

Work Life Balance Award Entrant: Vodafone NZ Ltd.

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/141148866>

Keeping employees connected opens up world of opportunities. Savvy leaders understand that talent is the single most important factor in a company's success and to attract and retain that talent, you have to work with them to create an environment where people feel valued and supported to perform to the best of their ability. One of the keys to success is to be flexible and collaborative with work practices, allowing people to work when and where best fits with all the competing priorities in their lives.

One such leader is Vodafone CEO Russell Stanners, a man who is very deliberate about his focus on people. Driven by a strong sense of fairness and treating people with respect, he believes that to get the best in people you must invest in them. Vodafone has a strong culture and people orientation which comes through in Russell's passion and prioritisation of this and flexible working is deeply embedded within the company and organisational culture. He has a family focused view and takes the opportunity to access diversity of thinking across the various customer and community groups he engages with, in order to build and lead a diverse and engaged workforce.

When new leaders are appointed they attend a leadership induction course, Leadership Essentials. During this training they are introduced to leadership styles, characteristics and the concept of the "Vodafone Ways of Working" to encourage flexible working styles.

As part of a new employee recognition programme launched in 2014, Russell and his wife Michelle hosted Vodafone's top 30 performers chosen as being those who best represent "The Vodafone Way", on an all-expenses paid, luxury overseas trip with their loved one. Russell values this time and uses it as an opportunity to reward and get to know his people that are highly recognised and valued by peers across the company.

Aside from enabling flexibility around individual working patterns, Vodafone encourages work life balance for their people in a number of dynamic ways including:

- **Environment** - all main centres are designed to create an environment of mobility and space, so that on any given day you can be sitting next to one of your team members to get a job done, and the next day you might be seated next to one of the company Directors.
- **Connect** - individuals are able to work from home or remotely with 24/7 access to the corporate network and all employees equipped with access to resources such as smartphones, allowing them to connect anywhere at any time.
- **Family matters** - CEO Russell Stanners is an active father of three and a strong advocate for a family friendly workplace. In a move to encourage greater gender balance and an increased female talent pipeline, Vodafone announced a bold change to its maternity policy

in March 2015. In addition to increasing maternity leave entitlements from 12 to 16 weeks full pay, they also now pay people an equivalent full time salary for working 30 hours per week for the first six months after returning from maternity leave. The business believe this will help with the transition back to work at one of the most important times of a new parent's life.

- **World of opportunities** – for employees whose personal aspirations may include an overseas experience, Vodafone offer the opportunity for international short or long term assignments at one of their 26 operating markets across the globe.

- **Socially responsible** – through the Vodafone Foundation the business supports people and charities who are making a difference in the lives of young New Zealanders. Through both formal and informal initiatives employees are encouraged to get involved with these charitable organisations – whether through the Hands Up programme where staff can volunteer their time for up to two weeks on full pay, or full function fundraising in the annual Business Unit challenge.

CEO, Russell Stanners, says that in addition to having the formal policies in place, the success of any worklife balance initiatives also relies on continued conversations to ensure that Vodafone's people can take full advantage of the wide package of benefits on offer.

"We have a great policy on maternity and returning to work. For a lot of the mothers the key to success is making them feel comfortable with the dual career and family commitments. I think women in particular struggle with - how do you be a totally successful mum and totally successful contributor [at work]. We need to get them to feel good about both, and their managers need to help with that", says Stanners.

Vodafone believe the impact of their Maternity policy extends far beyond the reach of its own people, and hopes that it will serve to inspire other companies to follow their lead in encouraging more support to retain and attract women in the workforce.

The evidence so far suggests that Vodafone are right to believe that enabling their people to effectively balance work and home life plays a critical role in building engagement and productivity, and ultimately that it will contribute towards the company vision of being an admired brand and trusted employer of choice in New Zealand.