



Introducing and embracing te reo Māori in the workplace

Te reo Māori is an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, a taonga (treasure) and protected under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. It is an important part of our national identity.

There are many ways you can start thinking about incorporating te reo Māori into your organisation. However, when embarking on a te reo Māori journey, it's important that you encourage your people to reflect on the wider context. This means:

- Learning about the history of te reo Māori, such as the Māori Language Petition, establishment of Te Kōhanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa Māori, The Native Schools Act, and the Waitangi Tribunal claim on te reo Māori (WAI11).
- Understanding that te reo Māori is a vehicle for understanding te ao Māori and what that encapsulates.
- Learning about Te Tiriti o Waitangi – it is important to understand the context of the Treaty and the role that language plays in it. Te reo Māori is a part of a rich history and culture and as such should not be considered in isolation.
- Acknowledging the difficulty that some Māori will have in reclaiming/learning their reo which has been lost as a consequence of colonisation.
- Reflecting on the relationship between non-Māori and te reo Māori – remember that te reo Māori is for everyone across Aotearoa New Zealand, and everyone can contribute to its revitalisation, not just Māori. Partnership is one of the key principles in Te Tiriti o Waitangi, so consider your role in learning and promoting te reo Māori.

Getting the basics right:

- Consider how you will support employees who want to learn te reo Māori in the context of your organisation. What will this look like?
- Review organisational exposure to te reo Māori and internal capability, identifying common ground for your people. It is also important to understand the different skillsets of your employees and tailor learning opportunities.
- Identify potential barriers that might arise when introducing te reo Māori within your organisation. How will you overcome those barriers?
- Secure a champion at the executive level – this will showcase the importance of te reo Māori (in an organisational context) and will make it easier to introduce te reo Māori across all levels of the organisation.
- Motivate and involve as many people in learning te reo Māori and championing te reo Māori use. Te reo Māori is not just for leaders and the executive team, but for everyone.
- Share with your people the value and benefits of using te reo Māori, such as connection to the land and culture, but also higher work satisfaction, increased confidence/cultural intelligence, cohesion and greater whānau wellbeing.
- Create a supportive environment where people will have a safe space to learn.

Some practical steps for introducing te reo Māori:

- Remember to start off slow, kia āta haere. This can be done by producing internal resources and easy-to-follow guides, translations of things around the office, introducing simple email greetings, use of mihi and acknowledgements in te reo e.g. kia pai tō rā sign-offs.
- Encourage your people to learn karakia and pepeha, names of local places, iwi and geographical landmarks.
- Organise te reo Māori classes, or refer your employees to external providers. It is also important to encourage both non-traditional and traditional methods of learning, including apps, e-books, online tutorials and books for different learning opportunities and styles.
- Celebrate Mahuru Māori and Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori, honouring and celebrating the language champions from the past and present day.
- Have fun and find ways of making learning te reo Māori fun. Some examples of how this can be done are through team challenges, quizzes, crosswords, or kupu hou (an activity which encourages people to go out and seek new kupu Māori to expand their vocabulary).
- Last but not least, remember that pronunciation is important, but it does not need to be perfect in the beginning. Every little step counts, be respectful of the taonga te reo Māori is, be authentic and kia kaha ki te kōrero Māori.



Future considerations:

- Create a te reo Māori plan or strategy, monitoring steps and establishing clear goals as part of the plan.
- Feature te reo Māori in your training and development budgets.
- Embed te reo Māori in external communications. In doing this, you will be creating safe spaces for wide usage and the normalisation of te reo Māori.
- Get involved and encourage your people to engage with local iwi.
- Support pakihi Māori, i.e. Māori businesses and organisations.