



Springload

MĀTAURANGA MĀORI AWARD FINALIST



Bringing more Māori into an industry where they are underrepresented and creating opportunities to genuinely understand te ao Māori was behind Springload's decision to update its business strategy to reflect its goals.

Springload is a digital agency with 72 employees based in Wellington. Chief Operating Officer Emily Vaka'uta says the business developed Whakapuāwai, a three-year strategy to increase digital inclusion in New Zealand and grow a community of diverse practitioners.

“The digital products we create are for all of Aotearoa, therefore it is our responsibility to contribute to reducing the digital exclusion that exists, have an understanding of te ao Māori and embed these principles into our design and end product,” she says.

“We hope that over the next three years as we take our people on a journey into bicultural design, we will help create better digital products for Māori and for Aotearoa.”

Four central initiatives support Whakapuāwai. Every six months employees are invited to take part in a noho marae to gain insight into te ao Māori with an emphasis on interconnectedness and the relationships of people and the environment.

“I have only been in Aotearoa for two years, so it was a really special experience for me to be properly welcomed onto a marae with real manaakitanga and to learn about the traditions of a pōwhiri. It was also wonderful to spend time with my colleagues in such a different setting to our usual office life. We shared stories about ourselves, shared kai, and shared the washing up — all great experiences in their own way! I'm really pleased that I could be part of this great experience and I feel very lucky that Springload has been able to forge this relationship with Koraunui Marae and tangata whenua there,” says Alice.

Te reo and tikanga classes are offered to teach participants karakia, waiata, their pēpeha and some introductory sentences and greetings. They are encouraged to use these learnings when interacting with clients, opening and closing meetings, and when welcoming new team members.

An emphasis has been placed on exploring and understanding Te tiriti o Waitangi, with an external facilitator enabling discussions on the treaty and its role in New Zealand's history.

Alongside internal initiatives, Springload has diversified its GROW Development Programme, which was originally a free programme for women to learn the basics of web development.

“Women are severely underrepresented in tech and as this course had proven popular for women last year we decided to pilot this with Māori rangatahi who are also severely underrepresented in tech,” says Emily.

GROW is run quarterly with between 10 and 15 rangitahi in each workshop. The feedback has been positive, with one participant commenting, “I came with no interest in coding and can confidently say I have gained lots of interest. I enjoyed the company, the food, hospitality and learning.”

The initiatives are supported by both the senior leadership team and the board. The CEO and board members have attended noho marae, and senior leaders are participants in lunchtime te reo classes.

Emily says since starting the initiatives, there has been an increase in staff connectedness and engagement, which is resulting in work that more accurately reflects Aotearoa and its people.

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THE AIM

Springload wanted to understand te ao Māori and embed the principles into its work and culture, helping to reduce digital exclusion.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Whakapuāwai, a three-year strategy, was developed to ensure the organisation had the tools to interact with Māori in a genuine way and to address the industry-wide underrepresentation of Māori. The four central initiatives include:

- Noho marae
- Te reo and tikanga classes
- Te Tiriti of Waitangi training
- GROW development programme, which offered free workshops for Māori rangatahi to learn the basics of web development



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Two noho marae held with more than 60% attendance and further experiences will be offered every six months.
- Lunchtime te reo classes have taught staff karakia, waiata, their pēpeha and some introductory sentences and greetings and boosted their confidence to use these learnings when interacting with clients, opening/closing meetings or welcoming new team members.
- New clients are increasingly asking for te ao Māori to be incorporated into their designs, content and data functionality.

KEY LEARNING

An active and strategic commitment to te ao Māori has resulted in better work produced for clients that more accurately reflects Aotearoa and its people.

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

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