

Tomorrow's Workforce Award Winner: Vector Limited

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/141148560>

Power to the People At Vector Limited the future business plan is what you would imagine for one of the most successful organisations in New Zealand: grow, innovate, and succeed. But this future forecast isn't limited to the organisations' economic plan; instead it focuses primarily on the growth, innovation and success of the energy giant's real power: its people.

Following a demographic report of the business orchestrated by Vector's HR Team in 2013, the organisation was made aware of two concerning statistics: firstly, of their 850 employees, Māori and Pasifika populations were under-represented by comparison to the overall New Zealand average.

The second statistic that was brought to their attention concerned the average age of their employee base showing that 22% - almost a quarter - of their employees were aged over 55, and starting to consider retirement options. This fact was not only concerning for Human Resources, but for the organisation as a whole as it was faced with potential technical skill shortages, and the loss of years of experience and expertise.

Vector's leadership team realised that they needed to diversify their recruitment process to avoid the creation of a static work environment and recover from the lack of industry investment in apprenticeship programmes in the 1980s and 90s, and to mitigate their organisation's vulnerability to fluctuations in the labour market.

This was going to be a challenge, but Vector decided to turn it into an opportunity. In addition to future proofing their business to handle their ageing workforce, they decided to make a concerted effort to recruit their new workforce from a variety of socio-economic areas, thereby encouraging the creation of a culturally diverse environment in which the diverse backgrounds and experiences of employees would contribute to the overall innovation and success of the organisation.

To achieve this goal, they needed to not only widen their pool of potential applicants but also to educate and train potential employees who may not have previously ever considered opportunities in the energy industry.

In partnership with the Manaiakalani Education Trust, Vector participated in a mentorship programme which hosted 12 senior school students from Tamaki College at the Auckland offices for a week. The programme helped the students gain insight into the corporate environment and offered them training and advice to make the most of their CV and interview skills. The programme was so successful that one student even asked to continue his work experience for another week and went on to work for the company for 15 months.

Vector then went on to partner with Te Puni Kōkiri, the Ministry of Māori Development, to offer cadetships within Vector to young Māori for a six-month period. Through this programme, the organisation formed relationships with the Auckland and Taranaki Iwi, and

the cadets have played a major part in raising awareness around Māori culture within Vector.

These initiatives were not about picking from a pool of engineering graduates, but about creating skilled workers from various backgrounds and offering opportunities to young people who may not have otherwise had them. It was also about upskilling existing employees and providing the appropriate training and support so that they could excel to reach their full potential.

By securing funding from Te Puni Kōkiri, Vector has worked to support the development activities for current Maori Vector employees.

It is through this partnership that Vector team members are continuing to learn and develop their skills: one employee is completing an MBA, two others are completing technical training certificates with the Australasian Corrosion Association; and a further two employees have just joined the Whakaterehia Māori Acceleration Programme in partnership with ASB, the New Zealand Institute of Management and Te Puni Kōkiri. Vector is working to ensure that the potential for development continues to grow for all of their employees.

The recruitment and training of a diverse pool of employees is a major priority for Vector. By planning for a future workforce that is from a varied range of backgrounds and influences, Vector is not only future proofing their business, they are also creating opportunities for the youth of today and the leaders of tomorrow.