DIVERSITY WORKS NZ

VALUE CULTURE IN THE WORKPLACE

Top tips to build a work environment that values and respects different cultures

Understand the cultural diversity of your community Ethnic diversity is increasing in New Zealand. The country's five largest ethnic groups are New Zealand European, Maori, Chinese, Samoan and Indian but in total, according to the 2013 Census results, there are 213 different ethnic groups. Almost 40% of Aucklanders' were born overseas. Ethnic and cultural differences are part of New Zealand society and our work environments need to be open to those differences.

THERE IS NO ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF DISCRIMINATION

Share the vision – explain why cultural diversity is important to your business Along with making it clear 'what not to do', take the time to discuss why an inclusive, multi-cultural work environment is important to your company. Is it because you want employees that can identify and connect with a culturally diverse client base? Is it because the company values the different perspectives that come from culturally diverse teams? Is it because the company has global plans and needs greater cultural knowledge to enter new markets? Is it because your organisation wants the largest possible talent pool to choose from? Sharing your company's thinking will help to position cultural diversity as a goal that everyone needs to work towards.

Build your team's cultural knowledge Ignorance is one of the greatest barriers to positive cultural diversity in the workplace. Invest some time in educating your workforce on New Zealand's ethnic make-up. Check out relevant events and training on offer from Diversity Works New Zealand or access research and other resources at www.diversityworksnz.org.nz

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Make it clear cultural discrimination is unacceptable New Zealand law prohibits discrimination but organisations need to take responsibility for their work culture. Company policy and day-to-day actions inside the business will determine whether the work environment delivers a positive experience for all cultures. Ensure everyone understands that there is no acceptable level of discrimination – from 'harmless' jokes to exclusion from informal work gatherings to behaviour in shared office spaces that makes colleagues uncomfortable. Managers should be supported (and trained) to talk to staff about inappropriate behaviour, resolve issues and take action if the behaviour continues.

Understanding cultural norms is a good starting point Appreciating different cultural norms gives a business a good platform for understanding how they can show respect for the diverse cultures in their company. Each culture has "cultural norms" which act as a guide for socially acceptable behaviour. Cultural norms can influence everything from what a person eats to what they wear and how they interact with colleagues in the work environment.