



## Fisher & Paykel Healthcare

### INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

#### MEDIUM-LARGE ORGANISATION FINALIST

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### THE STORY

An employee-led community based on the premise that ‘empowered women empower women’ is helping women in STEM roles at Fisher & Paykel Healthcare bolster each other and provide the tools needed to enable their growth.

Fisher & Paykel Healthcare (F&P) designs, manufactures, and markets products and systems used in acute and chronic respiratory care, surgery and the treatment of obstructive sleep apnoea. Of its 670 engineering roles, 22 per cent are filled by women.

Recognising that women are underrepresented within some of the organisation’s teams and may not interact with other women regularly within their role, two early-career women in STEM at F&P sought a way for women to make meaningful connections and share their experiences with other females in the company, WiEng President and Product Development Engineer Eugena Au says.

WiEng was established in October 2020 by employees as a support circle for 10 early career women in engineering roles to speak freely about adversity, seek advice and grow professionally. It has since grown to become a company-wide initiative committed to supporting women in STEM roles at the company.

“Support circles are a common method of overcoming obstacles, creating a safe environment for women to share experiences and foster valuable relationships for life,” says Eugena.

“WiEng is a community to support and empower women in STEM at F&P. Our vision is that every woman in STEM will feel empowered and enabled to fulfil their potential to succeed in their roles. We aim to provide the necessary tools to enable their growth. We value empowerment, relationships, and equality; we believe behind every successful woman is a tribe of other successful women who have her back.”

WiEng is led by a committee of women in STEM, responsible for planning events, increasing reach and liaising with the WiEng community and company leaders. A governance committee of nine company leaders including the CFO, General Managers, R&D Manager, team leaders and WiEng community representatives, oversees the strategic direction of WiEng and alignment with the company.

At the beginning of 2022, WiEng reported to a subcommittee of the F&P Board of Directors as part of the Diversity & Inclusion review. They were impressed by WiEng’s achievements and offered full support enabling significant growth in a short period.

WiEng supports its members through a variety of initiatives. Each calendar quarter a workshop explores common barriers experienced by women in the workplace. Past themes have included overcoming imposter syndrome, developing a growth mindset, and mentorship.

Support from the VP of HR and the Learning and Development team has contributed to the exponential growth of WiEng.

“Their assistance in providing us with a budget for facilitating events, connecting with executives, and increasing exposure has been invaluable,” says Vandna Patel, WiEng Vice President and Product Development Engineer’.

“Our connections have also assisted in beginning to address two key issues: visibility and deep-rooted bias within the STEM industry. As an initiative in a large company, expanding and increasing awareness across all areas of the business can be difficult. To overcome this barrier, WiEng has gained exposure through the company intranet, the Diversity & Inclusion community, and department meetings.”

Feedback from members has been very positive. “I love being surrounded by a group of women I trust and share similar experiences with so that we can be vulnerable and help each other and reach our best every day,” says a WiEng member.

Diversity and Inclusion Manager Rachel Miller says support circles provide a place of empathy and compassion that women can turn to when needed. One member shared that having a circle allows her to ‘discuss things I don’t feel comfortable discussing with my immediate team members or managers.’

“Empowered women empower women. We believe establishing close networks filled with support and nurture helps women tackle biases in underrepresented industries, as well as excel in their careers.”

**“Establishing close networks filled with support and nurture helps women tackle biases in underrepresented industries.”**

## THE AIM

With women in Aotearoa only making up approximately 30 per cent of the STEM workforce, women working at Fisher & Paykel Healthcare wanted to provide a community for women in STEM roles to support each other and provide the necessary tools for their growth.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- WiEng, a support circle for women to share experiences and foster valuable relationships for life was established
- Workshops held every calendar quarter and a Microsoft Teams channel created to provide a space to spark discussions, provide information, and share opportunities across the business
- Support from leadership including a budget for events, access to executives and increasing exposure, all helping aid growth



## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Since beginning in October 2020 as an employee-led circle for 10 early career women in engineering roles, WiEng has grown to be a company-wide initiative with 218 members
- In a progress survey, 91 per cent of the community indicated that WiEng had delivered a positive effect on their experience at F&P
- 70 per cent of the community said the workshops and events held by WiEng assisted in their personal and professional growth and 64 per cent have used the teachings and advice in their personal and professional lives
- FY2022 saw strong levels of career advancement, with 18 per cent of all women in engineering receiving a promotion
- The positive influence of WiEng can be seen outside of the business, with opportunities made available to mentor up-and-coming women in STEM

## KEY LEARNING

Establishing close networks helps women tackle biases in underrepresented industries as well as excel in their own careers.

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

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