

Work Life Balance Award Winner: Te Wānanga o Aotearoa



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545447/62dfe1b78a>

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa's holistic wellness programme (Tau Ora), has not only measurably improved health and wellbeing of those working within the organisation, the benefits are also extending to their families.

Wellbeing has improved by 45 per cent at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa and attitude, enjoyment, energy, efficiency and work life balance have all improved by between 43 per cent and 47 per cent, as reported by a recent survey.

And as Te Wānanga o Aotearoa had hoped, workers (kaimahi) have been sharing their new knowledge with whānau in communities where they live, work and play. Kaimahi report that Tau Ora has changed kaimahi and family attitudes from one where health and fitness was a chore to now being a positive part of their lives.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa operates from 80 locations throughout the country offering holistic education opportunities guided by Māori principles and values. It provides certificate to degree level qualifications in subjects including small business, computing, social work, teaching, Māori performing arts and te reo Māori.

The implementation of Tau Ora (the holistic wellness programme) came after a difficult period of major restructure. In 2009, the organisation's kaimahi was recovering from a

major restructure. The founder and CEO had resigned and a government caretaker had been appointed as general manager. The organisation was receiving significant media attention and kaimahi morale was at a low point. The organisation drastically needed some sort of intervention to set it on a new path.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa faced a dual challenge: How to bring a nationwide organisation back together and how to change attitudes and perceptions of wellbeing. Within their communities, they had an acceptance that larger body sizes were the norm; exercise was considered the domain of youngsters; deep fried foods, white bread and fizzy drinks were staples; smoking was acceptable; a health ailment of some kind was standard; and visits to the doctor were avoided. The organisation's research group understood that, if change was to occur, it would need to extend "beyond the tea rooms and corridors of Te Wānanga o Aotearoa" and extend to the communities within which kaimahi lived. Included within this is the recognition that whānau are regularly impacted by choices and the things we do at work. "We are mindful of the health and welfare of our whānau and communities and we understand the potential reach and the influence of Tau Ora and its ability to change lives," they say.

Te Punga Oranga is the holistic wellbeing model created as a result of this research and is the foundation of the Tau Ora programme and includes eight fundamental components to create a way of life that embraces positive wellbeing. These include tinana (physical), mahi (occupational), taiao (environmental), hinengaro (mental), pāpori (social), aronganui (emotional), whānau/iwi (family & community) and wairua (spiritual).

To implement Tau Ora, Te Wānanga o Aotearoa uses team visits to sites across the country, supported by volunteer Tau Ora champions, email and intranet promotions, social media, events and competitions.

The grass roots work has the commitment of management, evidenced by their participation in the programme including the CEO and Senior Leadership team.

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa will continue to measure its progress. The Tau Ora survey is reported on annually to clearly represent the improved relationship between the organisation and kaimahi as they uncover the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and appropriate work/life balance.

The success of Tau Ora has spurred interest in the programme from other organisations including corporates, iwi and community groups. The Tau Ora team is currently working through a business model that will enable it to transfer the programme to others so that "our success can become theirs".

The Tau Ora model is relevant not only to Māori and Polynesian people. It celebrates diversity and is applicable and adaptable to mainstream New Zealand society and beyond. Te Wānanga o Aotearoa believes the greatest strength of Tau Ora lies in its ability to deal with the causes of ill health rather than the consequences.