

Tomorrow's Workforce Award Entrant: Connect Global



Family-based business Connect Global is going above and beyond to help ensure its local Porirua community is prepared for tomorrow's changing demographic challenges.

Throughout the process of developing their call centre business, owners Serena and Siuai Fiso have recognised that in the future there could be a shortage of young people to fill employment needs in their community.

In response to that, Connect Global is investing in local people and producing a skilled workforce, not only for the benefit of their own company, but also for the community as a whole. In Porirua there is a high proportion of young people, as well as a high number of Maori and Pacific families.

Just over 50 per cent of Connect Global's workforce is under 25. Ethnically, 40 per cent are Pacific and 30 per cent are Māori. All the training young people need is provided on site. And going forward, on-going development and assessment ensures employees meet their full potential and retain their competencies, backed up by the company's own internal NZQA-qualified assessors.

The couple believe in recognising talent and potential in those who display motivation, attitude and values; over qualifications and past experience. To back their belief, Connect Global's recruitment process is structured in a way that doesn't prejudice individuals who have limited experience.

Successful employees, some straight from school with minimal qualifications, are able to progress to new roles that suit their talents and new skills or move to roles which allow them flexibility around external study or family commitments.

The business's profitability and the loyalty of its client base demonstrates the success of Serena and Siuai's philosophy.

Connect Global has in addition won several significant awards since 2005, including the Pacific Business Trust Awards and the Porirua Business and Chamber of Commerce Awards.

The company has also decided to assist other areas with limited employment opportunities, outside the Porirua community. In the past year they have been working on establishing two new call centre hubs. The first was opened in early 2016 in Ruatoria and a second is planned for Taranaki. These new employment opportunities will help both rural regions to remain viable in the future. The sales and communication skills as well as the work experience given by Connect Global is helping to ensure that the workforce of today and tomorrow is prepared.

Connect Global's investment in individual staff is having a positive impact on young lives. For example, 19-year-old Alosina Parsons has been working since she was 15. She has had a number of different roles within Connect Global, including working as an outbound sales agent working flexible hours which allowed her to study for a Diploma of Sports Management during the day.

Serena and Siuai don't agree with employers who complain that they don't want to invest in training someone for fear that they will move on to another employer.

Alosina is committed to achieving her goal of becoming successful in a sports marketing environment and has Serena and Siuai's full support and encouragement. In the meantime though, Alosina is recognised as a valuable member of the team. Last year she was nominated for the Young Employee Award at the Porirua Chamber of Commerce Awards, and proudly, she won the award.

Serena and Siuai believe in celebrating aspirations and motivations of their staff, even if they wish to develop their career elsewhere. Staff are motivated by goal setting, team work and by seeing their employers live and breathe their own company values.

While retention is a key focus, the company is proud of the career paths that their staff have gone on to after working for Connect Global. Staff have progressed to roles including senior banking advisor, contact centre management for government and large corporations, GM sales, technical helpdesk consultant for NZ's leading IT companies and one staff member is achieving his life time dream of becoming a Travel Consultant.

Knowing that the company has provided people with the opportunity to develop their skills, to become ready for new challenges and to be included in the workforce provides a high level of satisfaction.