

Work Life Balance Award Winner: Andrew.Stewart Ltd

Video Link <https://vimeo.com/105191718>

Balanced lives for team members delivers loyal talent, strong company culture.

Planning and environmental consultancy Andrew.Stewart is focused on becoming an organisation that talented employees want to work for and team members choose to stay with. And it's on track to achieve its vision.

Smaller and younger than many of its long-established competitors, Andrew.Stewart can't entice top talent with the largest salary packages but has instead built an organisation that fosters team spirit, provides opportunities for personal and professional growth and offers all staff flexibility to pursue their interests outside work.

The company has 36 employees (24 full-time and 12 part-time roles) across offices in Auckland and Wellington, while offering positions in Whangarei and Tauranga. The company boasts a 50/50 gender balance, including at the senior management and board level, and has set a current annual growth target of 35%.

"To achieve this we have made our culture the core of our organisation."

"Andrew.Stewart runs a truly flexible work place, recognising that every individual needs something a little different to achieve both their own personal goals along with the company's goals."

Helping staff develop and achieve their longer term career goals is one way Andrew.Stewart supports the professional growth of their team members.

The company's long-term career development plans are designed to help the employee figure out where they want to be in five years' time and maps out the subsequent steps that need to be completed at key milestones to achieve this.

"A key part of this is helping employees to discover what they are truly passionate about, and how they may be able to make this 'work' within Andrew.Stewart."

The organisation provides financial support for career development by setting aside annual budget for employees to belong to the appropriate professional industry groups, gain full industry accreditations, and to attend continued professional development courses.

Andrew.Stewart pays more than lip service to the concept of flexible hours too, with the provision included in each staff member's individual employment agreement.

"Staff choose their own start and finishing times and when to have breaks. If you need to start late, take an extra-long break, or finish early to make an appointment, get to the bank, or have a haircut you can, no questions asked. We recognise that people need flexibility to live their lives and to be able to deliver high quality work."

The flexibility offered to employees extends beyond changes to the working day, recognising that throughout a person's careers, and at different stages of their life, their needs change.

Andrew.Stewart facilitates extended leave and long-term reduced hours at the request of employees, and in the past these requests have included:

- Providing a three-month leave of absence to an employee who wanted to have a mini OE
- Extended maternity leave
- Reduced working weeks for fathers to spend time with their young children, such as three and four-day working weeks
- Reduced working weeks for senior team members who did not want to commit to a fulltime role
- Recognition of ongoing health issues, including Stage VI breast cancer, and the flexibility to arrange work around medical needs.

"Team members are able to work from home when they need to, with full company support, for a range of reasons such as missing the morning traffic, needing some quiet space, sick children, school holidays, even simply a change of scene."

Staff are equipped with the tools they need to work remotely including laptops, mobiles, cloud computing and access to the network.

These same tools help maintain the relationship with staff who go on maternity leave.

"When people go on maternity leave, no matter how long it is for, they retain their laptops, cellphones, access to the network, and they are included in all company communications and events."

Fostering balance for team members with children continues after maternity leave too, with children made welcome in the office - there is even a box of toys and books to keep them busy.

"Combined with skills shortages and the need to compete on a global stage, we recognise the need to support the unique needs of our existing workforce with a robust approach to work life balance within the organisation."

This commitment to work life balance has the added spin-off of attracting a truly diverse workforce. Andrew.Stewart's team includes Maori, Irish, South African and American employees, ranges in age from under 30s to over 60s and has a 50:50 gender balance at all levels including senior management and board members.

Positive team culture across this diverse team is supported with annual, company-wide social events including the annual family Christmas lunch, with entertainment and presents for employee's children, team drinks and BBQs, team outings, birthday morning teas and fundraising for charity, which last year included entering a company team in the Tough Guy and Gal Challenge and raising \$3000 for Shine.

The philosophy is working with high praise from the staff for the company culture and a staff turnover that sits at just two people a year.