

Empowerment Award Entrant: DSM Nutritional Products New Zealand Limited

DSM Nutritional Products has introduced a range of initiatives to empower women in the workplace.

Since buying the business in June 2013, DSM has introduced a range of measures involving equal employment opportunities, parental leave, gradual return to work and flexible working hours.

At takeover, DSM adopted and implemented the DSM Business Code of Conduct and Values. Since then the Senior Management team has evolved into a very culturally diverse group with more balanced representation of men and women.

DSM Nutritional Products is a world-leading supplier of vitamins, carotenoids and other nutritional solutions, with three market-facing entities: Animal Nutrition & Health, Human Nutrition & Health and Personal Care & Aroma Ingredients.

As part of its focus on revamping paid Primary Care Leave, DSM has implemented four weeks' paid leave for women for the birth or adoption of a child. This is paid on top of the Government-provided benefit. DSM also provides two weeks' paid Paternity Leave for male employees for the birth or adoption of their children.

DSM also provides a gradual return to work for its employees and have found employees adjust back into work much easier than with a hard-line return to work.

"Employees have been engaged with their work upon their return as they can self-pace their return," says Leah, DSM's General Manager for Human Nutrition & Health across Oceania. "So far the preferred method is to firstly work part-time from home, then part time from our work base before returning full time with a mix of working from home and from work."

The Leadership Team has been supportive of the Paid Parental Leave and Gradual Return to Work as it means the business has retained a lot of top quality employees who would possibly have resigned or had to take a shortened leave period in order to be able to provide for their family. Towards the end of the leave period the reporting manager is in contact with the employee to confirm their return to work, and how to best implement their return, including how best to support them.

DSM recognises that employees have busy and full lives outside of work and that a one-size-fits-all approach to work no longer works in today's workforce, so provides flexible working hours, starting early and finishing early or starting late and finishing late, as well as having the option to work from home as required.

"Through supporting our employees and their families with flexible working hours we have better openness and honesty between the employee and manager due to the developed understanding of what is going on within each other's lives," says Leah.

"Our managers are accountable for ensuring the employees work ethic and output remains as high during the flexible hours as it does during the standard hours," she says.

"We have found that employee's work ethic and output increases when employees are provided with flexible hours. This means that when our employees are at work they are completely focused on their work rather than rushing through trying to fit everything in or instead of taking a sick day to care for a sick child they can be working from home while caring for their child."