

Walk the Talk Award Entrant: Tayyaba Khan – ChangeMakers Refugee Forum

Positive Leadership is backed by Team Effort. "We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them." - Albert Einstein

For many years the ChangeMakers Refugee Forum (CRF) has been an organisation that provides a platform for communities with a refugee-background to share their concerns. Often as a part of this process, these communities seek to define solutions to common issues such as the lack of employment opportunities which serve as a major barrier in the resettlement process. Tayyaba, through her forward-thinking approach; has taken on the challenge to find entrepreneurial solutions towards the barriers of employment refugee based communities' face - and inspires the entire team to embrace diversity of thought.

Tayyaba exemplifies diversity leadership by providing a platform for employee inclusiveness at CRF. In the context of the work CRF does (community development, research & advocacy for refugee-background communities) Tayyaba has implemented systems within the organisation to ensure the workforce of CRF reflects diversity not only with gender, ethnicity, faith or sexuality but also with individuals of refugee-background. Under Tayyaba's leadership of the organisation there is not only a recognition that refugees face extra barriers to employment, but a genuine willingness to address these barriers and make CRF the organisation that leads the way in doing so.

In a media interview in 2005 Tayyaba was asked, "Do you feel normal?" to which she responded, "What is normal?" Her leadership reflects her practical ability to look beyond conventional barriers in managing a diverse workforce. She challenges the status quo often found in working environments based on the premise of "normality" and harnesses the use of her diverse team to achieve genuine change.

In her eleven months in the role of Chief Executive Officer, Tayyaba has demonstrated that she understands the niche within the refugee-sector in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Tayyaba has embraced this challenging time to employ a diverse workforce, 8 of whom are of refugee-background. Tayyaba has also encouraged the governance board to think about diversity beyond their own diverse backgrounds, which has resulted in the board opening up to two candidates of non-refugee background to be on the board.

Through this diversity thought process undertaken in collaboration with Tayyaba the governance board also strategically encouraged representation on the board from Maori so CRF could start the much needed critical dialogue between tangata whenua and refugee-background communities.

Tayyaba's staff believe she is not simply a leader who practices diversity thought, she genuinely nurtures and encourages her staff to embrace diverse thinking, capturing ideas and solutions to move CRF towards a stronger and more solution focused future. The current CRF team comprises of migrants, those of refugee-background, and Pakeha. This diversity brings a range of experiences and learning within the team. As a team, CRF are not only encouraged to share ideas, learning and experiences, but also to put staff in a position of learning with peers to assist professional development. The team at present feels like a

multi-cultural incubator where ideas and experiences are constantly shared. The impact of this approach, has been that though CRF for the last two years was struggling with the identity crisis of being relevant for the communities it served as an organisation, this no longer is the case. Tayyaba is a strongly intuitive leader, and a great listener. She has the ability to capture ideas and solutions and bring develop them for the future.