

Empowerment Award Entrant: Deloitte New Zealand



Video link: <https://vimeo.com/album/4446506/video/229800819>

Deloitte New Zealand's Women in Leadership (WIL) programme is accelerating the progression of women at the firm. Of this year's promotions to partner and director, 43 percent were female – significantly more than previous years.

Deloitte New Zealand employs more than 1,200 specialists focusing on audit, tax, technology and systems, strategy, performance improvement, risk management, corporate finance, business recovery, forensics and accounting services.

The WIL programme was launched at the 2016 Annual Partner Meeting which was centered on diversity and inclusion. There were a number of international keynote speakers including Juliet Bourke, author and international speaker; Cindy Hook, who is leading the diversity and inclusion journey for Deloitte Australia, and David Morrison, the Lieutenant General who championed the diversity and inclusion for the Australian Army.

Partner Leaders identified women who have the potential to emerge into leadership roles in the next few years. Focus groups, made up of women from the pipeline identified, were held for each of the company's offices to seek input into the programme design. Common themes in the feedback included an overwhelming desire for opportunities to connect with other women, to have a mentor and hear other women's stories. The women also wanted support with being better self-advocates and building their business development and networking capabilities.

The programme was strongly supported and championed by the firm's CEO, Thomas Pippas. Thomas acted as an advocate for the programme and has been involved in the workshops. Various partners have also attended workshops to share their stories and perspectives about leadership as well as their own personal journeys.

WIL is run with a year-long cohort with at least four one-day sessions throughout the period, rotated around offices to broaden the exposure to the firm's leadership, with the firm's leaders involved in various sessions. There are approximately 40 attendees, with other women (internal and external) joining for networking or as a guest speaker.

Within the sessions, women undertook action planning within their smaller business groups, including how they would facilitate the whole firm's diversity and inclusion journey after the workshops finished, once back in their business teams. A number of tools were provided to the women to encourage introspection.

Head of People and Performance Sonia Breeze says this included the Hogan Assessment and a Values exercise to identify what is most important to them. "Participants were challenged to delve deeply into who they are, who they want to be and what they want to achieve. It was not always a comfortable journey, with participants saying it made them face issues they never had the courage to face previously."

Participants reported they were better women, leaders and people in general, she says. The programme helped them recognise the success they had achieved to date in their professional careers and gave them the confidence to continue to grow and become better versions of themselves and foster a leadership mindset.

One of the most consistent pieces of feedback was the value of the personal connections made. Participants appreciated hearing the stories about the different pathways to partnership. The exposure to the Deloitte New Zealand's leadership was positive and there was also value from the connections made with each other. Many said they enjoyed connecting with women from across service lines and offices and some had planned joint business opportunities to approach clients.

The participants all reported increased confidence in themselves and their future. Most felt more confident they had the resources to achieve their career goals. They also felt they had clarity in relation to their career path and understood what success would look like for them within the firm.

The group has been challenged to take their insights from the workshops and share and apply them with their teams back in the office. Many participants have themselves become mentors to junior employees and taken someone with them to meet a client to help build their network.

Some service lines have selected mid-senior leaders to participate in complementary events surrounding the firm-wide leadership programme and others have created informal networks where they have engaged other women who are not currently on the programme to discuss relevant issues and see how they can support each other as well as share literature and best practice examples.