

**“All of us
are unique
and bring
differences
to work.”**

COMPANY : Air New Zealand

Air New Zealand gets the Xenomorphs on-side

In the end, the Xenomorphs triumphed. On a sparkling October day at an Auckland sports stadium, four students from Invercargill's James Hargest College managed to make their soft-drink can plane glide 101m to win Air New Zealand's Make It Fly competition. (Their craft would have gone further, but it hit a wall.)

The Xenomorphs – the monsters from the *Alien* movie series, for those without teenagers – beat 20 secondary-school teams from all over the country. The students' planes cost next to nothing to make – the fuselage had to be a can, and the add-ons recycled materials worth no more than \$20 – but they have become a symbol of how creative thinking can really take off.

Make it Fly was part of an Air New Zealand campaign to encourage teenagers into aeronautical engineering apprenticeships, and saw the company take out the Supreme Award in the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2008 in late October.

Air New Zealand's innovative and ultimately successful campaign aimed to turn around a slump in the number of young people signing up for the apprenticeships – the average age of its 2,700-strong workforce is rapidly increasing.

Air New Zealand needed to connect with Generation Y and combat the widespread perception that aeronautical engineering was no longer a secure, long-term career. CEO Rob Fyfe acknowledges that this perception has been influenced

by the loss of 200 engineering jobs in 2006 due to a “cost structure that was unsustainable”. However, Air New Zealand is not alone in struggling to attract engineers, as airlines all over the world are facing the same challenge.

Air New Zealand recognised that it needed to harness the skills and attitudes of young people in order to communicate effectively with them. Its strategy group included a 17-year-old staff member, and a central plank was to

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talk to young people in the digital environments that are such a large part of their lives.

In May 2007, “Andy”, aka AeroCareerBoy – a 21-year-old staff member – arrived on a Bebo social networking site. His message was to the point: “We’re looking for smart, intelligent people like you to enter into the Air New Zealand aeronautical engineering course!”

Simon Pomeroy, Manager Sourcing Inspiring People, says that Bebo provided a platform to listen to young people and understand what was important to them, building their trust.

Within three months, Air New Zealand was in touch with

1500 young people. As a result, it developed various other ways of reaching Gen Y, for example, sending posters to schools careers advisers to encourage teens to text for more information. Internet and paper newsletters and an interactive website showcase the sort of work engineers do and emphasise the opportunities. School visits and road shows are also an important part of the campaign.

Students who want to know more are taken to the engineering

bases in Auckland and Christchurch for in-depth site visits during which they are buddied up with trainees.

They were also lured by significant prizes in the Make It Fly contest, among them \$20,000 worth of technical and computer equipment for the winning school.

The response was huge. The company built a network of schools from Kaitaia to Bluff and held 20 regional heats across the country. And the result? A total of 108 engineering trainees were recruited in 2007, the highest intake for a decade.

The campaign has been very cost-effective compared to Air New Zealand's other attraction strategies.

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Showing the way

Mike Foster and Lucy McKimm come from opposite ends of New Zealand and work in very different industries, but their stories have a common theme

Lucy and Mike show that the ability to positively influence the culture in a workplace is not always about power or position.

Mike Foster, Human Relations Consultant to Express Couriers in Christchurch, and Lucy, McKimm Team Leader in the Accident Compensation Corporation's Hamilton scanning unit, shared the Walk the Talk Award in the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2008. The award recognises individuals who show leadership in their management of a diverse workforce. Both Mike and Lucy have had a major impact on the culture and engagement of employees.

If you walk into Lucy's workplace you will see staff communicating with colleague Kerry Paul in New Zealand Sign Language – the country's third official language after English and Māori.

When Kerry, a profoundly deaf, long-term ACC staffer, joined Lucy's team in mid-2007, Lucy decided she wanted to learn sign language so she could communicate with her better. Lucy successfully asked her manager to include night-class training in her personal development plan, and ACC paid for it. But she didn't go alone – six other members of the team were so inspired that they attended too.

"We had a blast," recalls Lucy. "It was a great team-building exercise, and each and every week



PICTURED (OTHER PAGE):
Mike Foster accepts his award.

PICTURED (THIS PAGE):
Lucy McKimm (centre)
and Kerry Paul with former
Prime Minister Rt Hon Helen
Clark at the EEO Trust Work
& Life Awards.

"Express Couriers is a richer, more diverse and better place to work as a result of the influence of Mike Foster."

our communication with Kerry would increase." Kerry admits she found some of her workmates' efforts amusing, but says, "My colleagues in the scanning unit have been wonderful."

Lucy says that her overall aim was to make Kerry feel included and valued. But there were numerous other spin-offs as team cohesion improved and productivity rose.

More importantly, people found barriers breaking down. One of the novice signers, Andrew Clement, admits that before he met Kerry and started the night classes, he was uncomfortable with disability.

"I saw the ease that other people experienced in relating to her and felt I'd never get there," he says. "Now we can have conversations

that range from family to work and beyond, even sharing jokes without much trouble. She's a very happy and personable staff member who I'm glad to be finally getting to know. "And it wasn't even hard.

That was the surprise. We made a commitment to work on it and Kerry met us more than half-way."

Mike Foster was employed by Express Couriers in Christchurch four years ago to provide HR and industrial relations advice to 13 branch managers who are collectively responsible for 240 staff and 150 contractors.

He is, say his peers, a born coach who empathises with people from all walks of life and engenders greater tolerance and understanding in the workplace.

He has a union background, which has honed his skills in negotiating constructive solutions.

By exploring people's actions with them, says Branch Manager John Roche, Mike, who is of Samoan ancestry, uncovers the drivers that trigger certain unhelpful workplace behaviours. "He always seeks to understand issues at a personal level, and believes that negative behaviour will undoubtedly have its root cause in relationships or behaviours from the past," says John.

Mike has been able to positively coach staff and managers who were reluctant to develop and grow, or deal with their own underperforming or difficult staff members. "With coaching from Mike, those same leaders have coached and encouraged those same staff to go on to bigger and better roles within the organisation."

Mike has made a marked impact on staff engagement, says John, and on his watch absenteeism has fallen markedly. "As a team, we now give our key people-related decisions the Mike Foster test. If it passes that, then we can be confident it is the right way to proceed.

"Express Couriers in Christchurch," says John, is a "richer, more diverse and better place to work as a result of the influence of Mike Foster."

COMPANY : Fulton Hogan

From inmate to workmate

Roading company Fulton Hogan took a bold step by employing prisoners to help build a new motorway through the Auckland suburb of Mt Roskill – and it is paying off in more ways than one.

The company says the 20 prisoners it took on through the prison system's release-to-work scheme have proved more reliable than many workers employed through labour hire firms, and six are still working on State Highway 20, months after leaving jail.

Fulton Hogan's new relationship with the Corrections Department has yielded spin-offs in Taranaki, where prisoners are driving up from Wanganui Prison each day to help build infrastructure for the Kupe gas project, and in Hawke's Bay, where one prisoner has been taken on so far.

It's a brave and far-sighted approach that saw Fulton Hogan highly commended in the Tomorrow's Workforce Award category of the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards. The award recognises organisations which take a creative and innovative approach to meeting the needs of the workplaces of the future.

"A lot of prisoners actually have skills – there are chippies, concrete workers, drain-layers," says John Smith, Fulton Hogan Site Safety

Manager. "They are skills that are hard to find so we took a gamble, I suppose, took a punt, and it has worked out very well."

Johnathan, 25, started working on the project in February after three years in jail and was still there seven months after he was released in April. He said that if Fulton Hogan had not taken him on, he would probably have gone back to crime.

"Before, I was stressing out worrying, 'What am I going to do? No one's going to hire me.' I used to lose quite a bit of sleep over that," said Johnathan, who preferred not to give his surname.

"If I had got out and had no job, I would have gone back to the old crowd and done crime to make money, because the benefit isn't enough."

Although Johnathan worked as a glazier before going to jail, he wanted a "fresh start" after leaving jail. He has gained experience in surveying and drainlaying on the motorway, and Fulton Hogan has helped him enrol in a plumbing

course at Unitec. "Fulton Hogan is awesome," he says. "They gave me a chance."

Junior, a 45-year-old father of six, spent a year in jail for domestic violence and is on probation until 2010. He used to be a painter but is happy to be labouring on the motorway. "I'll give this a go for a while to learn a lot of skills here," he says.

One 21-year-old man started working on the motorway four months before he finished his second jail term in September. "I started doing crime at a young age. I didn't see any opportunity to work at that stage," he says.

Phil Harman of Corrections Inmate Employment, who manages the release-to-work scheme, says 55 per cent of prisoners have never held a full-time job.

Release-to-work is available only to prisoners in the last year of their sentence who have done everything required to address the causes of their offending, such as attending anger management or drug and alcohol courses.



"If I had got out and had no job, I would have gone back to the old crowd and done crime to make money, because the benefit isn't enough."

"They're going to be released, so getting them into employment is a positive factor," Phil says. "The idea is to try and give them the opportunity to change."

Prisoners on the Mt Roskill site catch buses from Mt Eden Prison and Fulton Hogan tells the jail if they turn up late. No one has absconded. Inmates' earnings are held in trust until they leave prison, giving them a useful nest-egg to

start their new lives.

"What we found is that they were here at the crack of dawn, every day, regardless," says Fulton Hogan's Deputy Safety Manager Tash Mullen. "They often beat me to work. It gave them that incentive. It gave them something to look forward to. They wanted to be here."

By Simon Collins

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PICTURED (ABOVE) :

Ex-prisoner Johnathan started working with Fulton Hogan while still serving his sentence. He is now on the payroll. Looking on are Deputy Safety Manager Tash Mullen and Safety Manager John Smith. (Photograph: Glenn Jeffrey/NZ Herald)

COMPANY : Comvita

Awards amplify Comvita's work-life buzz

Flexible working arrangements are just part of Comvita's commitment to creating a healthy workplace

Comvita won the Workplace Work & Life Award at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

Chief Executive Brett Hewlett describes the company as a mini multi-national. It manufactures a range of natural health products at its production plant and showroom in Paengaroa, half an hour's drive south of Tauranga, and has grown rapidly in the past couple of years.

As well as around 40 manufacturing staff, Comvita now employs 200 people in New Zealand and around the world. Rapid business growth, the relative isolation of

Comvita's plant and offices, and the range of its work areas all create work-life challenges for the company and its employees.

Brett and a group of passionate Comvita employees are behind the work-life drive at Comvita. When a staff satisfaction survey in 2006 revealed that some staff were feeling the stress of rapid business growth, a work-life programme was developed to formalise flexible working and health initiatives, and to determine what was needed next to maintain a healthy, committed workforce.

Many staff travel long distances

to work in Paengaroa so Comvita has provided the technology for them to work from home on a regular or occasional basis. Other staff members choose start and finish times which suit their needs.

Brett says the flexible working arrangements are reasonably informal and guided by what he calls "a wellness philosophy" based on trust.

Flexibility is always a challenge for staff but Comvita listened and adjusted shifts to suit them. "A few years ago, the production staff asked if they could work their shifts over four and a half days during summer so they could have Friday afternoons off," Brett says.

"We readily agreed to that and they found it so helpful that we've recently made it a year-round arrangement."

International research has found that manager commitment is critical to creating a workplace culture that supports health and wellbeing, so Comvita plans to up the ante for its managers. "All the managers know that we encourage flexibility, working in the community and looking after your health," says Brett. "We've been working on this for the last couple of years and it's part of our culture now. We're all very much behind it.

"We're now working on



"Healthier, happier people are bound to be more committed and productive."

PICTURED (OTHER PAGE) :
Haleigh McRae checking pots at Comvita's Paengaroa factory.

PICTURED (THIS PAGE) :
Comvita staff Sonya Grantizer and Jael King celebrating their company's healthy success.

making managers more accountable for the happiness and productivity of their staff by including staff satisfaction measures in their performance reviews.

"Healthier, happier people are bound to be more committed and productive."

Comvita is exploring various other work-life initiatives including a small on-site gym, a school holiday programme and other support for caregivers, including people who care for adults.

Brett says that Comvita's proactive approach to wellness and flexibility contributes to its ability to access a large pool of potential employees, despite its rural

location. "We'd really struggle to employ mothers if we insisted on a rigid 40-hour week," he says. "This way we're getting some extremely committed people who appreciate the benefits and are really focussed because of it."

A new initiative is the Global Volunteer Day which reflects Comvita's strong commitment to community. It enables employees to take a paid day off each year to do volunteer work for a charity of their choice.

Comvita has an active social and sporting life with annual social club events. The relative isolation of its premises was partly behind the instigation of weekly on-site Pilates

classes. One keen attendee says, "In a busy working environment there are definite benefits of having on-site Pilates classes as there's no need for additional travel."

All staff are entitled to a \$200 contribution to their health every year and a Health Club Award of \$500 is given annually to the employee who has made the biggest improvement in their lifestyle.

Although Comvita's products are also health-related, many aspects of Comvita's approach to flexibility, health and wellness, and community involvement could translate to other sectors.

ORGANISATIONS : Mercy Hospice Auckland
Wesley Community Action

Empowered people create resilient workplaces

When 10 Mercy Hospice Auckland staff got up on stage at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards and sang a waiata, they communicated a strong sense of the respectful, inclusive and down-to-earth humanity that drives the organisation.

Mercy Hospice had just received its commendation in the Workplace Diversity Award for the way employee diversity is encouraged and harnessed to provide the best possible care for people in their last days.

Diversity is crucial to Mercy's mission to support patients and their families. Patients come from every walk of life. They may be migrants with limited English, or Māori who need certain tikanga (protocols) respected. Some patients' cultural beliefs mean that they and their families embrace the end of life; others will not mention the word "death", believing that to utter it will hasten the end.

"Our staff understand the needs of people from different cultures and orientations through the diverse workforce we have in place," says Anne Reid, Human Resources Manager.

"At a stressful time, patients and families are often more comfortable dealing with staff with whom they can identify."

Mercy Hospice, which has 13 beds, a day programme and a community palliative care service, is run by a team of 80 staff. That includes nurses – they number more than 50 – many of whom are women and many part-timers. Doctors, managers, social workers,

chaplains, counsellors, cultural support people and administrators are joined by around 200 volunteers.

Mercy's staff make up a United Nations of hospice care, with Māori and Pākehā staff joined by people of Tongan, Chinese, Japanese, Samoan, Jamaican, South African,



PICTURED (OTHER PAGE) :
(left to right) Mercy staff members Julie Reid, Teina Stewart and Viv James take part in a "Terrific Pacific" lunch to celebrate the success of a number of staff, including a cleaner, in their university studies.

PICTURED (THIS PAGE) :
Children participate in Wesley Community Action activities.

an inclusive and diverse culture which permeates its services to a wide range of clients, from troubled teens to the elderly.

"We accept that all of us are unique and bring differences – these differences are accepted as part of the individual," says Director David Hanna. "We believe this is a strength-based, respectful attitude, rather than just paying lip-service to diversity."

Wesley Community Action, a charitable trust, provides social services worth \$7 million each year to the greater Wellington area. It runs Wesleyhaven, an aged-care home for 120 people at Naenae, foster homes, and a range of community programmes ranging from a Cannon's Creek foodbank, social work and advocacy, to counselling and youth development. It has 200 employees and 70 volunteers.

Wesley's leaders, says David, show their support for diversity by "not having any hesitancy or reluctance to welcome people from all walks of life who express interest in our work".

He adds that the "public relations value" of having a diverse workforce is significant, and there is no shortage of job candidates. "There is pride in working for such an organisation," he says.

Indian, Guatemalan, British, German and American descent. A number of staff are gay or lesbian.

Staff speak a wide variety of languages, and the hospice brings in interpreters when necessary. Employees are encouraged to live Mercy Hospice's values of compassion, respect, quality and advocacy.

Caring for people at the end of their lives can be stressful: "There is the potential for burn-out emotionally and physically," says Anne. Flexibility and emotional support are two keys to supporting staff, with clear policies around both.

And Mercy employees value their workplace. Results of a March

2008 staff survey found that Mercy Hospice staff were more positive than the benchmark in areas such as good employer, interpersonal communication, communication, Māori perspective, change management, recognition and team cooperation.

One staff member said: "It is all about people! I enjoy being part of a supportive and fun team ... I feel valued working for Mercy."

People in need are the focus of another organisation that received a highly commended award in the workplace diversity category. Wellington's Wesley Community Action was honoured for fostering

COMPANY : ANZ National Bank Ltd

Seeing the cents in diversity

Walk into any ANZ National Bank branch and you will see a diverse workforce in action.

Diversity is a business imperative for ANZ National, not an HR intervention, says Chief Executive Graham Hodges. “Increased diversity and opportunities for our people leads to increased diversity of thought and innovation,” he says. “It just makes good business sense.”

And the philosophy, driven from the top and supported at all levels of the business, encompasses all aspects of diversity, from gender to culture and sexuality.

ANZ National Bank’s approach to workplace diversity won the Workplace Diversity Award at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2008. ANZ National’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategy focusses on three key areas: diversity in leadership, flexibility and community.

The diversity in leadership focus aims to increase the number of women in senior roles, and achieved an increase – from 30 per cent in 2007 to 33 per cent in 2008. The proportion of women at executive level increased from 14 per cent to 21 per cent during the same period. There is also a marked increase in the number of women on the company’s talent radar.

Graham Hodges says, “We can’t afford to turn our backs on half the workforce. Having more women in the executive leadership team has changed the dynamic. There are

more perspectives and generally a more collaborative approach.”

Internally, the NZ Women’s Network provides support to all ANZ National Bank women, through seminars and networking opportunities across the country. It was established to help women build networking skills, generate new contacts and understand how this can be an effective business, career and social tool.

The flexibility focus aims to help staff achieve work-life balance. Managers and employees are encouraged to explore, discuss and agree flexible working arrangements while ensuring that business goals are still met. Approaches include flexible hours, flexible start and finish times, working outside the workplace, part-time work and job-sharing.

One mum reports: “As a mother of a five-year-old and two pre-school children, flexibility is extremely important and was paramount in my decision to accept my current role. I work 24 hours over a three-day week starting at 7am and finishing mid-afternoon, which allows me to be home early for the children.”

ANZ National’s community focus includes volunteer days, and language and cultural events. To build greater cross-organisational

links, the company offers support for seven networking groups. They include an Asian network (12 per cent of staff identify as Asian), a gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender network and a Māori and Pacific Island network.

Staff are also offered one day every year to work with a community group of their choice. During 2008, the company expects to give 20,000 staff hours to community organisations across New Zealand.

Days of cultural significance are also celebrated. For example, in November 2007, lending services staff celebrated Diwali, the Indian festival of light, by coming to work in traditional dress, decorating the cafeteria with colourful bolts of fabric and hosting a morning tea.

The bank’s diversity drive arose out of the recognition that the more diverse its staff, the more diverse the thought and innovation that could be tapped. It also wanted its staff to reflect the increasing diversity of its customers.

While the diversity strategy is still young, informal feedback suggests that benefits include increased job satisfaction, greater opportunities to achieve personal and career goals and improved well-being and mental health.

COMPANY : New Zealand Post Group

Increased options for women

New Zealand Post Group realised few women were rising to senior jobs, found out why and did something about it.

Of New Zealand Post Group’s 10,000 staff, 61 per cent are women, but just 20 per cent of senior managers are female. This is not an uncommon statistic across New Zealand organisations, but Post Group knew that the gender disproportion could lead to missed business opportunities. CEO John Allen wanted to understand the obstacles facing women who were in leadership roles or who wanted to pursue them.

The Group’s Manager of HR Policy, Vicki Bazalo, says the company needed solid data on which to base programmes for change. With the EEO Trust’s help, an online, anonymous survey was devised to elicit the views and experiences of a broad cross-section of women managers, specialists and team leaders.

More than 500 women completed the survey in May 2007, describing their experiences at NZ Post and sharing their ideas on how women might be encouraged to aspire to the top jobs.

The survey revealed that women often chose not to apply for leadership roles because they lacked encouragement and personal confidence. Sometimes, other leaders’ behaviour put them off. Women said they needed encouragement

with career development, including networking and support, a mentoring programme, and mechanisms to help build their confidence.

Post Group’s first initiative was women’s networking sessions. The aim is to build a professional, thought-provoking and supportive network so women can make contacts, establish and extend working relationships, and share ideas, advice and success stories.

Vicki says that the initial networking events were so popular that extra sessions had to be held. One woman wrote that the experience encouraged her “to look at my career frontier and recognise this is an organisation that gives opportunity. What I’m doing differently as a result is believing more in myself as a leader, being more courageous and determined, and looking at taking up leadership opportunities”.

Another wrote: “I found this very relevant as I’m a working mother. It was extremely encouraging to know that you can still be successful in the workforce even though you have children.”

The women’s network meetings will increasingly focus on addressing specific skills or information gaps identified by women, such as networking techniques and career planning.

Another important component of this programme is a new Women in Leadership section on the Group intranet, which includes advice, toolkits and resources. Programmes in career development and mentoring are planned, and Post Group will be monitoring key gender metrics.

Vicki adds that John Allen’s support has made a huge impact on Post Group’s senior women. “He genuinely believes that it’s a good thing for the organisation and that we’re missing out on a lot of opportunities if we don’t have a better representation of women in senior roles,” she says. “It’s been proven time and time again that it’s good business sense to have diversity – including women – at senior levels.”

Vicki says some women may not aspire to the top jobs, and that is valid. “But we wanted to be sure that it’s not because of something we were or weren’t doing.”

The Group has also developed a new diversity policy to encourage members of minorities to progress to senior roles. This and the Women in Leadership programme won the Group the Work & Life/Diversity in Action Award at this year’s EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

Old hands a good thing

Two recent EEO Trust research projects bode well for the increasing numbers of older people in the workforce, with employers and recruitment consultants alike saying they value the skills and experience that older people bring to work.

Almost a quarter of New Zealand's workforce is in the 50-64 age group and the number of workers over 65 was 65,000 in 2006. The EEO Trust research indicates that awareness of New Zealand's ageing demographic is increasing.

The research, which built on a 2006 project exploring employers' perceptions of an intergenerational workforce, involved interviewing employers and recruitment consultants around the country to find out how the labour market perceives older workers.

Recruiters and employers said that older people were more reliable and had a better attitude to work than younger people, especially in the trades and manual areas.

Recruiters in the management and finance areas also mentioned the benefits of older employees who had lived through a range of economic cycles. Suzanne Boyd of Clayton Ford Recruitment said, "Older workers have seen so many systems and ways of doing things, they're very pragmatic. They add flavour and texture to teams."

Another recruiter said, "They've have prior experience of a recession and crisis management."

In the past, new technology has been seen as a barrier for older workers but the EEO Trust research found that older employees now have little problem with new technology, showing good skills and a willingness to learn more.

For example, Alexis Siermans of Auckland firm KC Temps said, "Technically they've caught up – the gap has become smaller. Those that have stayed in the workforce have up-skilled and kept working and learning and up-to-date."

Gillian Anderson from Dunedin City Council gave an example of an older person who had more commitment to learning new technology than younger staff. "In relation to the introduction of a new electronic system, everyone was scared that [name withheld] – age 60 – wouldn't be able to do it, but he was quicker and better and worked harder at picking it up than anyone else, so it was just other people's expectations and perceptions."

Roles which involve heavy lifting were also seen to be beyond the abilities of older people in the past, but many recruiters and employers reported that times had changed.

Kate Dunn of Fonterra said that role-sharing is important when it comes to heavy work. "Certain heavy manual parts of a shift are not done by some older workers, someone else does them. I haven't seen any problems with that. Other

workers seem to accept that, and know older workers bring other things to the team.

"We've also mechanised quite a bit of the heavy manual part of the job, which makes it more accessible for older workers. So workers are operating machines rather than doing heavy lifting."

Many respondents said the benefits older workers brought easily outweighed any physical limitations. For example, HR Director at Solid Energy, Bill McDonald, said that whereas older employees might have some physical limitations, "people who have been with us for a number of years are by far and away our best and most reliable workers".

Many employers are willing to design roles to meet the needs of older workers, for example, with flexible hours so that employees can balance their work lives with their leisure pursuits or so they can care for ageing parents. This points to an opportunity to reduce roles rather than cutting them during difficult economic times, thus keeping skilled older people.

This research found that employers are keen to draw on the strengths that older people bring to work. By developing versatile workplaces, they are tapping into their loyalty, experience and stability, positioning their organisations well for the future.

Go to www.eeotrust.org.nz for the research reports.

Work-life measures pay their way

This year's EEO Trust Work-Life Survey demonstrates the value of supporting employees at work and outside work even at a time of faltering business confidence.

The respondents to the EEO Trust Work-Life survey said they invest in work-life measures because they are good for business – improving recruitment, retention and engagement.

Those which had a work-life policy or strategy reported lower staff turnover than other respondents, and those that provided extra paid parental leave reported higher rates of return from parental leave. In addition, the respondents that supported health and wellness lost less time to injury.

The second EEO Trust Work-Life Survey was completed by 234 members of the EEO Employers Group – employers with an expressed commitment to EEO and diversity. For a comparison with other New Zealand employers, the EEO Trust analysed the findings alongside those from a much larger work-life survey carried out by the Department of Labour.

Both surveys show a strong climate of support for flexible working, with 80 per cent of EEO Trust respondents and 68 per cent of Department of Labour respondents reporting support for flexibility

in their workplaces. EEO Trust members were more likely than the Department of Labour respondents to already have procedures related to flexible working or be in the process of introducing them.

EEO Trust respondents reported a very high level of senior management commitment to work-life initiatives with more than 90 per cent of respondents saying that senior managers demonstrated their commitment in some way, for example, through role modelling work-life balance or by providing resources for someone to manage and monitor work-life issues.

A third of respondents to the EEO Trust survey offered extra paid parental leave over and above the 14 weeks' statutory Government-funded provision, usually an additional six weeks. Those who provided extra leave reported higher return rates from parental leave but the numbers of employees returning from parental leave was high overall. Of the three-quarters of respondents who knew their return rate, two-thirds said it was over 70 per cent, and one third over 90 per cent.

The ageing workforce is the main emerging work-life issue facing EEO Trust members. They also mentioned related issues such as caring for elderly dependants, retaining skills and institutional knowledge, retirement transitions, intergenerational differences, and the differing needs and expectations of the younger generation. Other key issues facing members were flexibility, cultural diversity and working from home.

In terms of helping employees meet their work-life needs, employers said their main challenges related to the nature of work in some areas, for example 24/7 operations; meeting the needs of both the organisation and employees, and ensuring equity for all staff.

Despite these concerns, the majority (84 per cent) of organisations participating in the 2008 EEO Trust Work-Life Survey thought their work-life practices were effective, with a quarter of these rating them as "very effective".

Download the survey report from www.eeotrust.org.nz.



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Diversity in Action | *Summer.08/09*

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Diversity in Action registration.

Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) means eliminating barriers to ensure that all employees are considered for the employment of their choice and have the chance to perform to their maximum potential. EEO practices include fairness at work, hiring based on merit and promotion based on talent. It concerns all aspects of employment including recruitment, pay and other rewards, career

development and work conditions. EEO strategies and sound HR practices enable employers to recruit the very best people from the diverse population, making the most of their skills, creativity and energy. Initiatives that encourage work-life balance are an important part of EEO as they enable people to perform to their full potential while still accommodating their commitments outside of work.

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