



Vector Limited

DIVERSABILITY WINNER



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VIDEO**

THE STORY

When Vector Limited compared the current state of the energy company's policies against the ideal accessibility level, there was an obvious gap and the company set about closing it.

Vector's Diversity and Inclusion team had already identified that accessibility was not formally recognised within the organisation, and a team had started work changing human resources policies. When the digital team began work with Access Advisors (AA), they decided to combine efforts and a core accessibility team was formed.

The process gave Vector the chance to work out what actions were required not just to achieve the Accessibility Tick, but also achieve the longer-term goal of becoming a truly accessible business.

The Accessibility Tick is a programme that helps employers be part of the move to create a more accessible and inclusive New Zealand for people with disabilities. General Manager – Human Resources Paul McCloskey says the priority areas of change identified existed primarily within Vector's recruitment processes and support of staff.

“With one in four New Zealanders limited by a physical, sensory or learning disability, mental health, or other impairment, we understand that disability touches all aspects of our business – our people, our customers and the community in which we operate. For many individuals living with disabilities or chronic health and mental health conditions, it is difficult to participate productively in workplaces that are not accessible for them,” he says.

“Vector’s recruitment process and the way we advertise jobs were adjusted to reduce the likelihood of disability discrimination in hiring, provide better clarity and guidance to hiring managers and to encourage applications from people with a disability, including application assistance,” he says.

External recruitment partners were required to demonstrate a commitment to diversity, and 146 of Vector’s managers have been through unconscious bias training.

When a staff survey was undertaken to increase awareness of disabilities within the organisation, nine per cent of respondents identified as having a disability, and 32 per cent of these identified with a mental health illness.

A range of initiatives have been introduced to support these employees. Accessibility has been integrated into Health and Safety protocols, digital technology to support the hearing and visually impaired has been installed in meeting rooms, and accessibility workplace assessment is part of the on-boarding process for new employees. Wellbeing Rooms in the Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch offices provide a welcoming, private space for staff to take a break, and volunteers have been trained as Mental Health First Aiders to provide support when needed.

The accessibility initiatives have had the full support of the executive team and CEO, who shared the company’s vision with all internal staff.

Vector became the first employer to receive the Accessibility Tick.

The judging panel said Vector Limited was showing the way for large organisations to stop seeing employment of people with disabilities as a burden or something the Government should pay for. The company’s work in the disability dimension is integrated into its diversity and inclusion strategy and has strong leadership buy-in, opportunities for people with disabilities to be involved in the co-design of solutions and concrete actions to increase consideration of this group during recruitment.

THE CHALLENGE

Vector’s Diversity and Inclusion team identified that accessibility was not formally recognised with the organisation. Priority areas requiring change were recruitment processes and support of staff.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- A core accessibility team was formed from the HR, Digital, Procurement and Customer channels to work alongside Access Advisors who were in the process of developing New Zealand’s first Accessibility Tick.

- Accessibility was integrated into health and safety protocols



- Senior managers attended unconscious bias training
- Changes were made to the recruitment processes and the way jobs were advertised to reduce the likelihood of disability discrimination in hiring
- Work spaces made more accessible and digital technology introduced for hearing and sight-impaired employees
- Wellbeing initiatives introduced to support staff with mental health challenges

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- In October 2018 Vector was the first employer to receive the Accessibility Tick
- This has led to a leadership role supporting other organisations
- New initiatives have meant employees with disabilities have been better empowered at work.

KEY LEARNING

Disability is not a minority issue, it's a majority issue – 25 per cent of New Zealanders live with a disability and are part of families and communities. Organisations are missing out on talent at all levels because bias is real and it takes a committed approach from strong leadership to prevent this.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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