a 13-month commitment at the least, and often stretches well beyond that.

Peter, the Māori-Chinese only child of a bus driver and a full-time mum, says, "I feel I'm much more confident now. I feel I can do anything right now because of CadetMax. They push you, but

they take account of what you say. They really opened my eyes to the world." The most important takeaway: "If you don't try, no one will try for you."

A positive ending, then – but the challenge for New Zealand remains finding ways to tap the talent in each school-leaver. As large numbers of our workforce head for retirement, young people need to be equipped to become the prime-age workers of the near future.

A new EEO Trust report, *Youth force labour trends, issues and solutions*, points out that 12 per cent of those aged 15 to 24 were not working, training, studying or engaged in

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PICTURED:
Peter Reti with Wayne Sinton
of CadetMax.

full-time caregiving in the year to March 2010. That's a massive 73,900 young people getting left behind; many of them are already socially disadvantaged. Māori and Pacific people and young men are more likely to be in this group.

Getting these young people oriented to the world of work is at the heart of programmes like CadetMax. Says Project Manager

Leah Gates: "There is so much amazing young talent out there. For us, it's about finding that talent and promoting their skills and attitude to an employer. Key to this is risk mitigation for employers – cadets who get in have been thoroughly screened."

So far, 400 young people, several of them disabled, have found work through CadetMax. Jobs range from entry-level office

and customer service work through to trades apprenticeships; about 30 cadets are now in the freight forwarding industry in roles such as trainee Customs brokers.

Says Chamber head Michael Barnett: "Transitioning these young potential employees through CadetMax and the Chamber's business networks means we create a strong platform of skills and attitudes for employers."

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PICTURED :
CadetMax Project Manager Leah Gates
with her "wall of fame".

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Frank Bennett admits he was initially apprehensive about employing teenagers: "I had some reservations about young people's attitude to work and their reliability – at that age, they are sometimes not settled in their own minds about what they want to do in life and sometimes their minds are elsewhere. But those reservations have been proved groundless."

In fact, he's so pleased with

what CadetMax is turning out that he has taken a second cadet, Jonathan Chau, and has no hesitation in promoting the programme – "I've already recommended the service to a couple of clients."

Read the full EEO Trust report on youth labour force trends at www.eeotrust.org.nz. See also the Human Rights Commission's new report *Breaking Through: Young people at work* at www.neon.org.nz.

How to support young talent

Offer work experience placements

Use subsidies to offset initial costs of training new entrants

Work out how to retain or re-engage highly skilled young people who leave New Zealand for global experience

Promote positive workplace role models

Adjust management styles to reflect 21st-century realities

Getting set to go

Making the move from school to work can challenge even the best-prepared teenager. The Gateway programme offers employers the first shot at work-ready young people.

Thomas Devereaux, 18, has never had a full-time job – but he’s already helped out as a junior film editor on *Spartacus*, the new sword-and-sandals series starring Lucy Lawless.

Kristina Jordan, 17, hasn’t ever held a full-time job either, but she knows what it takes to successfully manage events for teenagers. And both of them are absolutely clear about the attitudes and behaviour expected of them in the workplace, thanks to the Gateway programme run by Waitakere College, Auckland.

Gateway is a national programme aimed at year 11 to 13 students which prepares them for

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Esther Calley, Senior Manager, Tertiary Education Commission

the working world by blending employment-related learning at school with structured on-the-job experience.

Placements with local companies give employers a chance to check out potential: Thomas, long keen on film and television, did his *Spartacus* work at post-production house Digipost last year and was given paid work over the holidays. This year, he’ll be doing more work experience at Digipost as he starts a computer science degree at the University of Auckland.

Last year, Kristina worked with Henderson youth centre Zeal, and the experience taught her that “work isn’t like school ... you have to pick up your game”. Now in her final year of school, she’s decided to set her sights on hospitality management and this year will start work at an inner-city hotel.

Karen Carter, Waitakere College’s Gateway coordinator, has seen students’ skills and self-belief bloom: “Their confidence has grown so much.”

Overall, Gateway is available in about 83 per cent of the country’s state and integrated secondary schools. Students are most commonly exploring careers in education, hospitality, the motor industries, retail, and sport and recreation. Around one in five of

Checking out the pipeline
Employers have a chance to help grow the next generation of workers – and funnel talent into their companies – through a range of other schemes besides Gateway.

Trades Academies is a new model for year 11 to 13 students which combines secondary and tertiary study and work experience. The first academy off the blocks is at South Auckland’s Southern Cross Campus, with nine others to start in 2011.
www.tiny.cc/q9wzc

The Youth Training Programme covers a wide range of regional and local schemes to prepare under-18 school-leavers for work. Wage subsidies are available if employers take on young people for work experience.

Community Max provides a six-month wage subsidy for young people to help complete community-based projects, and Job Ops gives employers a \$5,000 subsidy to provide a six-month work experience or employment opportunity to a young person aged between 16 and 24 with low or no skills.
www.tiny.cc/42du6

PICTURED :
Karen Carter, Waitakere College’s Gateway coordinator, with students Kristina Jordan and Thomas Devereaux.

“You have to grow up quick to fit into the working world. And if you are willing to learn, people will take the time to teach you.”

Zane Niven

2009's Gateway students went straight to a full-time or part-time job, and 64 per cent either stayed in school or opted to do further training to improve their prospects.

Gateway is about “effective transition, not just work experience for the sake of it,” says Esther Calley, a senior manager for the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC), which funds Gateway. “It’s about structured workplace learning, and work experience which will be assessed for unit standards.”

Students generally do one-day-a-week placements or monthly blocks of one week, and they are expected to undertake an element of formal learning – they’re not around just to sweep up and make tea, and they have to comply with health and safety regulations.

“Businesses have to make quite a commitment,” says Esther. However, Gateway covers the costs and supports the student and the employer. Placements allow companies to hone staff coaching skills as well as test potential.

Award-winning Greymouth company Liddell Contracting isn’t wasting that opportunity given the acute local shortage of engineers. It has Gateway programmes with two local high schools and has moved

three students into apprenticeships.

Liddell also gives its Gateway students – two this year – part-time paid work as trades assistants on two afternoons after school, which adds up to five hours of paid work a week.

HR Manager Tania Washer says the company wanted to make “a larger commitment to the students, and we have after-school trades work – helping out, cleaning up, doing general measurements, cutting steel, and counting bolts and screws. It’s what they would learn in a first-year apprenticeship.”

Zane Niven went from Greymouth High’s Gateway programme to Liddell three years ago and has nearly finished his engineering apprenticeship.

“Gateway gave me a big head start,” he says. “I started when I was 16, when all my friends were still at school. Now they are looking to go to uni or just starting apprenticeships and I have nearly done my time and qualified.”

The most important thing Gateway taught him? “You have to grow up quick to fit into the working world. And if you are willing to learn, people will take the time to teach you.”

Thinking about work

What are teenage girls’ career aspirations? In 2010, girls aged 15 and 16 were choosing pretty much the same roles as their counterparts in 1995 and 1979, according to a survey of students in Dunedin and Auckland.

The rankings changed between years, but female-dominated fields prevailed, such as air hostessing, hairdressing, kindy and primary school teaching and nursing, despite the major changes in attitudes to women’s careers in the last 30 years. However, researchers noted a strengthening preference for working in male-dominated jobs such as vet, architect, doctor and lawyer (medical and law school intakes are now about 50 per cent female).

The study was carried out by the Gender and Diversity Research Group of AUT University for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, which sees encouraging young women into male-dominated professions, including trades, as part of its work to reduce the gender pay gap, currently about 12 per cent.

www.tiny.cc/m7z4f

Some young not so computer-savvy?

Think your young employees must know computers inside out? Think again, says Pam Martin.

Although young people generally leave school with internet and social media skills, productivity expert Pam Martin says that relatively few have been taught about standard business tools like word processing packages, spreadsheets and email.

“Everyone assumes that young people are digitally literate, but that is not always the case –

they tend to be confident around computers but not competent,” Pam says.

“Many employers hire youngsters thinking they will know more about using a computer than they do – but that’s often not the reality.”

Young people are among those taking an online programme through Pam’s training company,

Positive Connexions, which delivers the internationally recognised Internet and Computing Core Certificate (IC3). Available in 143 countries and 24 languages, it teaches fundamental skills and core software applications.

The company is also home to the Kiwi Computer Challenge, her “mad plan” to see one million New Zealanders gain the qualification by 2015 “so we can be sure that everyone is on the same level”.

She adds: “Most people have taught themselves to use a computer and our productivity is leaking out through the holes in our core computer skills.”

In her 2009 book, *Beneath the Knowledge Wave*, Pam talks about the accounts manager who didn’t know how to calculate in Excel, so did the sums on a hand-held calculator and manually inserted them into the spreadsheet. One administrator spent three hours a fortnight for more than a year typing payslips because she wasn’t shown how to generate them automatically when new software was installed. Often, says Pam, people are unaware of the gaps in their knowledge or are too embarrassed to ask for help.



Paths to the future: the key to keeping young staff

Want to ensure you keep your young staff? Channel their energy and appetite for learning by offering clear expectations and good career-path training, says Briscoe Group's Rohan Bignell.

Briscoe Group believes its approach to training and career development has helped it boost employee retention in a particularly youthful sector – more than half of Briscoe's employees are under 25.

"The reality is if we invest in young people and give them those clear expectations, opportunities to learn and coaching, we will retain them in the long run and save money on recruitment," says Rohan Bignell, Briscoe Group's National People and Performance Manager.

"Because of their energy and their hunger to learn, we believe it's a great investment to train them. We are often asked how we can afford to train our people, to which we always respond we believe we

can't afford not to."

Numerous studies suggest that training and development and opportunities for advancement are among the key influencers of young people's engagement at work. And engagement is all-important – a local study has shown that while the under-20s are initially strongly engaged with their jobs, going the extra mile to help their employer succeed, this soon declines; people in their mid to late 20s have the lowest levels of engagement of any age group.

Briscoe Group, which employs about 2000 people in Rebel Sport, Briscoes Homeware and Living and Giving, has long offered industry training qualifications through the Retail Institute. But in 2008

the two organisations developed a customised on-the-job, nationally recognised training programme called the Customer Service Award to build staff skills and show them a career path in retail, a field that in New Zealand is often seen as a stopgap rather than a long-term occupation. Employees can earn 22 NZQA unit standards in areas such as relevant retail legislation, selling skills and communication, and so far 230 employees have completed it. Says Rohan: "That's an 85 per cent completion rate and extremely high by industry standards."

Work-life balance and flexibility is also a key driver of engagement among young people with busy social lives, says Rohan. "We try to work with that where we can; our rostering system has flexibility and staff can, with their manager's permission, self-roster and change their roster." That requires quite a time investment by managers, he agrees, "but for our youth it seems to be working – and we only do that for top performers."

So far, the Briscoe approach has seen turnover among permanent staff drop from 45 per cent in 2006 to 35 per cent, says Rohan, representing substantial savings given that it costs around \$4,000 to

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Attributes and attitudes

Generation X (born about 1965–1981) grew up in times of economic and social upheaval, and was the first cohort to experience high rates of parental divorce. At work, they are often seen as sceptical, self-focused, and keen to find better work-life balance than their parents did. They are often described as preferring steady and balanced workplaces and avoid long working hours. Generation Y (about 1982–2003) are described as tech-savvy digital natives, with technology shaping them into individualistic people who multi-task. Research suggests that they like a strong degree of mentoring and guidance to point them in the right direction, and are aware of their value in the jobs market. Their loyalty to any one employer can be limited, and they aim for stimulating, fun work environments.

recruit and train a new hire.

So what personal qualities do young people want from their bosses? "Integrity," says Kevin Sharpe, Human Resources Manager for NZ Ski, another big employer of young people with 16- to 25-year-olds comprising around 20 per cent of staff at the height of the snow season.

"Young staff haven't always developed communication skills, so you really need to be quite clear about what it is you want from them; you can't backtrack and change your mind," says Kevin. "You need to be clear about your expectations and not move the goalposts."

Young professionals may be older and more highly skilled than many of those working in retail or tourism but for them simply working for a high-profile company isn't always enough. Increasingly, they ask: What's in it for me?

Recognising that sea change, professional services firm Deloitte revamped its graduate recruitment campaigns. It now promotes the

Deloitte staff experience, which includes a comprehensive induction programme, formal recognition for good work, employee benefits such as flexible hours and development opportunities. An important element of the campaign is young staffers talking about what they get from life at Deloitte.

It's an approach that has worked well, says Duncan Brown, Head of People and Performance: young employees' engagement is up and attrition down.

Work-life balance and flexibility is also a key driver of engagement among young people with busy social lives

Specifically Pacific

The Pacific workforce is growing rapidly, especially in Auckland. A new EEO Trust study explores how to make the most of young Pacific workers.

What's important to young Pacific workers? Here's a 22-year-old Samoan working in finance: "It's important how the bosses feel about me. The more you feel valued, the more you want to come to work. You want to do what you have to do ..."

And here's a 23-year-old Cook Islander working in transport and tourism: "We get recognition for what we did ... Our shift managers and management are quite good and they realise that we perform better when there is a good

aged 19 to 27, and their managers, from six EEO Trust member organisations. The aim: to find out what engages young Pacific workers, what helps and hinders their full participation, and their employment aspirations.

The insights will lead to guidelines to help employers better engage with Pacific staff, an increasing proportion of the total workforce. By 2026, it is estimated that Pacific people will make up 12 per cent of New Zealand's

Pacific workers include being culturally responsive and understanding, recognising good work, looking after staff, being supportive and communicating openly.

Says a 22-year-old Samoan man working in retail: "The boss would usually say good things when he knows I have done overall good things ... I try and think carefully to do the best, but I don't always do right and so I would ask and they will come and give you support... they are good at giving advice."

So what are the attributes that act as enablers to employee engagement? Cultural awareness training and education, two-way communication, the encouragement of supportive managers, and providing opportunities to grow mutual trust and respect were raised.

Another early finding is that a whole-person approach is important to young Pacific workers' engagement – that is, employers understanding what might happen in a young worker's wider environment, such as cultural, religious and family obligations.

It's a two-way thing, says Charis. "Youth employees in many

"They felt like they were being invested in by their employer, thus this increased engagement."

Charis Brown, MPIA

relationship."

Both are voices from the finance, retail, manufacturing, health, transport and media sectors that have contributed to a major piece of EEO Trust research in partnership with the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs (MPIA).

The project, Specifically Pacific, involved face-to-face, in-depth interviews with 20 young employees of Pacific heritage,

workforce and up to one-third of the workforce in Auckland.

Although it will be a few months before the final report is produced, says Dr Charis Brown, MPIA Senior Research Analyst, some early themes are emerging.

One early insight is that the immediate manager is critical to young Pacific workers' success and attitudes. Positive manager attributes identified by young



cases have support from family – and are keen to reciprocate financial support to their families.

"In one case, a manager visited a young employee's family to ask for their assistance in supporting the youth to improve timeliness and attitude on the work site. This family support was received well and resulted in a positive change in the youth's behaviour in the workplace."

Another finding is that organisational support to find and develop a career path is important to many young Pacific workers, as well as support to set short- and long-term goals.

Young people who were able to "trial" an industry while still at school had developed great motivation to gain the right qualifications and experience, says Charis, and they were very aware of the need for the right qualifications, especially in areas like health, finance and the media.

On-the-job training and opportunities to continue their education are also big motivators for young workers, says Charis. "They felt like they were being invested in by their employer, thus this increased engagement."

What do we know about young Pacific people in New Zealand?

The Pacific population is youthful, with a median age of 21 years compared with 36 years for the rest of New Zealand. The median age of New Zealand-born Pacific peoples is 13 years, compared to 39 years for those born overseas. (Statistics New Zealand, 2006)

It is estimated that by 2026, Pacific people will make up 12% of New Zealand's workforce aged under 40, and maybe as many as 30% of the new entrants to Auckland's workforce. (SNZ)

Pacific peoples are highly urbanised, with 97% living in urban areas in 2006 (66% living in Auckland). (SNZ, 2006)

Despite improvements in educational outcomes, Pacific peoples still have the highest proportion of those with no qualifications. (SNZ and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2010)

In the year to December 2010, the leading industries in which Pacific peoples worked were manufacturing (21,000 workers)

and wholesale and retail (11,700). Over the last four years, public administration and safety experienced the largest gain in Pacific employment (up 35%), while wholesale and retail had the largest loss (down 18%). (Department of Labour)

Youth aged 15–19 years have an unemployment rate more than three times that of the entire working-age population. Young workers are more vulnerable to downturns in the labour market due to their lower skill levels and lesser work experience. The latest figures show that 17.2% of youth aged 15–19 and 8.4% of those aged 20–24 are unemployed. Māori and Pacific youth have significantly higher unemployment rates. (Department of Labour)

Many Pacific young people prioritise prosperity within the family and relationships rather than material well-being. (MPIA, under review)

Changing mindsets

Highly qualified disabled people have the same chances of getting a job as unqualified able-bodied people.

Melanie Sloan's employers look at her ability, not her impairment. Melanie, a driven 29-year-old, has worked as a teacher at Oamaru's St Joseph's Primary School for the last seven years, and the kids clearly adore her.

Although her rheumatoid arthritis can cause a great deal of pain and swelling, the condition isn't always obvious to onlookers. Melanie puts on a brave face and says she doesn't want anyone to make excuses for her.

But when interviewed for her job seven years ago, she was "terrified. I was worried I wouldn't get the job [because of the disability]. The only difference between me and any other teacher is that I might not be able to do the year eight 18km trek, but I wasn't about to say that.

"In my CV, though, I had put that I was Arthritis New Zealand Young Achiever of the year 10 years ago. They just asked, so what is this? Then they said OK, and moved on. They did not see my disability as an issue."

Melanie says not only are her colleagues can-do, compassionate people, she is confident enough to speak up when she can see that something might be a physical challenge and work out alternatives. "You just have to take charge," she says.

Melanie talks quite openly about the condition that struck her when she was two. She's had both hips and knees and one shoulder replaced – and shows her pupils what a hip looks like so they can understand what's going on beneath their teacher's skin. "I have always just shared it; it's made me what I am in many respects. The kids here don't bat an eyelid about me being different."

She thinks disabled workers teach their peers empathy and compassion: "It's enriching for staff to have a disabled colleague. It teaches them to be inclusive, and then that becomes second nature. Workplaces could be so much better off for having that inclusiveness."

Three out of every four disabled employees don't need special support to be able to work, and of those who do need support, modified hours are most commonly reported.¹ Small numbers of people need equipment, building modifications, job coaching, personal assistants or communication services, and various government grants are available for this.

For Melanie, the overhead projector is set a bit lower than usual so she doesn't have to stretch inflamed, painful joints, and she has a stool with handles to help her safely reach the controls of the whiteboard and any high shelves.



Says school principal Jenny Jackson, "Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect and we make changes and adjustments, big or small, to ensure that everyone feels valued. Everyone has gifts and strengths and we aim to bring out the best in them, no matter who they are."

The in-work rate for tertiary-qualified people like Melanie is the same as for unqualified able-bodied people, a clear signal of disadvantage. An EEO Trust survey in 2005 found that 61 per cent of disabled

"It's enriching for staff to have a disabled colleague. It teaches them to be inclusive."

people reported difficulties getting a job, and nearly half found it hard to stay in a job because of negative attitudes and lack of opportunities and flexibility.²

Helping to overcome these barriers are "supported employment" agencies like Workbridge and Deaf Aotearoa (see box) – they help disabled people into work and support them and the employer as necessary. But in a recent development that's thought to be a first in mainstream recruitment, Drake International has integrated disability services into its work.

Caroline Campbell, whose last role helped young disabled people transition to a meaningful adulthood, has taken the new role of Disability Services Business Development Manager in Drake's Auckland office. Like any recruiter, she sees her role as matching employer needs and skill sets; if someone who happens to have a disability has the required skills and the desire to take on a particular role, they will be presented to employers.

Education and networking will be a large part of the role, says Caroline: employers may not realise how much untapped talent lies in those who live with disability, and fears that the disabled pose a health and safety risk are generally unfounded. "We know that disabled

people are very conscientious, often stick at jobs longer, turn up on time and take fewer sick days," she says.

A new, young breed of employers will also push for change, says Robyn Scott-Vincent, head of Attitude Pictures, which has six disabled staff. "In ten years' time, we'll see moving into middle-management jobs people who went to school and university alongside disabled kids, and who don't see disability as a thing to fear or a barrier. These people will be change-makers.

"Also, disabled kids didn't have the right to go to their local, mainstream school until the 1980s; they are now coming out of university, they are quite vocal and talented, and they just want the same chance to work as everyone else."

She adds, "Employing someone with a disability is no big deal; it only takes one lot of managers to lead the way for others to slowly realise that there is huge untapped talent there and that employers' mindsets need to change."

Workbridge helps disabled people to find jobs, supports them in work, and administers government funding for workplace modifications. www.workbridge.co.nz

CCS runs a supported employment programme, Accomplish, in Northland, Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Marlborough, Canterbury and South Canterbury. www.ccs.org.nz

Deaf Aotearoa works with employers to tap into the skills of deaf people. www.deaf.org.nz

The Employers' Disability Network supports employers' understanding of people with disabilities and is designed by employers for employers. www.edn.org.nz

1 Disability and the Labour Market in New Zealand in 2006. Wellington, New Zealand: Statistics New Zealand. p. 16
2 www.eeotrust.org.nz/content/docs/reports/Disability%20and%20employment%20lit%20review.doc



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The EEO Trust provides information and tools on EEO and raises awareness of diversity issues in the workplace. We assist employers to introduce and manage proven EEO thinking and practices which can make a real difference to business success. We also build understanding of

the business benefits of versatile and inclusive workplaces. EEO strategies and sound HR practices enable employers to recruit, retain and motivate the very best people: people with skill, commitment and intelligence who can help businesses thrive.

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