

Work Life Balance Award Entrant: Nestlé New Zealand



When a staff survey showed 'work life environment' was a strength for food producer Nestlé New Zealand, the company decided to improve this measurement further to attract and retain talent and support a high level of employee engagement.

The company surveys its 700 staff every two years to measure engagement; questions in the work life environment category cover diversity and inclusion issues such as work life balance, workplace safety, creating an environment that is open to differences, satisfactory physical working conditions and a healthy work environment.

After the 2014 survey, Nestlé launched an initiative aimed at improving its work life environment for employees; success would be measured by the 2016 survey results.

It had three main focus areas; improving team communication and building awareness around being open to different cultures and experiences, improving the Site Wellness Activity Calendar and promoting the concept of flexibility and trialling flexible work arrangements.

Changes to the company's monthly 'Team Talk' content were initiated to improve communication and raise awareness around difference. Morning teas and catering were themed to celebrate different cultures (e.g. During the month Chinese New Year is celebrated, Nestlé provides Chinese cuisine) and guest speakers were invited. The CEO from Autism NZ introduced his organisation and one of its managers presented her own personal story about her son who is growing up with autism. The Chef de Commis from the Olympic Committee NZ was invited to speak about uniting the different athletes as one New Zealand team at the Rio Olympics. The manager of Team NZ (Sailing) shared the

challenges he and his team had faced and how they coped, emphasising the importance of resilience and persistence.

Improvements to the Site Wellness Activity Calendar included a mandatory e-learning module for employees covering nutrition, more frequent promotion of the Employee Assistance Programme available to staff and their families, ensuring staff kitchens were stocked with an array of utensils and equipment so employees can prepare a healthy lunch or snack and providing daily breakfast cereal and weekly fruit. Employees' shared interest in physical activity was encouraged with running and walking groups and discounted group personal training offerings.

To raise awareness of flexible working, Nestlé promoted the company's resources on flexible arrangements for managers and employees, coached employees to help them start a conversation with their manager and raise a formal request, ensured decision making around this issue was fair and consistent and approved many trial flexible working arrangements.

Leaders and managers at Nestlé support these initiatives by participating in wellness activities; attending diversity and inclusion training; giving presentations and participating in improving team communication; understanding and promoting flexibility and having courageous conversations about flexibility with their team members. Many of them were involved in a panel discussion for International Women's Day where they shared personal stories and experiences about how they had encouraged differences in their teams, and defining moments as they were growing up.

HR Business Partner Kathy Upton says the improvement in engagement results is good quantitative evidence that Nestlé's initiatives are having a positive impact.

In 2014, Nestlé NZ's participation rate in the global engagement survey was extremely high at 90 per cent. In the category of work life environment, 86 per cent of employees under Veronique Cremades (Country Manager & CEO of Nestlé NZ), responded in favourable agreement that the company has a healthy and safe work environment and that the workforce is open to different cultures and genders.

In 2016, the participation rate increased to 94 per cent and 88 per cent of employees agreed that the company has a healthy and safe work environment and that the workforce is open to different cultures and genders.

In the past two years, Nestlé went from offering only fulltime or part-time positions to offering more than 20 flexible work arrangements and more part-time roles. Current arrangements are based on staff needs around managing peak traffic, caring for children/parental responsibilities, supporting a disabled family member, supporting a pregnant partner and improving physical activity.

Feedback from staff and stakeholders also reinforces the improvements in the company's work life environment.

"I was very excited to dress in my national dress, a sari, to the Team Talk that had a Diwali theme. We were proud to showcase our beautiful fashion whilst eating food I grew up with."
- Saras Pillai Vinu

"I use my paid volunteer day every year to support Cure Kids fundraising. I think it's awesome Nestlé provides this." - Louise

"I am a mum of four children and I work fulltime so life is busy. I work a bit longer Monday to Thursday so I can finish at 2pm on a Friday. I look forward to this quality time with my children! Flexibility at Nestlé appeals to me and helps me balance my parental responsibilities." - Vuka

"I lead a team of 13 and half of my team have a flexible work arrangement or work part-time. I think it's fantastic that Nestlé supports these arrangements so we can attract and retain the best talent." - Matt