

## Walk the Talk Award Entrant: Estelle Curd - Armstrong Motor Group



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545408/8d46c99018>

One of 25-year-old Estelle Curd's first tasks as the new Human Resources Manager at Armstrong Motor Group was to get the buy in of an all-male senior management team to her new HR vision for the company.

Not a problem.

Next she flew all around New Zealand to meet and hear from the 420-strong workforce at 11 automotive dealerships from Timaru to Auckland. Afterwards she developed a new culture survey to give staff a confidential voice.

This turned out to be just the start of a raft of new initiatives in the workplace. After only seven months at Armstrong Motor Group, Estelle has made a huge impact and has been appointed to the company's senior management team at just 24.

The company's managing director, Rick Armstrong, had been looking for someone with at least 10 years' experience when he recruited Estelle, but he was blown away by "the power behind her," and knew she was exactly what the company needed.

"She encourages others simply by being strong in herself and what she stands for within and outside of work," says Rick. "She has never been afraid to back her ideas, which can sometimes be challenging in a male dominated organisation as a young women. I believe

she defines diversity herself as a young woman and this in itself encourages others to do so."

Estelle is described as strong and incredibly positive. "She will always come armed with a plethora of evidence to back her cause," says Rick.

Estelle's initiatives have been widespread.

She has changed the way the organisation recruits with the creation of videos to encourage women, immigrants and all walks of life to join Armstrong Motor Group. They show the company is looking for great people, not a stereotypical sales man.

She has started to scope out roles for older workers. The company currently have two older workers on board who work part time out of retirement and have been very successful.

Estelle is also putting together a programme for dealerships to try and engage more women, especially in car sales consultant positions as this is an area the company has struggled to recruit in.

Estelle has introduced a structured apprentice programme, encouraging young people to achieve their goals. A new apprentice awards scheme backs this up, recognising the best apprentice, most improved apprentice and best mentor to an apprentice.

She has also re-written some of the company's policies and procedures to make them more gender and ethnically friendly.

There is now succession planning in place and performance reviews for every employee, from groomer to managers.

Key to Estelle's success is that she cares very much about everyone having the opportunity to be the best version of themselves. "This is not based on age, gender, sexual preference or any other factor that should not have a bearing on where you can go in our company," Rick says

"Even at Estelle's age she has the respect from other members of the senior management team, our board and our employees simply because she is willing to give the time to understand other people's perspective, but will stand up for her beliefs.

"I believe that she is the perfect example of what more managers should be doing, which is empowering others, no matter who they are."