



Constellation Brands New Zealand

WORK LIFE BALANCE FINALIST



THE STORY

In a competitive labour market it is very important to be positioned as an employer that looks after its people. For Constellation Brands New Zealand, that means working towards providing best in class policies for employee work life balance.

Constellation Brands New Zealand is a subsidiary of Constellation Brands Inc, a leading producer and marketer of beer, wine and spirits. Its New Zealand offices employ around 300 people across three wineries, head office, a mobile sales force and vineyards across Marlborough, Hawke's Bay and Central Otago. The New Zealand business also has responsibilities for a small team in Asia and a growing office in Sydney.

In March 2018, Constellation Brands New Zealand introduced its FlexAbility initiative. FlexAbility, intended as a guideline or philosophy rather than a strict policy, entitles all Constellation Brands New Zealand employees to a conversation with their manager about flexible working. These conversations allow employees to discuss options for flexible work, such as working remotely or from home, flexible or alternative work schedules, reduced hours or job sharing.

Because flexible working needs operate differently for different roles, FlexAbility recognises that there is no one size fits all way of providing flexible work and allows managers to exercise discretion. Each team or employee can present their manager with a proposal on how to best implement flexible working based on the requirements of the role.

FlexAbility experienced some teething issues after its initial roll out, and it became clear that the principles were not being deployed consistently through the business. Once this was discovered, it was addressed at a company-wide road show followed by an email from the executive leadership team that provided additional resources to employees. Senior

management are also making use of FlexAbility and are working to normalise it at all levels of the business.

Although the reception has been generally positive, Managing Director Simon Towns acknowledges there is still work to be done. “We are early in this journey and I don’t believe we have complete buy in across the organisation.”

FlexAbility is being rolled out to employees in Asia, where feedback indicates that the initiative is unique in the region and has the potential to be very beneficial to Constellation team members in Hong Kong and China who spend hours commuting each day. The initiative is also unique within the broader Constellation Brands Inc group, as it is not offered to winery and vineyard staff in the US part of the organisation.

Employees are making use of FlexAbility in a number of interesting ways. One sales team member based in Auckland presented a plan for working from Wanaka for the third school term to allow his children to attend Wanaka Primary, which will have an added benefit of allowing the national sales manager to upskill on the dynamics and challenges of South Island customers. Other employees make use of flexible working to participate in ski season, spend time with their pets and children, or to save commute time. The majority of the Auckland office works summer hours which allow them to leave early on Fridays, and some have instituted this as a year-round arrangement.

FlexAbility has had great benefits for Constellation Brands New Zealand and allows them to be a much more competitive employer in their industry.

THE CHALLENGE

In a competitive industry, Constellation Brands New Zealand needs to provide best in class employee benefits to hire the best people.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Instituted FlexAbility, an initiative which encourages all employees to present their own flexible working arrangements to management
- Replaced desktop computers with laptops to enable people to work remotely
- Modelled flexible working at the top levels of the organisation and sent out extra resources after discovering that the initiative was not being rolled out consistently across the business.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Many staff are happier now that they are able to work on their own terms
- Allows Constellation Brands New Zealand to be a much more competitive employer, particularly in Asia where flexible working is uncommon.

KEY LEARNING

People view flexible work as a very important part of choosing where they will work, and offering it has benefits for both employers and employees.

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

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