

Worklife Balance Award Entrant:

iiNet

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/141144695>

Breaking out of the office cubicle pays dividends for staff and business. iiNet is Australia's second largest DSL Internet Service Provider (ISP) and the leading challenger in the Australian telecommunications market with over 2,500 staff across New Zealand, Australia and South Africa. Around 450 of these employees are based in their Auckland Customer Service Contact Centre.

iiNet's vision is to lead the market with services that harness the potential of the Internet and then differentiate with award-winning customer service. As a result of their world class service, iiNet customers are more likely to recommend their ISP than any other competitors, with a whopping 95.9 percent saying they would recommend iiNet to others. Keeping customers continually satisfied requires iiNet to train and retain highly skilled, professional and knowledgeable Customer Service Representatives (CSR's) who can genuinely make things happen for the customer.

As staff turnover within a Contact Centre environment is traditionally very high and tenure of staff is low, a significant risk to customer satisfaction is the turnover of experienced CSRs. iiNet's people and culture are a huge part of the success that has been built around a unique and stimulating working environment which ensures they remain engaged and inspired.

In 2007 iiNet identified some key areas that were a common concern for staff, and set out to make some improvements. iiNet set up a number of focus groups with staff and looked at other organisations for best practice ideas, subsequently establishing a Work from Home programme in late 2008. The initial test group included 14 carefully selected members of staff whose performance was measured over time along with associated impacts on customer service levels and wider impacts on the business.

Unsurprisingly, staff productivity and satisfaction went through the roof with huge knock on benefits for the business. Seven years on, the success of the programme continues to go from strength to strength with over 11 percent of the workforce in Auckland and almost 50 staff currently participating in the programme. These staff are privy to a number of benefits which provide them with a greater work-life balance and flexibility, such as no commute to the office, more free time outside of work, greater access to prepare their own healthier food and snacks and increased opportunity to manage family commitments.

iiNet's General Manager of Customer Service, Mathew Conn, says customers are the driver behind every decision made, with the aim of delivering awesome customer service at the forefront of everything that iiNet does. The award-winning Work from Home programme is

an initiative that not only assists in achieving this but also aids in CSR retention and the recruitment of up-and-coming customer service stars.

"Each and every staff member is focused on providing the best service they can on a daily basis, and we're proud of the programmes we have in place to help make this happen", says Mat. "We believe in awesome customer service and our Work from Home staff are fundamental to helping us to deliver it".

This has been an initiative supported and led from the top with the executive team being instrumental in formally embedding the programme, putting in place the mechanisms to ensure that this approach would be a success for its participants and the business.

Shane Anand, Senior Customer Service Manager at iiNet, has seen how the programme has had a positive impact on staff, saying that the overall feedback from those involved in the WFH programme is very positive, particularly regarding the time saved on commuting each day. "Staff don't like wasting time travelling and the expense of it all, so by working from home it's much more productive and convenient. We encourage the staff to come in once a week so that they don't lose contact with their teams or feel isolated. We are always just an instant communication message away and I haven't heard of anyone who has been on the WFH program who wants to return to the office - I think that speaks volumes!"