



HSBC New Zealand CULTURAL CELEBRATION FINALIST



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VIDEO**



THE STORY

Every month or so, HSBC New Zealand employees get to enjoy the food, traditions and dress of a different culture without even stepping outside their office.

The bank's 230 staff members identify with at least 40 different nationalities and speak more than 50 languages, and frequently interact with clients from a wide variety of countries, along with HSBC offices around the world.

This diversity is celebrated and encouraged thanks to EMBRACE, an employee resource group dedicated to building a culturally open and inclusive working environment. The initiative is sponsored by the HSBC Diversity and Inclusion committee and is made up of staff volunteers from different department and backgrounds,

EMBRACE has two main missions: to build awareness of different cultures including their perspectives, work and social etiquette; and educating staff on embracing inclusion and leveraging the benefits of a culturally diverse workplace, overcoming its challenges.

As Business Manager Phong Do puts it, "HSBC New Zealand is a team of people from various cultures and backgrounds, like a salad bowl with multiple types of vegetables. Like a good dressing that harmonises the different textures and tastes to make the salad complete, EMBRACE was founded to build an environment that bonds the diverse workforce, enables employees to be their true selves, to overcome the cultural barriers and deliver results as one team."

EMBRACE delivers on its mission with fun, interactive and engaging activities designed to appeal to staff. This includes themed events centred around cultural celebrations such as Matariki, Eid and Rosh Hashanah. Attendees are invited to dress in the national dress of the featured culture, taste its food and take part in traditional activities.

Pot luck meals are another popular activity. Small groups of up to 10 are randomly picked from different areas of the business. Each employee brings a plate from their culture and has the opportunity to share their food and their stories with colleagues in the group.

“They provide an immersive experience where staff can live another culture in a few hours, can dress and eat and play and think like a local,” says Phong.

Other opportunities to learn about different cultures are promoted via Culture Wizard, an interactive tool developed by HSBC in collaboration with RW3, specialists in the intercultural training and e-learning industries. It provides information on a wide variety of countries and can be customised to suit each user’s specific requirements. EMBRACE organises quizzes for staff based on the contents of Culture Wizard to encourage employees to use it.

Senior leadership has shown its support via guidance and advice, along with funding for events. Senior leaders attend events and encourage their team to do the same.

Phong says EMBRACE has not only promoted cultural understanding within HSBC, it has improved staff engagement.

“For our people, an inclusive atmosphere makes them feel valued for their unique contribution and fosters mutual respect. It can also be professionally enriching – exposing our people to new skills and approaches to work. This, in turn, helps the organisation to attract and retain the best talent,” he says.

HSBC New Zealand’s Country Head of Commercial Banking and Diversity & Inclusion Executive Committee-sponsor Rob Roughan says, “The next stage of our EMBRACE journey is how we can better apply HSBC’s multicultural learnings and experience to the wider community in New Zealand, including our clients.”

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THE CHALLENGE

HSBC New Zealand is a culturally diverse organisation with its approximately 230 employees identifying with at least 25 different nationalities. They also frequently interact with colleagues and clients around the world. The Diversity and Inclusion committee wanted to find ways of building an awareness of different cultures and educate staff on how to leverage the benefits of a culturally diverse workplace and overcome its challenges.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

EMBRACE is an employee resource group that builds awareness of different cultures through fun activities and educates staff on embracing inclusion. Initiatives include:

- Themed events centred around cultural celebrations

- Pot luck meals where employees share their culture's food and traditions
- Encouraging the use of an intercultural training tool



- Panel discussions featuring both senior and junior staff sharing their experiences in navigating a diverse workplace, and their thoughts on the associated benefits and challenges
- Collaboration with other employee resource groups to organise joint events

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Staff attendance at each event averages 50 to 60 per cent of the workforce.
- Results from a staff survey at the end of 2018 found:
 - 70 per cent of employees felt able to be themselves at work
 - 75 per cent felt able to work with people outside their team and get the job done
 - 42 per cent worked with colleagues across different countries

QUOTE

“Multiple voices and personalities bouncing off one another also gives rise to out-of-the-box thinking, offering new perspectives that inspire us to see matters differently.” Manager, Business Management Phong Do

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