



## Rocket Lab

### DIVERSE TALENT

#### FINALIST



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#### THE STORY

When it came to increasing gender diversity in its own business, Rocket Lab discovered the starting point was growing the number of women within New Zealand STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) industries.

Rocket Lab is an end-to-end space company delivering reliable launch services, spacecraft, satellite components and on-orbit management.

The company is dedicated to building a generation of home-grown talent which is representative of New Zealand's population, says Global Director – People, Culture & Capability Estelle Curd.

Two years ago, Rocket Lab formed a Ladies Who Launch group, comprised of all wāhine at Rocket Lab, with the aim of identifying the challenges they face as women in STEM, promoting their achievements within the business and creating pathways for young women who are considering a career in STEM.

When group members were asked what brought them to Rocket Lab, the answers revealed their pathways were paved with many challenges, including being deterred from pursuing STEM careers by teachers and having opportunities blocked due to their gender.

“Although there has been a lot of progress over the years, we are still finding that women and minorities are underrepresented in the STEM industry, and this is why we decided as

a group that we would commit to making a real change with our ground up approach,” Estelle says.

Rocket Lab leadership and the Ladies Who Launch group worked together to develop a number of initiatives, including:

- High school visits showcasing Rocket Lab female engineers, targeting students in years 10 and 11 who are choosing the subjects that will determine what university courses they can take.
- A pilot programme at McAuley High School, an all-female Auckland school, providing dedicated STEM subject tutoring to small groups of year 12 and 13 students.
- A Trades Open Day bringing year 12 and 13 students from under-represented groups, including female students and Māori and Pacific students to the Rocket Lab facility.
- A Women in STEM scholarship awarded each year to a student who identifies as a woman or a gender minority.
- Ensuring 50 per cent female representation in the Rocket Lab internship programme, which caters to between 15 and 20 interns each year, with the majority being offered permanent positions.

To support equitable gender representation in the intern programme, managers were given an equal number of male and female CVs to consider and queried on why they chose particular individuals to progress to the next stage. Where female applicants lacked relevant experience, such as having completed an engineering internship with another organisation, managers were encouraged to consider other relevant information such as grades and community involvement.

Rocket Lab has also committed to the Space Workforce 2030 initiative, a global pledge within the aerospace industry that seeks to achieve a significant increase in women and underrepresented groups within the workforce.

“Each year we are required to provide information to Space Workforce 2030 as part of the pledge. Other organisations committed to this initiative include the likes of SpaceX and Virgin Galactic, and whilst these are large international players in the space industry, Rocket Lab is having a significant impact in moving the needle on this topic in Aotearoa,” Estelle says.

Rocket Lab’s initiatives have provided pathways into full time employment for a number of young women who are still with the company today.

“These young women have had multiple opportunities to progress their careers through promotions and training opportunities, and our data confirms that approximately 80 per cent of women who started with the company in the last 18 months have been promoted.

“At our core we are an incredibly innovative company, but innovation only comes from multiple perspectives and diversity provides us a launch pad to access that.”

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## **THE CHALLENGE**

Rocket Lab wanted to increase the diversity of the talent pipeline for its own business by supporting more female STEM participation across Aotearoa New Zealand.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Raise awareness of STEM careers generally and specific opportunities at Rocket Lab with female students through high school visits, tutoring programmes and a Trade Open Day
- Increase female representation in the Rocket Lab internship programme to 50 per cent
- Provide managers with a gender-balanced pool of internship candidates and interview training centred on mitigating conscious and unconscious bias
- Commit to Space Workforce 2030, a global pledge to increase the participation of women and other underrepresented groups in the industry



## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Hundreds of female high school students have been made aware of STEM career opportunities for women
- Sixty tertiary students have completed the Rocket Lab internship programme with many of those students offered fulltime employment. In the past two years, half the interns were female
- Eighty per cent of women who started at the company in the past 18 months have been promoted
- Feedback from the employee onboarding process reports that they felt supported, were able to connect with other interns within their intake and that the gender-split initiative was a step in the right direction.

## KEY LEARNING

Contributing to making sure young people from under-represented groups are aware of the career pathways and opportunities within your sector is an effective way of ensuring your business has access to a diverse, sustainable talent pool.

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