



EEO TRUST
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Diversity Award reveals stunning initiatives

For the first time this year the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards included a Diversity Award to recognise employers who proactively work to ensure that everyone can reach their potential at work, regardless of their background, lifestyle or beliefs.

Sixteen organisations entered the new category, demonstrating a wide range of approaches to effective diversity management. They included a programme to give refugees New Zealand work experience, a number of initiatives to ensure women can reach their potential at work, a range of training and literacy programmes and a comprehensive approach to recruiting and supporting new migrants.

The judging panel assessed public and private sector organisations separately, presenting a Diversity Award to the

Transportation Group at Beca in the private sector and to the New Zealand Defence Force in the public sector.

Through a large range of diversity initiatives, Beca Transportation has proven that cultural diversity is both a competitive advantage in professional consulting services and a sustainable way to grow and develop the company. As with many other industries, the most severe constraint facing Beca Transportation is being able to recruit and retain talented people.

The group employs 44 people in its Auckland office and set out to create a workplace of choice for immigrating traffic engineers. This involved listening to what they needed, assessing whether the current workplace culture was inhospitable in any way and proactively targeting graduates.

“We wanted to make Beca Transportation a great place to work, no matter what someone’s culture, gender or country of origin was,” says Technical Director and Section Manager of the Transportation Group, Matt Ensor. “It was an ongoing series of management-supported initiatives that have grown our team into a happy, supportive environment where immigrant engineers arrive with realistic expectations about working in New Zealand and are able to work to their full potential.”

What stood out for the judges was that Beca Transportation emphasises two-way communication, not just focusing on the challenges of people coming into New Zealand but also looking at helping managers understand that they might need to do things differently. Careful thought was given to effective

cross-cultural communication so that instructions, feedback and ideas were all conveyed positively and clearly.

"This initiative aims to develop a culture within our organisation that supports and embraces diversity so that we can more easily recruit people from overseas, particularly the student-producing nations of India and China," says Matt Ensor.

For the past five years Beca has selected several students from India to spend up to 10 weeks working at Beca in New Zealand. This involves a large commitment from Beca, including flying a technical director to Delhi to meet with students and supporting the students' visa applications.

The annual trip to India has been so successful that Matt Ensor is ready to apply the lessons to China. "While language difficulties originally made it a challenge to recruit from China, I now have staff who can accompany me there to translate," he says.

Beca Transportation has also developed initiatives for immigrants from the UK and South Africa, including changing its interview techniques to focus on building realistic expectations among candidates. Before people commit to joining Beca, time is spent talking through a range of issues including the challenge of buying a home.

"While we might lose a few potential recruits, we've learnt that without realistic expectations, they'll soon be disappointed and unhappy and move back home," says Matt Ensor.

The results of these and other initiatives speak for themselves. In 2002, the Transportation Group had one female and one Asian engineer. Now, the majority of the section was born overseas (26 staff from 13 countries) and women make up about 40% of the team.

In a recruitment market where engineering skills are in exceptionally high demand worldwide, the Transportation Group has grown by 11 staff (30%) in the past year whereas similar organisations have been losing staff.

At Beca Infrastructure's two-yearly innovation awards the Transportation Group entries stand out partly, according to Matt Ensor, because of the diversity of the team. Last year the Group won awards for an innovative way of analysing

motorway crashes and an idea for slow growing grass on the verges of state highways to minimise mowing costs.

Supporting women at work

Whereas Beca Transportation is focussed on integrating migrants, the New Zealand Defence Force's entry described a long-term programme to ensure women are accepted and included at all levels of the Services, addressing within its workforce some of the challenges facing many New Zealand employers wishing to recruit and retain skilled and committed women.

The integration of women in the Services began in 1977, starting a process of huge culture change, says Senior Manager Directorate HR Policy and Capability Laura Gillan. "The fundamental issue that needed to be addressed was the pervasiveness of masculinity in the military culture and the pressures put on women to conform to a masculine set of values and standards."

The NZDF programme included initiatives to change the organisational culture and to directly support women at work. For example, all bases now have access to childcare facilities which are used by parents and grandparents, and work schedules take into account people's parenting commitments where possible.

All Services have school holiday programmes on some of their bases, and the Navy and Air Force have family support programmes which provide practical and emotional support when Service personnel are on deployment.

These and other initiatives have resulted in a steady increase of women personnel, particularly at higher levels.

Gillan says the increase in women has helped build a critical mass so that the involvement of women has become normalised.

Pragmatics drive the NZDF integration initiative. "The Services benefit in many ways because women at more senior levels bring different perspectives to discussion and decision-making," says Gillan. "It's not about attracting more women to the military but about attracting the best people.

"Globalisation is creating more demands for deployment in different cultural, social and regional settings so we need a workforce with diverse styles, outlooks and approaches in order to

build strong external alliances and to be operationally effective."

Shell's entry in the diversity category also focussed on tapping into the potential of women. Its initiative, which grew out of a career development workshop for Shell's senior women held in Australia in 2005, has seen the numbers of women employees in Shell NZ increase by more than 10% in just three years.

In April 2006, the first career development workshop for senior women in Shell NZ was held and led to the launch of the Shell NZ Women's Network as well as the creation of a career development workshop for women at lower levels of the organisation.

Women's Network activities include running gender awareness sessions, hosting guest speakers, writing a regular newsletter and developing a library of useful information, as well as providing mentoring circles and links to other local women's professional networks.

"The network works in partnership with Shell's leaders to identify systemic barriers and help find solutions," says Organisational Effectiveness Manager Elizabeth O'Loughlin. "It supports recruitment activities as well as social responsibility efforts by becoming a resource and link to like-minded groups in the community."

The results of all these and other initiatives are impressive. Since 2004, the number of women employees in Shell NZ has climbed from 30% to 41%. At mid-level management, 20% are women, up from 9% in 2004, and at team leader level, 29% are women, up from 23% in 2004. Women also make up 33% of the graduate programme.

Increasing numbers of women in middle and senior management are already impacting on customer service. Shell NZ Retail Manager Mark Forsyth: "If we want to retain and grow our business we need to reflect our customers' diversity. Shell's retail business has traditionally had a male bias. We now have a female regional manager and 25% of our territory managers are women.

"As women, they more readily put themselves in our female customers' shoes. The diverse thinking creates a richer pool of options for the entire team to draw from when responding to our customer needs and this has a positive impact on our bottom line."

Building safe communities

Another Diversity Award entrant also says a more diverse workforce enhances its effectiveness. The New Zealand Fire Service needs a workforce that is well attuned to the needs of New Zealand communities.

It is increasingly focussing on delivering fire safety messages so needs to have access to and credibility with all New Zealand communities. It seeks to recruit and retain firefighters that represent the gender and ethnic mix of the communities it works in.

The Fire Service Commission endorsed specific diversity goals for the 2002-2009 period to improve the recruitment of target groups. For example, it wanted to increase the number of Māori firefighters from 6.52% in 2003 to 8.57% in 2007. In June this year, 9.6% of firefighters were Māori, well ahead of the initial goal.

Another way of measuring the success of the initiative is by tracking the number of Māori and Pacific peoples killed in fires. Fire fatality trends in the Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Northland regions show a steady decrease in the numbers of fatalities.

Work & Life Awards turn ten

By EEO Trust Chief Executive,
Dr Philippa Reed

The EEO Trust celebrated the 10th anniversary of the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards this year with a special diversity award and a diversity symposium on the day of the awards presentation.

In the 10 years since the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards were launched, the business drivers for supporting work-life balance have, if anything, intensified. With the drop in unemployment and deepening skills shortage, employers are increasingly concerned about developing their employment brand so they can recruit and retain staff. Local and international research shows that people want employers to support them at work and at home by providing flexible working arrangements, health and wellness options and other work-life initiatives.

The number and quality of entries in this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards indicates that employers in a wide range of industries are effectively

supporting work-life balance to improve business outcomes. The benefits reported by entrants include:

- A saving of \$300,000 over a three-year period for Franklin Kindergarten Association
- Avoidable staff turnover reduced by 19% at TNS NZ
- Absenteeism at Southern Cross reduced by nearly 3% over six months
- At Anderson Lloyd Lawyers, 16 out of 17 women have returned to work after parental leave.

IBM supported the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2007.



EEO Trust Work & Life Awards winners

Large Organisation Award

Winner: Franklin Kindergarten Association
Runner-up: Anderson Lloyd Lawyers

Small to Medium Organisation Award

Winner: Phoenix Inc Supported Employment

First Steps Award

Winner: Enterprising Manukau

Manāki Tangata Innovation Award

Winner: Southern Cross Healthcare

Diversity Award

Winner: New Zealand Defence Force
Winner: Beca Transportation

Walk the Talk Award

Winner: Helen Anderson (Ministry of Research Science and Technology)
Winner: Matt Pickering (ANZ National Bank)

Bring women's skills to the boardroom

A new website created by the Auckland Chamber of Commerce and the EEO Trust is seeking to redress the low levels of women's involvement in governance roles.

"The statistics relating to women's participation in governance and professional roles demonstrate a chronic underutilisation of women's skills and expertise in corporate enterprise," says Chamber Chief Executive Michael Barnett. "While women make up 47% of the New Zealand workforce, their representation on the Boards of the top 100 companies stands at just 7.13%.

"Our new service will enable women who have the expertise and commitment to register their interest in participating as an independent Board member of a private enterprise. We will mentor and network these skilled individuals with organisations from a wide range of businesses who are seeking to broaden

their governance capability."

The new website aims to:

- Connect women leaders with businesses seeking directors
- Provide information and tools on corporate governance
- Be a portal for women seeking a directorship role
- Promote good governance and independent representation of the Boards of SMEs
- Identify and support emerging female leaders
- Staircase women directors through increasingly larger organisations

"This initiative is at an early stage, but we firmly believe there is a vital need and obvious benefits to increasing the participation of women in the governance of private enterprises," says Barnett.

www.womendirectors.co.nz

New EEO Trust trustee

With the terms of three long-standing private sector board members expiring, the EEO Trust held board elections in November. Board Chairman Michael Barnett who is Chief Executive of the Auckland Chamber of Commerce, and Dave Stewart of Human Value both stood for election again, while Alison Quesnel of Blackmores Ltd stood down.

Neil Padley, General Manager, Corporate & Shared Services at Air New Zealand was elected to the board. Michael Barnett and Dave Stewart were both re-elected.

At the EEO Trust AGM in November, Michael Barnett thanked Alison Quesnel for her contribution to the EEO Trust during the past six years. "Alison has been a very valuable board member," he said, "drawing on her knowledge of small business and international business, and helping raise the EEO Trust's profile as a relevant and credible business partner."

The Diversity Effect – building innovation

The EEO Trust Diversity Effect symposium on August 30 brought together local and international speakers to discuss the potential and challenges of workforce diversity. ANZ National Bank was the principal sponsor of *The Diversity Effect*.

Keynote speaker was Frans Johansson, US-based author of *The Medici Effect* in which he discusses how and why diverse peoples, backgrounds and approaches

drive innovation in all spheres of life.

Other speakers covered issues related to changing demographics, employing Māori and Pacific peoples, collaborative work spaces and values-based workplaces.

The EEO Trust has produced a DVD containing highlights from the symposium. If you would like a copy, please contact us.



Frans Johansson

Legislating for flexibility

New legislation sponsored by Green Party MP Sue Kedgley seeks to underpin employees' requests for flexible working arrangements. The Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Act will give employees with responsibility for caring for anyone else the statutory right to request changes to their working hours, days of work or place of work from the beginning of July next year.

Employees must make their request

in writing and explain what changes their employer may need to make to accommodate their request. They must have been working for their employer for at least six months prior to making the request.

Employers can refuse a request on a number of grounds including:

- They cannot reasonably reorganise the work among existing staff or are unable to recruit additional staff
- The requested change would

have a negative impact on quality, performance or the ability to meet customer demand

- There is not enough work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- Structural changes are planned
- The costs of the changes would be too great.

More information is available at www.dol.govt.nz/worklife.

Diversity survey highlights

This year's EEO Trust Diversity Survey draws on the practices and experiences within New Zealand workplaces in order to assess how effectively workplaces are tapping into the talents of the diverse people that make up the workforce.

It found that few employers measure the connection between initiatives to support diversity and bottom-line benefits, few employers integrate their diversity strategies into their core business strategy and few employers collect data on the diversity of their workforce in order to monitor the effectiveness of their diversity strategies.

Comparing best practice respondents with other respondents shows that organisations which take diversity seriously are likely to have much better

employment outcomes, particularly in terms of improved recruitment and retention.

For the first time, the Diversity Survey explored whether respondents had a workplace culture that supported diversity. This was assessed through questions on whether the workplace was inclusive of diverse cultures, whether senior management believed diversity was important and whether the organisation promoted and advanced diverse talent. The majority of respondents said their organisation had a positive diversity culture.

Only 21% of respondents measured the effectiveness of their diversity practices, but almost all of those doing so found positive business outcomes such as

improved match with customers/clients, and improved recruitment and retention.

While most respondents did not measure the effectiveness of their diversity initiatives, they consistently ranked attracting and retaining staff, along with social responsibility as the key drivers of effective diversity management.

Gains have been made in the numbers of respondents collecting data to monitor EEO/diversity, mentoring or development of target groups, and compliance of policies and practice with general principles of EEO/diversity.

The full survey report is available from the research pages on the EEO Trust website.

Positive culture instrumental in engagement

An EEO Trust pilot survey of 880 employees in 15 workplaces has found strong relationships between employees' perceptions of their workplace's work-life culture and their levels of engagement and discretionary effort. The direct links between work-life initiatives and employee engagement/discretionary effort are less strong and less clear, confirming the importance of a workplace's work-life culture.

Comments from respondents showed that the factors inhibiting engagement at their work are within the control of workplaces. For example, respondents frequently referred to the unavailability of work-life initiatives, high workloads, rigid

structures and processes, and a lack of recognition of extra effort.

"The findings confirm our previous research – work-life initiatives do generate engagement and productivity provided the workplace culture is supportive," says EEO Trust Chief Executive Dr Philippa Reed. "One critical aspect of support is manageable workloads, as high workloads were frequently cited as the primary obstacle to work-life balance."

She says that, in general, this study suggests that men, younger and older workers and those without children or with older children are not being catered for by current work-life balance approaches.

Senior managers, who are a crucial factor in the implementation of work-life strategies, are generally seen by employees as poor role models for work-life balance although the senior managers rated themselves in the mid-range for work-life balance.

"These and other findings point to an opportunity for employers to assess whether workloads are impacting on staff wellbeing, whether their workplace culture supports work-life balance at all levels and whether work-life initiatives meet the varying needs of all staff," says Dr Reed.

The full survey report is available from the research pages at the EEO Trust website.