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Struggling to find staff? Support work-life balance

A recent EEO Trust survey has confirmed the business benefits of encouraging work-life balance with respondents saying that recruitment, retention and productivity all benefit. "Overall, productivity has increased in areas of our large organisation where work-life initiatives are available," said one.

The EEO Trust Work-Life Survey was completed by 462 employers earlier this year. It asked about their approach to encouraging work-life balance, including whether they had a work-life balance strategy, what initiatives they offered and how they communicated their support of work-life balance.

The survey found that the 20% of employers with the most comprehensive approach to supporting work-life balance were more likely than the 20% at the bottom end to report improved staff

turnover and absenteeism rates, and improved rates of return from parental leave in the previous 12 months.

Many respondents said that encouraging work-life balance resulted in improved staff loyalty, commitment, morale and discretionary effort. While it can be difficult to demonstrate that work-life initiatives are responsible for improved recruitment and retention, and reduced absenteeism, some respondents said that staff surveys gave evidence of the connection.

"Being more flexible in working arrangements has meant we have been able to fill positions that we were struggling to fill."

"Staff surveys confirm that work-life balance initiatives enhance our appeal as an employer, building commitment, retention and work performance."

Another pointed to the positive impact on recruitment: "Being more flexible in working arrangements has meant we have been able to fill positions that we were struggling to fill."

Respondents also commented that work-life initiatives to address long work hours do not negatively impact on productivity. "A formal policy on overtime hours has improved the management of employees' work hours. Productivity has not suffered as a result and people are not stressed and exhausted."

Flexible working hours and general domestic or special leave are the most common work-life initiatives offered by respondents. Most of the initiatives were

provided on an informal basis, with leave options such as special leave and study leave most likely to be formally provided.

More than half the respondents have a health and wellness programme. The most common health and wellness provisions are workstation assessments, stress management information or support, vision checks and information on physical activity.

Respondents which supported health and wellness were more likely to report reduced staff turnover, absenteeism and time off work due to injury in the past 12 months.

“Most staff members stay long-term and give flexibility and support for their family as a reason they enjoy working in the organisation.”

Comparison with data from the 2002 and 2004 EEO Trust Diversity Surveys shows an increase in almost all the work-life initiatives.

Organisations employing fewer than 10 people completed a different version of the survey in recognition that they are

less likely to have formal programmes and initiatives. Almost all the smaller respondents said they actively endorse work-life balance.

While the larger respondents were most likely to support work-life balance in order to improve recruitment, small respondents rated social responsibility as more important.

Amongst the small respondents, the most commonly mentioned impact of work-life balance initiatives was reduced staff turnover.

To view the full survey report go to www.eeotrust.org.nz or contact the EEO Trust.

University tackles shortage of women in high places

The Human Rights Commission's 2006 *Census of Women's Participation* reports that although women occupy some of New Zealand's key leadership positions, this does not reflect the status of women in professional life in general.

According to the Census, public sector women are making good progress but progress for women in the private sector is "grindingly slow".

Only 17% of top legal partnerships, 19% of editors of major newspapers, 24% of judges, 34% of national secretaries of trade unions and 17% of university professors and associate professors are women.

In 2000, in recognition that women's skill and talent was being wasted, the University of Auckland took a proactive approach to encouraging more women into senior positions at the university through its Women in Leadership Programme. The programme won an EEO Trust Work & Life Award for innovation this year.

In 2000, academic women made up 38% of all academic staff at the University of Auckland but they held only 16% of the senior academic positions. These figures vary widely across the university, with only 9% of women academic staff in one faculty and 50% in another.

In addition, 58% of general staff were

women but only 41% of senior positions were held by women. Most of these senior women worked in the university library.

Māori and Pacific women were also under-represented in senior positions with two out of seven senior Māori academic staff being women. Both of the two senior Pacific staff were men. Asian and ethnic minority groups were also under-represented.

The Women in Leadership Programme was launched to "increase the numbers of women in senior positions and foster training, mentoring and career development for academic and general staff women."

EEO Manager Prue Toft says a focus on work-life balance is built into the programme. "The university recognises that enabling better work-life balance could increase the participation of women in senior positions. A research-based academic career provides some flexibility but usually involves overseas travel and work is rarely confined to the standard working day, creating challenges for staff with family responsibilities."

A 2005 University of Auckland staff survey of work-life balance reported general satisfaction with working conditions but noted particular challenges including increased administrative duties, extended teaching time during summer

school and meetings and lectures before 9am and after 5pm.

Technology allows work to be done from home but raises expectations of responses outside working hours from staff and students.

Aiming for culture change

The Women in Leadership Programme was designed to create a culture that supports women to reach their potential at work. "While individual career development is a benefit of the Women in Leadership Programme, the overarching goal is institutional culture change," says Ms Toft. "This is achieved by supporting women to pursue a leadership style that is most compatible with their needs and providing diverse models of effective leadership."

Ms Toft says that focussing a programme exclusively on women provides a supportive environment for identifying barriers and exploring solutions.

"A women-focussed programme provides a context for reflection on gendered values and preferred ways of working. The structure can also provide particular support for women's dual roles of staff member and primary carer at home. It offers the opportunity for

strategising for work-life balance.”

The programme was piloted in 2000 with 24 academic and general staff at mid-career level. It included an overnight retreat, mentoring, a day-long workshop, monthly workshops and seminars, and networking opportunities.

The pilot was so successful, the programme has been offered annually since then. Demand for places is high and priority is given to applicants from faculties and departments with fewer women role models.

Mentoring important to programme

Mentoring is an important aspect of the programme and is provided by senior staff. Participants, including those who do not have children yet, often request mentors with family responsibilities.

Mentors and mentees report a high degree of satisfaction from the relationship. For example, one mentor said, “I learnt things myself...I enjoyed the personal contact, being in contact with someone outside my department, and helping someone. I enjoyed the contact with the other mentors.”

And one mentee said of her mentor, “Was a really positive role model in terms of her ability to combine being a mum and an academic and still not go crazy.”

Inclusiveness is a core value of the programme, with a focus on how women can maintain their gender and cultural identities while successfully advancing to positions of leadership.

Programme for senior women

As a result of the success of the initial Women in Leadership Programme, the university launched a programme for women in senior positions in 2002.

This strand was developed on the basis of consultation with Australian colleagues and research amongst women in senior positions at the university. It is less formal than the first programme and includes a range of activities that are open to women in senior positions.

The response to both programmes has been very positive. One participant wrote that when she attended the programme she was ready to actively seek employment elsewhere. “Because of the Women in Leadership Programme, I stayed and this year I have been a key

player in research grants that have brought in approximately \$300,000 to the University of Auckland. I have also written or contributed to eight other research applications, have written a book-sized technical report and been a co-author of another publication.”

Chief Executive of the EEO Trust, Philippa Reed, who is also on the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards judging panel, says that while some other employers encourage women into leadership

positions, the University of Auckland’s programme was outstanding and innovative. “It didn’t so much raise the bar on women in leadership as take it to a completely different playing field,” she says. “The programme was meticulously researched and offers ongoing support for women. The university also plans to extend the model to other groups on campus and to other New Zealand universities.”



Numbers of women in senior positions has increased since the Women in Leadership Programme was introduced.



EEO Manager at the University of Auckland, Prue Toft, is presented with the Manāki Tangata Innovation Award by the Prime Minister Helen Clark.

EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2007

The EEO Trust is celebrating the 10th anniversary of the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards in August next year. It has introduced a Diversity Award and encourages entries from workplaces that proactively encourage and support a diverse workforce.

“Effective diversity management has been a theme running through the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards since their inception,” says Chief Executive Philippa Reed. “This new category will give entrants the opportunity to showcase how they’re making the most of New Zealand’s increasingly diverse population.”

More information on the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards at www.eeotrust.org.nz.

Diverse approaches to work-life balance

Winner of the Large Organisation Award at this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards was Meredith Connell, a specialised Auckland law firm that undertakes all indictable prosecution cases in Auckland. CEO Hugh Caughley says the extreme nature of the firm's work, involving prosecution of serious crime including murder, manslaughter, rape, fraud or serious drug charges, means Meredith Connell needs to support staff in all aspects of their lives.

"It is utterly appropriate that the firm should provide all the support programmes necessary to assist staff, not only to perform well professionally but also to maintain a sense of balance as far as the rest of their lives is concerned," says Mr Caughley.

Staff retention is critical to Meredith Connell as it takes seven years of on-the-job training to acquire the skills to prosecute jury trials in the High Court. The support staff also do highly specialised work.

Meredith Connell employs around 140 staff, and 69% of all partners and staff are women. More than half of women partners and staff, and nearly a third of men, have working patterns that take into account their work-life balance needs.

Meredith Connell is responsive to people's changing circumstances, and creates solutions to suit individual needs. Of the 18 women who have taken up the firm's parental leave provisions in the last three years, 17 have returned to work, one deciding to leave Auckland for lifestyle reasons.

Retention is also an important issue for winner of the Small to Medium Organisation Award, Conversa Global. This global research consultancy employs 18 full-time staff and has grown by nearly 500% in the past five years.

Flexibility is key to Conversa Global's success. "People set their own work targets and the remuneration system is made up of a base salary and personal

bonuses linked to their daily outputs," says Director Donella Parker, herself a winner of the EEO Trust's Walk the Talk Award in 2002. "Clearly communicating goals and expectations, coaching, and strong performance management ensure that targets are met."

"Work-life balance is not about having more time off work but rather integrating all the aspects of one's life."

Training is also important in retaining and motivating valued employees. An annual education budget is available for personal or professional development, or for areas that support work-life balance. Health and travel insurance are offered to staff and the company pays for families to join employees on work-related travel.

Just as the owners have a personal commitment to maintaining work-life balance in their lives, they provide staff with the opportunity and tools to do likewise. "Work-life balance is not about having more time off work but rather integrating all the aspects of one's life," says Parker.

Winner of the First Steps Award is ABB at Kinleith which has provided maintenance and stores-related services to the Kinleith Pulp and Paper Mill since 2003.

When ABB took over the work, outsourcing on this scale was completely new in Australasia and represented a significant risk for the company and its staff. However, by getting people involved in the creation of the workplace culture, ABB has improved working arrangements, reduced maintenance costs and increased productivity.

One of its early initiatives was to give every employee an opportunity to attend a "Forest Camp" to help with team building, goal setting and identifying individual and

team values. From the Forest Camps, a cross-section of staff developed the vision, mission statement, values and goals. The "Pathfinders" group was then developed to focus on workplace initiatives and site communication.

Work-life initiatives include flexible shift work patterns, free annual medical check-ups, an on-site gym and canteen, community volunteer days, medical insurance for staff and families, a company super scheme, and contributions to study fees.

ABB management say the work-life initiatives have significantly increased employee ownership at the mill, resulting in increased productivity and lower maintenance costs.

"...his genuine, personal approach and down-to-earth nature, and his desire to accommodate staff needs."

Winner of the Walk the Talk Award is Lester Oakes, Chief Executive of Career Services. Career Services employs 170 staff at 15 locations around the country, providing career information and advice services via phone, internet and face-to-face contact.

Mr Oakes is passionately involved in Wellington's repertory productions, and actively incorporates balance into his work day.

His motto of "long hours are not a badge of honour" exemplifies his attitude to work and he encourages staff to make time for family and other interests outside the workplace.

Staff commented that they feel there is a whanau concept about the way Lester manages the office. The judges say this reflects his genuine, personal approach and down-to-earth nature, and his desire to accommodate staff needs.

Making a difference – employing Māori

The EEO Trust's new publication *Making a difference: why and how to employ and work effectively with Māori* outlines how employers can tap into the vast wealth of Māori talent.

By 2021, 19% of New Zealand's younger workforce will be Māori and it will be imperative for business leaders to recognise and develop this source of talent.

This new EEO Trust publication, written by Chellie Spiller, Dr Rodger Spiller and Dr Manuka Henare, describes best practice regarding recruitment, retention and promotion of Māori, with each section complemented by business stories and examples.

Training for the future – Toll NZ

Toll NZ Consolidated is one example of an organisation that realises the importance of embracing cultural diversity. It promotes an inclusive work environment that enables staff to incorporate aspects of their culture and values, and allows them to express themselves and grow with the organisation.

Approximately 15% of Toll NZ's operational staff are Māori or Pacific peoples. Since 1989, a Māori network called Te Kupenga Mahi (TKM) has provided employees with a channel to collectively present Māori issues to the company as well as advise on policy development.

Personal development, leadership and tikanga-based courses are integral to Toll's mission. The Te Kupenga Study Grant was initiated in 2002 and is open to all Māori staff so they can progress within the organisation. The study grant programme includes diploma studies in business, Māori and administration, matauranga Māori, or Māori laws and

philosophy.

Paul Watene has worked for Toll NZ since 1981, starting off as a trainee locomotive assistant. He then worked as a locomotive assistant for four and a half years, and made his way to first grade locomotive engineer in 1989.

At Toll NZ, everyone with potential is directed towards management, something which Mr Watene thinks is crucial in the development of staff.

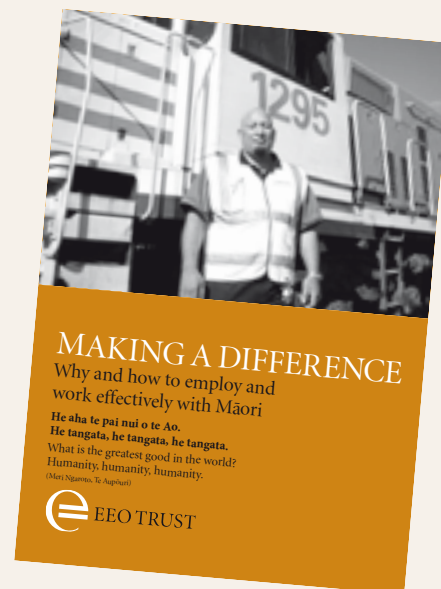
"There are a lot of good people out there who haven't considered management. I was one of these people until someone asked me to apply and it has been a huge benefit to all," says Mr Watene.

In 2001, Mr Watene was appointed to a locomotive operations managerial position, a role he worked in until this year when he was promoted to Toll Rail Manager Waikato.

"In 2004, I attended the organisation's inaugural Frontline Management Programme as well as presentation skills courses" says Mr Watene. The HR team in Auckland constantly reviews managers and the training courses and assesses how to encourage people to move forward.

"Management training has helped me gain a wider understanding of the organisation and given me the chance to build relationships with others in the business so I can better understand what they're doing and broaden my horizons.

"You can never know enough. Frontline management training has improved my time management skills, and also introduced me and others to the



essence of building effective networks among colleagues both inside and outside of the business. I realised that you're not alone and there are any number of people willing to assist you to reach and achieve you and your team's goals."

Mr Watene, who has just nominated two of his managers for training, is very positive about the way Toll NZ approaches staff development. "Having passed through the system myself over the last 25 years, I know the importance of feeling part of a team and not losing touch. We recently had a 24-hour cook-up covering all the shifts. It's important for me to connect with people at all levels and maintain relationships."

Although most of Toll NZ's staff are Baby Boomers with an average tenure of about 10 years, the highest recruitment band in 2005-6 was in the late teens to early 20s. With an ageing workforce, the company knows that training young staff may lengthen tenure and increase productivity and loyalty. The company is initiating a level four Team Leaders Course in 2007 and has received 32 nominations so far, nine of whom are Māori or Pacific people.

For a copy of *Making a difference: why and how to employ and work effectively with Māori*, please contact the EEO Trust office or download it from our website www.eeotrust.org.nz.

Go to www.eeotrust.org.nz/equal/implementing.cfm and play the *Embracing different cultures in the workplace* video clip to see more of Toll NZ at work.