



Air New Zealand

DIVERSE TALENT

MEDIUM-LARGE ORGANISATION FINALIST

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THE STORY

To better represent the population of Aotearoa and its customers, Air New Zealand has created a talent pipeline for Māori and Pasifika staff via a development programme designed to build leadership capability through cultural confidence.

Air New Zealand is a global network of passenger and cargo airline services that centres on people. Its driving purpose is to 'Enrich our country by connecting New Zealanders to each other and New Zealand to the world'. Before COVID-19, the airline flew more than 17 million passengers every year, with 3,400 flights per week.

In 2018, Māori and Pasifika made up 25 per cent of New Zealand's population. At Air New Zealand, 17 per cent of employees were Māori or Pasifika, but only 13 per cent were in leadership roles. The airline set a target to increase this to 20 per cent by 2025, says Chief People Officer Nikki Dines.

Focus groups conducted with their Māori and Pasifika staff indicated employees did not always thrive as they did not feel they could bring their whole selves to work.

"It is important our leadership is representative of the population of Air New Zealand, our customers and Aotearoa. Our leaders are role models for our people and future generations," she says.

Air New Zealand looked to create a talent pipeline for Māori and Pasifika staff already in the business, working with Indigenous Growth Limited to develop the Mangōpare

programme – a personal and professional development programme, spread across six months, designed to build leadership capability through confidence of cultural self.

It supports individuals to embrace their unique culture, giving them the tools and coaching to help them progress into leadership, and ultimately create an environment where indigenous people can thrive.

There have been challenges along the way, with Covid-19 throwing up a major obstacle. “A third of our workforce was made redundant and we pivoted into ‘survive’ mode. All development programmes were put on hold, Mangōpare included. Unfortunately, this has meant a slowing in progress towards our goal of increasing Māori and Pasifika into leadership roles,” says Nikki.

As the organisation moved into a ‘revive’ phase, Mangōpare was the first leadership programme to be reinstated, highlighting its value and importance.

Mangōpare graduate Teuila Fraser reflects on the impacts COVID-19 had on her personal and professional life.

“Since Mangōpare my life has been transforming in ways I never imagined. I am taking care of Ko Au (me) by doing this I have reconnected and regained my sense of purpose after Covid. I feel revigorated and excited to see our airline thrive. I decided to take on the challenge as a newly appointed Agile Coach in the business transformation space,” she says.

Senior Cabin Crew Manager Sarah Murray says Mangōpare exposed graduates to opportunities that might not have existed otherwise, opportunities to upskill, receive cross departmental mentorship, visibility to senior leaders and provided a structure to bring cultural self and values to work every day.

“Mangōpare provided my direct report with a whole new outlook on how they approached themselves and their career. She had the confidence to push herself harder and question her purpose. Since Mangōpare, my direct report has been promoted.

“It gave her the confidence to interact with senior managers and enabled her to share her experiences with others and this brought a fresh way of thinking to our broader team. As a manager, attending the Mangōpare graduation was one of the most moving experiences of my life,” she says.

“It is important our leadership is representative of the population of Air New Zealand, our customers and Aotearoa.”

THE AIM

By implementing a development programme to grow indigenous leadership capability, Air New Zealand wants to diversify the leadership in its workforce to ensure it better represents the population of its customers and Aotearoa.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Holding employee surveys regularly, with action taken on the findings
- Mangōpare – a capability development programme for staff to upskill and enhance leadership capability through cultural confidence
- Delivery of the programme on a marae setting to remove some of the perceived hierarchy barriers
- Collate feedback and constantly evolve the programme to ensure its relevance

- Increased support following graduation to include career and recruitment advice such as applying for roles and interviewing techniques
- Senior leadership buy-in that requires regular reporting
- Manager participation in multiple phases of the six-month programme with follow up actions after graduation
- Introducing cultural competence to the unconscious bias training for all leaders.



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Growth and development of Mangōpare graduates as they progress their careers
- Mangōpare graduates developed an online toolkit to support better engagement with Māori and Pasifika staff
- Mangōpare graduates improved health and safety reporting by including specific reporting metrics around discrimination events
- Out of the 48 Mangōpare graduates, 14 have been promoted, many directly into leadership, business partnering or coaching roles. Although nine graduates have left Air New Zealand, most unfortunately due to the impact Covid-19, many have gone on to more senior roles. Others have taken the opportunity to step into different parts of the airline which they might not have done otherwise.

KEY LEARNING

Fostering an environment for developing indigenous leaders helps create a more inclusive workplace where everyone feels they can bring their whole selves to work and thrive.

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AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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