

## **Emerging Diversity and Inclusion Award Entrant: Fletcher Building Limited**



Imagine a recruitment process where all biases are removed and a candidate is assessed purely on their skills, ambition and potential. That was the vision Fletcher Building set for its future graduates and as a giant leap towards recruitment without bias.

Fletcher Building, one of New Zealand's largest listed companies, with 19,000 employees globally and about 9,000 in New Zealand, was seeking an innovative approach to recruiting that would create a positive impact on their business, job applicants and the wider HR industry.

Fletcher Building entered the graduate recruitment market in 2014, using a 'blind' approach by running an unbranded campaign to elicit applicants.

"We wanted to challenge the market and their preconceptions of us as an organisation, as we know bias runs two ways. It proved an innovative tactic that delivered great results," says Diversity and Inclusion Manager Jenny Martin.

"We were committed to maintaining the momentum into 2015. Our organising idea was to roll out a recruitment initiative that only considers the things the candidate chooses for themselves, where they wanted to go and their journeys to get there. We removed all name, age, gender, ethnicity and education identifiers.

"By taking unconscious bias out of the equation, we endeavoured to end up with a group of candidates who best fit the culture and values of our business, but who were also more than capable of achieving great things as part of our two-year Graduate Leadership Programme... regardless of their name or the colour of their skin."

Fletcher Building's in-house recruitment team worked with Auckland-based digital business Weirdly to create FB YOU, an application avenue which invited graduates to "show us the real you". An online quiz tool allowed applicant responses and information to be captured, without Fletcher Building having access to names, email addresses, gender, age ethnicity,

education or location, while maintaining a flawless candidate experience throughout the process.

FB YOU was promoted via social media, Grad Connection and NZ Uni Career Hub and Fletcher Building spent three days at Auckland, Canterbury and Otago Universities telling students about the recruiting campaign.

The FB YOU culture quiz asked creative, thought-provoking questions that set out to reveal an applicant's key personality traits and value alignment with the business.

"We encouraged people to be themselves - to answer honestly, as we weren't looking for cookie-cutter candidates," Jenny says.

Based on how applicants answered the questions, they were automatically ranked according to their fit with brand values and organisational culture.

The top-ranked 100 candidates from the 610 applicants progressed to psychometric testing which was carried out by Winsborough. Based on the results of the first round of testing, the list of 100 candidates was refined to 50. These 50 hopefuls were then progressed to the next round of psychometric testing.

From here, candidates' psychometric results and relevant information then flowed back into the Weirdly platform. This triggered the next stage of the process, which saw candidates asked to upload a video of themselves giving a speech, imagining it was their 50th birthday. All videos were obscured so Fletcher Building staff were unable to identify candidates.

"Based on the insights from Weirdly, Winsborough and what we could garner from the videos, we were able to select our final 28 candidates, who were invited to a full day assessment centre at Fletcher Building's Head Office in Auckland. This was the first time we were able to meet and actually see who our final few were... and we were delighted with the diversity in the group, not to mention the high calibre potential of those in attendance," says Jenny.

While Fletcher Building's executive team and senior leadership were supportive of FB YOU, which met one of the company's core values of being 'Bold', some hiring managers were slightly apprehensive, Jenny says.

"So we worked through their scepticism and proceeded with FB YOU."

One measure of the success of the initiative has been the increased demand for graduates from the business this year, without the need for irrelevant details, she says.

The number of graduate applicants for 2015 increased 138 per cent compared with the previous year and there was a noticeable increase in applicant diversity, particularly in ethnicity and degree type. One graduate had a degree in classical studies and another had Honours in Dance Studies.

"Feedback on the FB YOU campaign has been extremely positive, with numerous mentions in the media and overwhelming endorsements from the recruitment and HR industries. It

positioned Fletcher Building as thought leaders in dialling up diversity and walking the talk," Jenny says.

"Fletcher Building can sometimes get pigeonholed as a construction company - predominately pale and male. Our greatest success from running this innovative campaign was the internal buzz around challenging perceptions. We received feedback from employees applauding our demonstrable diversity practices."

Candidate feedback was also positive.

"The blind selection offered an opportunity to describe my opinions and perspectives in a different context to a standard interview process. By asking open-ended subjective questions I felt that my personality was the focus rather than my educational background."

"I felt that by not having any personal information, I had a free pass to write exactly what I thought and describe myself exactly how I felt. I also found that I took the company values a bit more seriously and considered them more when making the decision of 'do I actually want to work here?'"