



GHD

TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE FINALIST



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VIDEO**

THE STORY

Solutions to complex challenges can be found when diverse groups of people work together, and emerging leaders are encouraged to speak up and make a difference.

That's the premise behind Smart Seeds, an initiative developed by GHD to drive greater collaboration across industries to meet the needs of diverse communities and people. GHD is a global engineering, architecture and environmental consulting company with a staff of more than 500 in New Zealand.

Smart Seeds was first developed in 2012 as a programme for summer interns, but has expanded to an annual 11-week design-led programme that brings together emerging leaders from a variety of industries, who are invited to solve real-life challenges their city is facing. Participants are drawn internally and from partner organisations, and attend a variety of workshops to learn and understand the design-thinking and innovation process.

APAC Digital Lead Maurice Hoban says the most important aspect of the programme is the diverse teams, who draw on their varied experience and backgrounds to deliver a new idea. At the end of the 11 weeks, the teams pitch their solution to a judging panel.

“Smart Seeds brings together a diverse group of people, from lawyers to zoo keepers, engineers to marketing professionals, as well as connecting generations by bringing together our future leaders with our current ones. Mentored by industry professionals throughout, this programme provides a collaborative environment for participants to make new connections and influence change within their cities,” he says.

“Smart Seeds is the perfect platform to change the way our leaders think, while also developing fresh responses to challenges that our increasingly diverse cities and communities are facing.”

The initiative is recognised as a key professional development tool for both GHD’s emerging and senior leaders. Senior team members are offered the opportunity to take a role in planning the challenges put to programme participants, and mentor one of the teams.

“Mentors are selected based on their appreciation of the creative process, but also having the mindset where they can encourage collaboration within their team and challenge them beyond what they would consider themselves capable of.”

Smart Seeds is led by Maurice Hoban and a dedicated programme coordinator with senior leadership showing support by judging the programme each year.

New Zealand General Manager Al Monro says, “Smart Seeds is building for the future. We are creating some great diverse networks across industries and disciplines. This is important as these young people are the future leaders of our city.”

There has been a distinct change within the organisation since the programme was introduced, says one of its Project Leads for Transport, Gansen Govender.

“Smart Seeds has given confidence to my younger team members to speak up with new ideas or a new approach when tackling a challenge on a project. Even though they may not have participated in the programme, they recognise innovation within GHD is championed by our managers and leaders and it gives them confidence to put forward their ideas in delivering innovative solutions for our clients.”

That’s a view reinforced by a GHD employee who took part in the programme. “I probably would not have felt comfortable approaching senior managers within GHD prior to Smart Seeds, but now I am not worried about the hierarchy. I worked alongside all levels within the programme and came out with a great result.”

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THE CHALLENGE

GHD saw a need for better collaboration across industries to deliver outcomes to meet the needs of diverse communities. There was also a need to engage young leaders and equip them to share their understanding of technology to influence the future.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- The Smart Seeds programme brings together young leaders from a variety of industries to work in diverse teams and collaboratively deliver a new idea.
- The programme is marketed within the business through a variety of channels, including the graduate programme, and senior leaders champion it within their teams and the wider business.



- Teams are mentored by industry professionals, thus bringing current leaders together with emerging ones.
- The initiative provides a platform for future leaders to share their ideas and contribute to both their business and their communities.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Year on year, an increasingly diverse group of participants has taken part from an increasingly diverse group of partner organisations.
- Younger employees feel empowered to speak up and share ideas.
- It has encouraged younger employees to advocate for greater diversity within teams to ensure a broader range of perspectives are considered in their day-to-day roles.
- Cross-industry collaboration has been encouraged.
- The programme has encouraged the development of more meaningful relationships with clients.

KEY LEARNING

Encouraging young people to contribute to key discussions early on in projects and share their thoughts or approach to tackling a problem brings different ways of thinking to the table and delivers innovation.

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