

**In honouring
the attributes
of others, we
are ourselves
inspired.**

Parenting programmes build team cohesion

The Warehouse won the Supreme Award at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards for its parenting programmes for staff – and is keen to see other companies run similar initiatives.

It's a fair question: What does people's approach to parenting have to do with their productivity and engagement at work? Plenty, it seems, and the Warehouse is showing how.

The company ran parenting programmes for its South Auckland distribution staff in 2008 and 2009 which led to remarkable improvements in team cohesion and performance. HR Manager

Kids, Information for Parents).

SKIP project manager Victoria Parsons says that SKIP has a number of national partners such as Plunket and Barnardos, and also funds projects to work with parents in their own communities; some of these have been small-scale parenting initiatives in workplaces. Teaming up with The Warehouse was an opportunity to engage parents on a larger scale.

driving; there's a strong whānau culture given the number of relatives who work together.

But despite good performance in the centre, leaders felt that something was missing. As Kirsty puts it, there was a disconnect between (mostly English) managers and multi-cultural staff, as well as between cultures in the workforce.

The company saw SKIP as a golden opportunity to boost communication and understanding through the common experience of parenthood, and the company's leaders were right behind the project.

Not only would the programme help team members to understand each other better, says Kirsty, they would get tools to support them as parents at a convenient place and time. And it would "show the team members that we value them not only as team members but as parents, and that we acknowledge that home life can be supported by work life as well".

The first sessions, an hour in work time, were offered to 80 distribution centre men – or "DC dads", as The Warehouse puts it,

“While having 180 team members take two one-hour sessions off the floor seems initially like an expense, that's returned when you look at the increase in productivity and engagement.” *Kirsty Wooding*

Kirsty Wooding is keen to encourage other companies to do the same.

It all started in early 2008 when the Ministry of Social Development offered the Big Red Sheds the opportunity to pilot its parenting programme SKIP (Strategies with

The approach came at a good time, says Kirsty. The North Island Distribution Centre in South Auckland has 180 very diverse staff in roles ranging from picking and processing, security and engineering to forklift and straddle-crane



and were enthusiastically taken up. The principle was inclusion, says Kirsty: "Participation was not only for dads. There were some grandparents, some soon-to-be dads, and some uncles. Some had no intentions of being a parent, however, they felt they could add value from their experiences as a child."

The programme was delivered by well-known parent educator Alfred Ngaro. The session wasn't about lecturing the employees on how to be parents; rather, they used what the charismatic Alfred calls a "process of enquiry" to encourage participants to discuss what it means to be a good parent and how they could help each other be better dads.

The men were given disposable cameras to take pictures of themselves doing things with their children. The images and

their comments on parenting were compiled into attractive booklets that were given away to Warehouse customers on Father's Day in 2008. As well as being popular, the workshops were effective. As one male employee says, "I learned that if you want to keep your kids safe, make friends with them, talk to them."

Part two of the programme was a workshop focussed on parenting styles, facilitated by Alfred and SKIP educator Vicky Ellison. More than 90 men took part. Impressed by what they were hearing, "DC mums" asked when it would be their turn; 70 took part in sessions in 2009 run by Moka Ngaro, Alfred's wife and a family therapist. The group also produced a booklet which was given out in stores on Mother's Day that year.

Like any company, The Warehouse needs to see hard

data on bottom-line impacts. It had a research firm run interviews with staff to assess what differences, if any, the parenting workshops had made. Parents of younger

They reported taking "time out" or having a moment to calm down when they were angry, and making more time to listen.

children experienced the greatest benefits, and many said that they had reduced their use of physical discipline. They also reported taking “time out” or having a moment to calm down when they were angry, and making more time to listen.

All the participants said the workshops were worthwhile. Half the participants said the workshops allowed them to build empathy and connect with each other around their shared parenting experiences. Just over a third of parents continued to talk about parenting at work.

And the impact in the distribution centre? Overall, communication improved straight away, says Kirsty: the cultural gap narrowed and staff at all levels now talk more easily. As one employee says, “It’s nice to know that I can speak to my supervisor about my daughter ... we’re all experiencing the same things.”

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Adds Kirsty: “We’ve got team members who aren’t afraid to talk to their manager or supervisor. The workshops have put everyone on the same plane. There’s still a level of hierarchy to get things done, but people are more comfortable to talk to each other and talk openly and honestly. So if they have been away, they are comfortable to say, ‘My son was sick and my wife was working, so I had to stay home’.

Managers are more receptive to that because they know the story they are getting is honest.”

The Warehouse’s engagement survey in March this year made revealing reading. The number of North Island Distribution Centre staff who felt engaged at work had risen from 77.5 per cent in 2008 (before the workshops) to 88.9 per cent in 2010 – one of the highest scores in the company. Distribution



centre sick days dropped from 6.4 days each in 2008 to 4.5 days this year.

All of this took place against a backdrop of increased stock volumes, says Kirsty, but over the same period the distribution centre recorded a 20 per cent increase in productivity – the amount of cartons processed per hour per person – and a 30 per cent decrease in cost per carton processed.

“The reduction to operating costs has meant we have been able to invest back into training and absorb the cost of doing the workshops in work time,” says Kirsty. “While having 180 team members take two one-hour sessions off the floor seems initially like an expense, that’s returned when you look at the increase in productivity and engagement. Discretionary effort goes up

So what’s next for The Warehouse? In early 2011, a one-hour session will be run for mums and dads together to explore the ways in which men and women parent. Also planned are school-holiday workshops for employees’ teenagers (“How to deal with your mum and dad”) and for parents (“How to deal with your teenager”).

The Warehouse and SKIP are working together on a toolkit for

“We’ve got team members who aren’t afraid to talk to their manager or supervisor. The workshops have put everyone on the same plane.” Kirsty Wooding

and people feel good about coming to work.”

Staff turnover remains very low in the centres, and retention now sits at 98.7 per cent.

So far, SKIP is paying the costs of running The Warehouse workshops while the company provides staff with time out and spaces to gather. But The Warehouse intends to fund the programme in other parts of the company and is keen to encourage others employers to get involved with SKIP. It seems there is a lively interest: before the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards night was out, Kirsty had fielded four approaches.

employers which outlines why they should get involved and how. Victoria Parsons says that although the SKIP messages don’t change, the facilitators and delivery are adjusted to best fit the circumstances, and she’s keen to talk to employers: “We’ve got a great story to tell.”

PICTURED : Alfred Ngaro (left) with Aaron Greene of The Warehouse and Hon. Tariana Turia, who presented the Awards saying, “In honouring the attributes of others, we are ourselves inspired.”

www.skip.org.nz

Treating staff like one of their own

Henare Clarke and Vern Rosieur both take a whānau approach to managing their large and diverse workforces.

Downer New Zealand's Auckland Area Manager, Henare Clarke, sees his 275 staff as an extended family. And when it comes to the health and safety challenges that face an infrastructure company every day, it's whānau philosophy all the way.

"Looking after each other and caring for each other are all part of the whānau process and our company values in Downer, as people are our greatest asset," says Henare, who is of Ngāti Porou descent. "At Auckland branch

Trust Work & Life Awards. The award celebrates leaders who create an environment where a wide range of people can work effectively and creatively together; for Henare, the award is "humbling".

Cos Bruyn, Downer's CEO in New Zealand, says Henare is "a leader who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way. His leadership skills pull together people with very different backgrounds, talents, experiences and interests, encouraging them to step up to

"I try to work on the principles of keeping their pride/mana in place and sometimes work on their self-esteem."

we're one big family – we spend probably more time here than we do at home, so our workplace should be just as safe as our homes as well. Every person who works with me is someone's father, mother, sister or brother."

Henare won the Walk the Talk Award at this year's EEO

responsibility and to become full-scale partners and contributors to both their teams and the overall business."

Henare has indeed walked that talk. He started with the company at 18, working as a labourer in a Hamilton asphalt plant. In his 20s, he started studying part-time for



"Enthusiasm and excitement will take you over a lot of hurdles."

his New Zealand Certificate in Engineering (civil). He says it was hard to mix work, home life and study, but has since risen steadily up the ranks. He encourages others to build their skills, whether that's improving their reading and writing or getting a tertiary qualification.

One of Henare's initiatives that has instilled pride and a sense of family in the Auckland branch is the haka group he set up. In 2004, when Henare took on the Area Manager's role, morale needed a boost; when the company decided to welcome esteemed kaumātua John Komene into the Downer fold, it seemed the right time to turn casual chat about setting up a haka group into reality and prepare a pōwhiri.

Henare had been years before a member of Hamilton's Ngā Tama a Rangi haka group that had made the hotly-contested national champs four times. He knew the pride, energy and solidarity haka could bring, and brought in some experts to get the group going. It's a multi-cultural team, with Germans, Malaysians, French, Māori and Pacific Islanders among its ranks.

"Pride, among other things, was something we really wanted to lift in our business," he recalls. "And I have a view that until people are proud of themselves, how can they be proud of the company?"

It's about building their self-esteem and being proud of who they are and building on that process; then [pride in] your company brand follows along."

Henare mentors young staff with leadership potential, and led a group on a week-long Outward Bound course in Turangi and a two-day course on Great Barrier Island earlier this year. He also mentors young staff who have come to work at Downer through a partnership with the justice system.

This is some of the advice he gives them:

Be enthusiastic. "Enthusiasm and excitement will take you over a lot of hurdles."

Adjust your attitude. "In my younger years, I could have

"There are times when you think you are doing 100 per cent when you're not. Look in the mirror."

mistaken some of the 'dirty work' given to me by some of my supervisors as being punishment. I just turned it around to 'everything I am doing is character-building. It's about expanding my knowledge.'" The same applies to job moves which sometimes aren't what you really want:

“Treat them as opportunities that may never come around again.”

Read. “I’m reading *NZ SAS: The First Fifty Years* [Ron Crosby] in conjunction with *The Toyota Way* [Jeffrey Liker] and that’s a dangerous combination” – here he laughs – “but I’ve learned lots from reading. It widens your knowledge and makes you a more interesting person.”

Be honest with yourself. “There are times when you think you are doing 100 per cent when you’re not. Look in the mirror.”

Treat colleagues and staff with respect and instil pride. “There are some people whose lives are not as tidy as mine and sometimes

we are an integral part of.”

Also among the six entrants in the Walk the Talk category in the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2010 was **Vern Rosieur** (Ngāti Manuhiri), Safety and Human Resources Field Services Manager for utilities company Northpower. Vern’s role encompasses around 900 people throughout New Zealand and Australia.

Vern, who has been with Northpower since 1999, sees his role as looking after hearts and minds; he’s very conscious that if someone’s personal life is in disarray, they won’t have their minds on the job in an industry where safety is critical.

He sees one-on-one chats as critical in getting people to open up, and keeps management in the loop as solutions are devised.

Here’s an example of Vern in action. After learning that a late colleague’s widow was struggling to provide for her family, Vern called on the industry to help, then approached Northpower management to suggest establishing a koha policy. The company developed a policy on gifting to staff, including koha for tangi, retirement gifts, terminal illness and births.

Vern, who sees visibility through “walking and talking” as an important part of his and other managers’ jobs, says he couldn’t be effective without the trust of staff at all levels. He encourages employees to boost their knowledge and has fostered various learning programmes, including foremen and supervisor training courses, a financial literacy programme for employees, and a female trainee line mechanic programme.

Vern also established Northpower’s team of trade coaches, people who provide pastoral care, training, coaching and mentoring to field staff. According to Barbara Harrison, Northpower’s General Manager Business Support, Vern’s current role “was created for him to ensure that his coaching, mentoring and leadership skills could be shared as widely as possible.

“Vern’s love, care, respect and leadership of people is very genuine. His support of the people within the industry is far-reaching and has touched several generations.”

“People understand the importance of looking after each other.”

I think that all they need is a bit of TLC ... almost treat them like one of your own. It [the workplace] is almost like your extended family. There are some you can tell have been through some pretty brutal upbringings and if I can give them a chance in life or provide a wee bit of light at the end of the tunnel or give them something they might have missed out on, then that’s really great, and time costs me nothing.”

He adds, “It is rewarding to see the progress in these guys; the company fully supports and embraces this philosophy as we are investing in our future as a company and in the communities

Vern is often the first person called when someone is facing a personal or family crisis; a serious illness in a long-time staffer, perhaps, or an apprentice struggling with on-the-job learning and a young family.

“If someone comes to me or I hear about something, I’ll immediately try and help early in the piece rather than later; trying to be proactive rather than reactive,” says Vern, who started out in the industry as a cable layer in the 1980s and worked his way up. “I try to work on the principles of keeping their pride/manā in place and sometimes work on their self-esteem.”

Investing in cleaners and orderlies

With high levels of social deprivation amongst its catchment of half a million people, the Counties Manukau District Health Board is determined to equip its staff of nearly 6000 to meet the challenges of their jobs.

It’s easy to overlook the importance of hospital cleaners and orderlies in the health-care system. However, they play a critical role in maintaining infection control and ensuring that patients and materials are where they need to be.

They also tend to have limited education and, in the Counties Manukau region, many are of Pacific Island descent with limited English.

In December 2008, the DHB ended a contract with an external provider, bringing 276 hospital cleaners and orderlies onto its payroll. It was a golden opportunity to boost their skills.

“Management recognised that the new employees would need to be trained in-house,” says Organisational Learning and Development Consultant Sandy Millar, “and one of the first steps was to improve literacy and numeracy.”

First stop was the Tertiary Education Commission, which funded the design and delivery of StepUP, a pilot literacy scheme for 28 people – 20 cleaners and eight supervisors. Manukau Institute of Technology and the Department of Labour supported the programme.

The pilot was delivered in work time and aimed to improve employees’ reading, writing and

communication skills through covering topics such as health and safety, hand hygiene, workplace practices, using email and understanding percentages.

The supervisor programme was funded for 25 hours and the programme for cleaners

Manager of Non-Clinical Support, believes that productivity has also increased. “Staff now fully understand what is required of them in their roles. As they’ve gained more insight into their roles and responsibilities, they’re more engaged.

All the learners made gains, particularly in the key areas of spoken communication and reading.

and orderlies for 50 hours per person, reflecting the difference in skill levels.

Results from the pilot showed that all the learners made gains, particularly in the key areas of spoken communication and reading.

Clinical staff report that as a result of StepUP, the DHB’s cleaners and orderlies are more positive about their work and more engaged with hospital-wide initiatives such as hand hygiene.

Wider impacts include a reduction in multi-resistant organisms, directly attributable to improved hand hygiene and better cleaning processes.

Clare Thompson, Service

“Staff who have completed the programme are now passing their knowledge on to other staff. They’re starting to know that they have a voice and can express better ways of working.”

Tweaks and improvements have been made to StepUP, and 80 more cleaners and orderlies are due to attend, with another 70 from the aged care sector also getting the chance to take part.

“Our vision was to see cleaners walking around the hospital with their heads held high within 12 months,” says Clare. “Within just six months, thanks to the StepUP programme, that vision has begun to be realised.”

South Islanders navigate the skills highway

Wool spinners and engineers were amongst the winners in the Skills Highway category of this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards.

Although separated by the Southern Alps, Canterbury Spinners and Liddell Contracting have in common a dedication to investing in their staff to improve skills and build harmonious teams.

Liddell Contracting won the Skills Highway category for its literacy and numeracy programme, which helped halt financial losses caused by poor paperwork.

EEO Trust Chief Executive and Awards judge, Philippa Reed, says the programme did not just

it became clear that the problem wasn't entirely systems-based," she says.

"When we provided some in-house training on completing timesheets, we discovered that poor literacy and numeracy could be affecting accuracy. We took this seriously as it directly affects our profits.

"In addition, we employ staff from all over the world and as a small business operating in a competitive market from

"It set me up for life." Apprentice Zane Niven

improve skills, it brought a culture of learning into the company.

Liddell Contracting was established in 1992 with just two employees but really started to grow in 2007, pushing the capacities of its staff, now numbering 48, to keep up with administrative details. With financial losses occurring on some jobs and administration staff spending hours following up poorly written timesheets, a solution was badly needed.

HR Adviser Tania Washer takes up the story: "After several attempts to streamline the timesheet system and make forms easier to complete,

a remote location, we need to attract and retain the best possible talent."

The solution was Building Bridges, a 40-week pilot literacy and numeracy programme developed with the help of the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC). During the first year, 13 staff participated in the programme, receiving one to two hours of training every week. Timesheet errors decreased immediately.

Staff who speak English as a second language received separate help, with one-to-one tuition.

The TEC could not fund Building Bridges beyond the pilot, but



"By supporting staff with an ESOL training programme, we helped our migrants improve their English communication ability."

Liddell Contracting made its own investment, subsidising literacy and numeracy training for staff completing Modern Apprenticeships. "It helped me a lot," says apprentice Zane Niven. "It set me up for life."

Like Liddell Contracting, Canterbury Spinners' staff come from around the world; 17 per cent of its 250 staff speak English as a second language. In addition, a number of senior staff with years of experience in the textile industry are heading towards retirement.

"We had largely been recruiting staff based on their physical ability to do the job," says HR Manager Karen Treloar, "without giving enough weight to their literacy, numeracy and communication skills."

The company dyes, cards and spins raw wool before finishing it into yarn ready for carpets. It has plants in Christchurch, Lower Hutt and Dannevirke, processing just under one million kilograms of wool fibre each month.

EEO Trust Work & Life Awards judges highly commended its literacy, language and numeracy programme LEAP (Learn, Experience and Progress) which was launched at its Christchurch plant in 2007.

LEAP runs two hours a week

for 20 weeks, with some learners going on to another 20-week block. A total of 76 staff have completed the programme.

Karen says that LEAP has improved staff morale, and reduced absenteeism and turnover. In addition, there have been fewer machinery breakdowns.

Karen was surprised at the results of the initial assessments which showed that staff at the Christchurch plant were one of the least literate workforces tested.

"It wasn't until the programme was underway that we saw the extent of our problem," she says. "Tutors were telling us that some of our workers were only able to comprehend basic English, so they couldn't even read hazard signs or the safety manuals we were giving them. This immediately rang warning bells for me."

Alongside LEAP, a programme was launched to encourage staff back to work as soon as possible after an injury. "It's essentially about making it easier for staff who are injured on the job to return to work as soon as possible, even if it's just to light duties," says Karen. "This benefits both the staff member and productivity."

The combination of both programmes has exponentially decreased lost-time injuries – one department has gone for two years without a lost-time injury, "something we never believed could happen," says Karen.

PICTURED : Workshop supervisor Antonio Baatjies, welder Ian Beedham and apprentice Zane Niven.

Healthy responses to our ageing population

How do companies in the health sector prepare for an ageing workforce just as their client base becomes increasingly dependent? Three providers show how.

With birth rates declining, life expectancy rising and many people retiring well past 65, employers are grappling with how to retain and engage older staff and attract younger people into their workforces. In the health sector, the issue is heightened by the fact that we are all living longer and large numbers of ageing baby boomers will place greater demands on the sector.

For one aged care provider, Claud Switzer Memorial Trust, which operates a rest home and hospital in Kaitaia, the prospect of closure due to chronic staff shortages forced it to get serious about recruitment and retention.

“In 40 years’ time, we’ll have four times as many people aged over 85 as we have now, and a quarter of the population will be over 65,” says General Manager Jackie Simkins. “To prepare for these challenges, we had to sort out our problems recruiting registered nurses and greatly improve our ability to recruit, retain and invest in people.”

Switzer employs 85 people including 11 registered nurses. In 2008, three registered nurses left within 12 months of being recruited, two of them to higher-paying jobs in the public sector.

“We were unable to replace those nurses,” says Jackie, “and it became clear that the recruitment and retention of registered nurses presented a significant risk. We either had to get better at it or close down. It’s no overstatement to say the situation was critical.”

The factors creating the crisis included an ageing nursing workforce, the pay gap between

work. As a result, resignations of registered nurses decreased from five in the 2007-2008 year to just one in 2009-2010.

Switzer’s future is now looking more secure.

For two other health care providers, more effective partnerships with unions have been instrumental in improving workplace relationships and outcomes.

“We either had to get better at it or close down. It’s no overstatement to say the situation was critical.”

Jackie Simkins, Claud Switzer Memorial Trust

the public and private sectors, an increase in the needs of people in rest homes, and poor perceptions of aged care as a job.

Switzer tackled the problem head-on. During the last two years, it has dedicated all its extra funding to pay increases so that registered and enrolled nurses now receive the same pay as they would in the public sector.

Recruitment problems have also been tackled through improving clinical placements for nursing students and nurses returning to

Bupa Care Services is significantly larger than Switzer, employing more than 3000 people to manage its 45 rest homes, aged care hospitals and homes. However it faces similar challenges in building a skilled, committed workforce.

While negotiating its collective agreement with the New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) and the Service and Food Workers Union (SFWU) in 2007, Bupa suggested linking pay to skill and competency. This led to the creation of a voluntary training and



development programme, called Progress Steps, in early 2008.

Progress Steps assesses the skills and competencies people need in their roles, breaking them down into five steps and providing training during work time. Managers review employees’ progress annually to assess whether they are ready to move to the next step and reap the linked pay rise.

In the past two years, 541 staff have earned a pay rise. The wage bill has gone up by \$1.5 million, says General Manager of the company’s care homes, Grainne Moss, “but the benefits of quality care, resident satisfaction and reduced staff turnover offset the hard costs”.

Customer satisfaction is up, complaints are falling and, most importantly, says Grainne, “staff tell us that they value Progress Steps as they provide goals, guidance and clear expectations”.

At the **Bay of Plenty District Health Board**, a nationwide agreement between DHBs and the NZNO which gives annual pay

increments over three years led to a shift from adversarial bargaining to a partnership approach.

To set the groundwork for the partnership, 10 nursing delegates and 10 management staff attended

“We’re all working from the same page now. There’s no longer the them-and-us feel of old.”

Julie Robinson, Bay of Plenty DHB

a two-day coaching course in April 2008, culminating in the establishment of a joint working group.

The group adopted a “mutually powerful” guiding principle, says Gordon Mackay, General Manager Human Resources. “We will test everything against the question: How does this improve the patient journey?”

Pay increases were linked to service improvements, with most of the initiatives directly related to improving patient care while also increasing retention and engage-

ment amongst nurses, who make up nearly half the workforce.

A staff engagement survey in 2009 found that while engagement had improved right across the organisation, nursing has been

transformed, with engagement rates rising 17 per cent in two years. Turnover of nurses fell by 4.72 per cent.

NZNO delegate Lynne Hansen says the partnership “is the most harmonious relationship between nurses and management there has ever been. There is trust and belief from both sides.”

Director of Nursing, Julie Robinson, agrees: “We’re all working from the same page now. There’s no longer the them-and-us feel of old.”

Flexibility: it's not special treatment

Flexible work is just part of how business gets done at ANZ New Zealand, Microsoft New Zealand and Chapman Tripp.

ANZ New Zealand says that it is determined to embed flexibility as the bank's standard way of working, not special treatment.

The company launched its My Flexibility policy in mid-2008 to help employees balance their work and their lifestyles. It covers everything from where work is done, working hours and breaks from work through to options such as leave without pay, study leave, and sports, cultural and community services leave.

“The attitude of the firm to flexible work hours has enabled me to make career and motherhood work.”

Paula Brosnahan, Chapman Tripp

My Flexibility applies to every single one of ANZ New Zealand's 9000 employees, “irrespective of how long they've worked for us and not just those with caring responsibilities”, says Senior HR Business Manager Simone Darragh.

ANZ New Zealand won the Workplace Work & Life Award in this year's EEO Trust Work & Life Awards. According to Simone,

flexibility is a business imperative for the bank. “Attracting and retaining key talent is critical to sustainable business, and increasing workforce diversity means flexibility is not just a nice-to-have HR initiative.”

The bank offers detailed guidance for managers and employees about how to make flexibility a reality. The intranet offers a quiz called The Flexibility Walk to help people identify and explore their assumptions and

biases about flexibility.

It advises going into discussion about flexible arrangements with an open mind, and thinking creatively if necessary to balance everyone's needs. The bank endeavours to ensure that working flexibly does not negatively impact on career or development opportunities.

For lawyer Mark Flood, three

months of parental leave during his son's first year “proved to be an invaluable bonding time for us and gave me a real appreciation for the role of at-home caregiver. I applaud the bank for having a culture that supports males taking parental leave.”

Simone says that ANZ New Zealand is already reaping the rewards of My Flexibility, with sick leave, absenteeism and turnover all decreasing. Its part-time workforce has increased from 14 per cent to 24 per cent, and 83 per cent of employees who return from parental leave stay for more than a year, well above the bank's target of 50 per cent.

As happens with any change, some staff couldn't see how My Flexibility would work, especially in customer-facing parts of the business – 67 per cent of ANZ staff work in branches or contact centres.

Organisational Development Consultant Esther Consedine says the greatest resistance related to requests to work a compressed week. “We worked hard to highlight that flexibility was about the results of employees and not about people being at their desk at certain hours.”

“Employees are given the flexibility to work from home and can take time out during the day to go to the gym, watch their child's play or simply leave at 3pm ...”

Sally Doherty, Microsoft New Zealand

For law firm **Chapman Tripp**, flexibility is critical to attracting and retaining top women lawyers and is a core part of its programme Women@CT, introduced in 2007. The programme was highly commended in the Work & Life/Diversity Initiative category at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2010.

Just over half of the firm's lawyers are female in a country where more women than men graduate in law, but remain relatively scarce at the top end of the profession. “We want to stand out from other organisations as being the employer of choice for women working in private law firms,” says HR Director Sarah Coleman.

Chapman Tripp, which has offices in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, is committed to allowing legal and non-legal staff to work flexible hours that suit their lifestyles, within the constraints of meeting client expectations.

Part-time work is supported by “discouraging any attitude that to be successful you must be seen in the office for long hours,” says Sarah. In 2007, three per cent of staff worked part-time, a figure that had risen to 14 per cent by 2009.

Paula Brosnahan, a Principal in the Auckland resource management team, was able to do some work from home while

on maternity leave and maintain contact with some clients. “After nine months, I was able to return to the office part-time. The attitude of the firm to flexible work hours has enabled me to make career and motherhood work.”

A new policy provides that, wherever possible, internal and external client seminars and publications are fronted equally by male and female lawyers.

More women are being promoted, too. In 2007, women made up 35 per cent of promotions; in 2009 that figure was 61 per cent.

Jess Cameron was one of the women rewarded with a promotion, appointed Senior Solicitor last year. She says the flexible working programme was instrumental in her decision to stay with the firm.

“When my personal circumstances changed, I was able to commute between the Auckland and Wellington offices and ultimately transfer to the Wellington office.”

Under Women@CT, networking and learning opportunities for women have increased and, in 2011, the HR team will be developing tailored career development plans for women with high potential. In addition, a series of workshops is being developed to encourage all legal staff to look at unconscious bias and how it could impact on women lawyers.

Microsoft has a high profile

globally, but its 150-strong New Zealand arm promotes flexibility as part of its desire to create a “local employee experience”, says HR Director Sally Doherty.

The company has a flexible working policy for those who wish to work part-time, flexible hours or job-share. “Employees are given the flexibility to work from home and can take time out during the day to go to the gym, watch their child's play or simply leave at 3pm to pick their children up from school,” says Sally.

“Some employees choose to come in later in the morning, some leave work earlier and others choose to work from home. Flexible working is not just for parents, and the options are endless.”

This approach saw it highly commended by EEO Trust Work & Life Awards judges. EEO Trust Chief Executive Philippa Reed says that on her visit to Microsoft, employees from throughout the organisation gave numerous examples on how flexibility made their lives easier.

“Microsoft obviously has access to technology that enables flexibility but, more critically, its workplace culture and attitude actually support and promote flexibility,” she says.

Premier Team Manager Nicola Ferguson is a single parent and says that flexibility allows her to juggle home and work life. “This is really important to me,” she says. “As a manager of a team of 11, many of whom have young families, I also actively encourage my team to do the same and it's great to be able to do that knowing you have the support of the organisation.”



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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.

To join the EEO Employers Group
admin@eeotrust.org.nz

Reference or resource inquiries
library@eeotrust.org.nz

Communications or media inquiries
jsmith@eeotrust.org.nz
jmiddleton@eeotrust.org.nz

EEO Trust office
Level 5, 56 Cawley Street,
Ellerslie, Auckland, 1051

Postal address
PO Box 12929,
Penrose, Auckland, 1642

Telephone (09) 525 3023
Fax (09) 525 7076