

## GHD

### Work Life Balance

A changing workforce in the modern world requires flexibility to balance working and home life, and one of the world's leading professional services companies is leading the way with an innovative approach to providing more flexibility to its employees.

GHD is a global engineering consulting company founded in Australia in 1928 that has been operating in New Zealand since 1999. In New Zealand, it employs 548 staff, including casual, part time and contract workers as well as permanent full-timers.

After consultation with employees and a realisation of the importance of flexible work practices in retaining female talent, GHD looked into a number of ways to improve its policies. GHD first implemented its innovative 50/52 policy in Australia, and it was rolled out in New Zealand in 2010.

The 50/52 policy allows GHD employees the opportunity to buy up to an extra two weeks of holiday per year, by being paid a 50 or 51-week salary over 52 weeks. The key benefit of this is that staff can take extra holiday without taking unpaid leave, which allows for consistent financial planning across the year. The scheme is available to all employees following a discussion with their manager.

As well as 50/52, GHD provides its staff with flexible working hours, the opportunity to work part time, the ability to work from home and family-friendly resources in each office should staff need to bring their children to work.

A number of staff who take up 50/52 are parents who use the time to manage school holidays more easily.

The policy is promoted across the business, featuring in the induction session for every new starter, and is visible in the internal systems used by staff every day, such as the staff intranet and leave management software. All requests are quickly processed once approved by a manager, and staff can go on and off the programme as needed.

Some of the executive management team are themselves on the 50/52 agreement, which provides top-down support to the initiative. General Manager of GHD NZ Al Monro says, "I am delighted we can help our people, especially those with families, to manage their personal commitments throughout the year, and not have to worry about lack of finances during these times. School holidays especially can be a stressful time for parents and being able to offer a package to make this time easier was important to us."

The 50/52 policy creates a number of benefits for the organisation, including:

- An ability to better attract and retain staff. One staff member is even a semi-professional hockey player, and using 50/52 has allowed him to maintain both careers simultaneously
- It helps employees manage their finances better across the year, as they are paid continuously instead of having periods of unpaid leave
- It helps the organisation to support staff who need to take extra time off for mental health and wellbeing



Nearly 28 per cent of GHD staff have signed up to 50/52, for a wide range of reasons. These employees are empowered in a number of ways by this increased flexibility, as it ensures they are able to find a happy and healthy work life balance.

Technical Director - Transportation, Operation and Optimisation Kathryn Musgrave says, "Flexibility at GHD was a key reason I joined the company. I have young children, one of whom has special needs, and being able to buy back two weeks holiday a year is just one of the initiatives that allow me to work in a way that suits me. The 50/52 arrangement means my husband and I can cover most of the holidays between us. We get to spend more time with our kids, and they get a decent break at the end of the school term to rest, as we can avoid putting them into a school holiday programme."

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