



EEO TRUST  
NEWSLETTER  
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# Creating versatile workplaces

## What can people with disabilities contribute, and how?

The employment experiences of people with disabilities is the current research focus of the Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) Trust which is running an on-line survey for people with disabilities.

The survey asks about the employment experiences of people with disabilities, and particularly about the skills and experience they bring to a workplace and how employers have helped or hindered them in making an effective contribution at work.

EEO Trust Research and Information Manager Dr Mervyl McPherson says that a better understanding

of the employment experiences of people with disabilities will enable the EEO Trust to help employers make better use of their talents.

“Since its establishment 12 years ago, the EEO Trust has worked with employers to help them recruit the very best people for a job and to treat them fairly once they’re in the job,” she says. “Some employers may not be taking advantage of the skills and experience of people with disabilities so we’re asking people with disabilities what they contribute at work and how they think employers can better tap into their skills.

“This project is part of our vision of helping create versatile workplaces which are tolerant, innovative and creative, and which understand that the best workforce doesn’t necessarily come in the packages we’ve been used to.”

The EEO Trust has already completed a comprehensive literature review which revealed a need for more information on the skills and potential contribution people with disabilities could make to New Zealand workplaces. There is also little information on attitudinal barriers and possible solutions, and on career progression and job satisfaction issues.

The literature review revealed that:

- The attitudes of employers and fellow workers tend to create a greater barrier than any physical barriers
- Senior management commitment is critical to the successful employment of people with disabilities
- Employers need to know more about the support services and funding available
- Employers need to know more about the business case for employing people with disabilities

The EEO Trust has previously used on-line surveys to explore the experiences and wishes of New Zealand fathers and how personal relationships affect people's working lives and vice versa. Both these surveys were completed by more than 1,200 people and contributed to the development of comprehensive research reports and resources for employers.

To complete the survey go to [www.eeotrust.org.nz/survey](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/survey). Contact the EEO Trust for an email or print version.

## Communicating the EEO Trust's commitment to business success



The EEO Trust unveiled its new logo at the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards in September. While the EEO Trust name remains the same, its visual identity has been updated with a new orange logo. All its publications and other communications devices are being revised in line with the new brand.

Chief Executive Dr Philippa Reed says the EEO Trust's purple branding had communicated its identity and goals since

the Trust's inception in 1991. "Early this year we asked some of our key contacts how they saw the EEO Trust and what our visual identity conveyed to them. We discovered that some people were confused about what we did and why.

"It was clear that we needed to communicate ourselves in a fresh and innovative way that conveyed our professional, commercial focus as well as the creativity and integrity we bring to the issues facing New Zealand workplaces."

The EEO Trust remains a not-for-profit organisation tasked with raising awareness and supporting businesses to achieve success through managing diversity. Its driving philosophy is still that businesses do better when people are recruited and managed in ways that respect their talents and needs as individuals.

"What will be different are some of our ways of communicating this," says Dr Reed. "For instance you'll be hearing more about the versatile workplace, referring to workplaces that are courageous enough to set aside preconceptions and habit in order to maximise available talent.

"With New Zealand's skill shortage continuing to intensify it's essential for workplaces to think creatively about how they attract and retain people and we want to help employers do this."

The EEO Trust's activities include:

- providing information and tools to help workplaces become more versatile to take advantage of the diverse talent pool
- raising awareness of the business benefits of EEO and work-life balance
- providing relevant and current information from businesses and thought-leaders around the world
- encouraging business success by demonstrating the benefits of recognising and managing diversity
- acknowledging and promoting businesses that successfully manage a diverse workplace.

## Moving beyond the "ideal" worker?

The EEO Trust's latest research on the management of diversity by New Zealand workplaces is now available from its website.

This year's Diversity Survey was completed by 590 organisations. It shows that New Zealand employers are performing slightly better on a number of diversity benchmarks, including work-life balance provisions and the number of Maori and Pacific peoples in management positions.

In her foreword to the Diversity Survey report, EEO Trust Chief Executive Dr Philippa Reed says effective management of diversity in the workplace can address the challenges employers currently face in finding and keeping skilled workers, many of whom need to balance work and home responsibilities.

"Looking beyond the norm and adjusting historical management practices to accommodate versatility in the workplace can mean that untapped talent emerges from unlikely sources," she says.

EEO Trust Chair and Chief Executive of the Auckland Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry Michael Barnett agrees, saying that preconceptions about the attributes and lifestyles of employees need to change.

"A big step in the right direction would be if New Zealand businesses could let go of the stereotypes they have created of the 'ideal' worker. Holding onto these stereotypes telescopes the number of potential employees in an already small pool of workers."

To download the EEO Diversity Survey Report go to [www.eeotrust.org.nz/information/diversity.shtml](http://www.eeotrust.org.nz/information/diversity.shtml) or contact the EEO Trust for a copy.

# Winning approaches to work-life balance

The EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2004 were presented in September by Prime Minister Helen Clark. Winners included workplaces from Auckland, Taupo, Wellington and Westport from the private and public sectors.

In the seven years the EEO Trust has presented the awards there has been an evolution in thinking around work-life balance, with leading workplaces realising that it needs to be an integral part of the organisation's structure. While some work-life initiatives are creative responses to particular employment challenges, the best workplaces have a culture of valuing people out of which a range of work-life initiatives have grown naturally.

Winner of the Large Organisation Award was accounting and business services firm Deloitte which exemplifies this approach. When staff feedback rated maintaining healthy relationships at work and at home as a key area of concern, the company's answer was to take a strategic approach to develop a work culture that supported this.

Its managers and partners now actively demonstrate the importance of healthy relationships by taking part in team activities, initiating family events and role modelling flexible work arrangements which enable them to balance their professional and personal commitments.

First Steps Award winner IT provider Oxygen Business Solutions is another organisation that has taken a consultative approach to developing a culture that prioritises its people and encourages work-life balance.

The company involved staff in a series of focus groups, roadshows and workshops to develop a framework for the way they interacted with each other and with the world around them. A new strategy was also developed to help attract, retain and develop people.

Runner-up in the First Steps category was Buller District Council which has developed a team-based culture and a work atmosphere that is fun and family-friendly in order to meet the challenge of attracting and retaining staff in its relatively remote Westport location. Initiatives like flexible hours for parents wanting to attend school activities and Fun Fridays where staff dress informally have played a big part in the council's culture.

The winner of the Small to Medium Organisation category was Auckland temporary recruitment firm KC Temps.

Directors Alexis Siermans and Kerry Kirwan recognise that the success of their business depends on modelling the benefits of flexibility to their clients. Work-life initiatives which enable staff to manage all aspects of their lives are therefore a core part of their competitive strategy.

One of the main reasons KC Temps' work-life strategy has been so successful is because the directors have "walked the talk". They both work in their North Shore office three days a week allowing Kerry to study towards a Bachelor of Arts and write a novel while Alexis works on the family farm and helps out at her children's school.

Taupo based chartered accounting firm DPA & Associates won the

Manāki Tangata Award for innovation for its approach to meeting the childcare needs of its staff.

The number of new parents on the DPA team has increased significantly in recent years with many struggling to pay for childcare. When one of the team suggested pooling together for a company nanny, management was so enthusiastic it decided to subsidise the initiative, employing a nanny for 35 hours a week on an "on-call" basis for DPA families.

This year's winner of the Walk the Talk category Nisha Nati manages nearly 300 people for EDS (New Zealand) and is a mother of four children.

Her approach has been to capitalise on technology and flexible work practices while focusing on productivity and quality rather than hours spent behind the desk. To allow her to drop her children off at school for example, Nisha tries to schedule meetings around school hours and has the necessary technology to teleconference from home if necessary.

The judges created a special diversity award for one of this year's entrants in the Walk the Talk category, Leon Sullivan of Land Information New Zealand (LINZ).

Entry guidelines for the EEO Trust Work & Life Awards 2005 are included with this newsletter. Contact the EEO Trust if you are interested in entering.

Entrants consistently report that the process of developing an entry has many benefits for their workplace, including improved internal awareness of work-life initiatives and the importance of work-life balance, as well as positive media coverage.



*Nisha Nati of EDS (New Zealand)*





## The Diversity Game – playing for business success

The EEO Trust will be bringing a training tool called The Diversity Game to New Zealand next year.

This tool won an award as one of the top ten training tools in the US in the 1990's and has been used in South Africa and Australia for a number of years. The EEO Trust is working with the game's developers, The Diversity Consulting Company, to customise it for the New Zealand context and has held meetings with some of its EEO Employers Group members to gauge interest and seek input into some of the features of the New Zealand version.

"We've been impressed by people's response to The Diversity Game," says EEO Trust Business Development Manager Hannah Samuel. "There's obviously a need for a participative and entertaining tool which really engages people in thinking about diversity and how it affects their employment decisions."

A large number of international corporations including IBM, Shell, Coca Cola Amatil, and LendLease already use the The Diversity Game to encourage employees to think about the challenges and benefits of a diverse workforce.

Ms Samuel says The Diversity Game gets people thinking about the diversity of New Zealand society and the need for an organisational culture which affirms diversity. "It's an easy and interesting way of accessing information about diversity trends and issues and gives participants ways of dealing effectively with common diversity challenges. Best of all, it's fun."

A number of New Zealand workplaces will trial The Diversity Game early next year with a proposed launch date of May. For more information contact the EEO Trust.