

Transpower New Zealand

Emerging Diversity and Inclusion

An e-learning module is giving staff at Transpower information about the business case for diversity and inclusion and challenging unconscious bias.

Transpower owns and operates the National Grid – the high-voltage transmission network connecting areas of generation with towns and cities across New Zealand.

With about 730 employees around the country, the organisation is proud of having a culturally diverse workforce, but saw a significant gap in both the number of Māori on staff, and the number of women. As a result, it launched a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy in 2016 with an initial focus on embracing difference as a way of driving higher performance, and attracting and retaining more women and Māori staff members.

Talent and Development Specialist Sally Homer says the *Embracing Diversity at Transpower* e-learning module was specially developed to provide evidence of the business case for diversity, and gives examples of behaviours that support inclusion in an innovative way.



“An initial scan of ‘off the shelf’ diversity and inclusion e-learning modules showed that all modules were very compliance-based, which was not what Transpower needed. We did not want to educate our staff on the legal aspects of diversity and inclusion. Our focus was on providing our people with clear evidence of, and generating discussion about, the business case for diversity and inclusion,” she says.

“We also wanted to raise awareness of behaviours that supported or could be counter to inclusion. These behaviours were largely unconscious, and we sought to make people more aware of these behaviours, so that they could address them. So, this e-learning module was intended to be a catalyst to create discussion and behaviour change right across the company,” she says.

Developed with help from staff during the workshopping stage, the module is based on real-life scenarios employees might come across during a working day.

They include ageism, the difficulty women have making themselves heard in meetings dominated by men, and arranging team celebrations for diverse teams. (A scenario relating to the correct use of Māori pronunciation, and observing of tikanga was also discussed, but the decision was made to promote existing learning programmes to raise bi-cultural competency).

Each scenario has interactive branches built in, so they have different outcomes depending on the course of action participants choose.

“This allowed people completing the module to see the different outcomes inclusive and non-inclusive behaviours were likely to have on their co-workers,” says Sally.

The module was initially launched to the General Management Team and Transpower's Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Group, then released to all staff in mid-March 2017. It has been fully supported by senior leadership with the CEO and her General Management Team using various channels, including the CEO's company-wide monthly briefing, to reinforce the importance of diversity and inclusion, both at the time of the module launch and regularly since.

Staff feedback has been positive with an impressive number wanting to join the company's Diversity Committee. At the end of the module, employees were asked what they would do differently as a result, and what behaviours they thought needed to change. Sally says there were many constructive comments.

"There was a wide range of responses with respect to what individuals would change, but there were common themes around being more aware of their unconscious biases, being prepared to listen to and even seek out different views, and respecting cultural difference," she says.

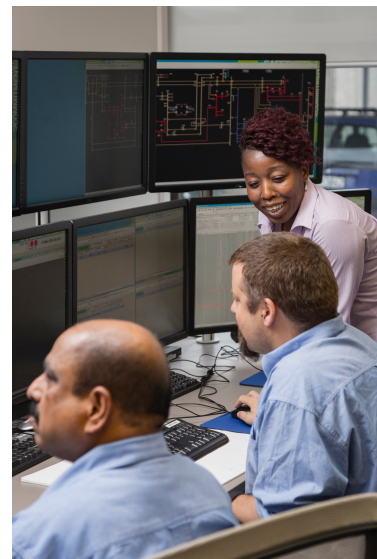
"One long-time employee noted, 'The diversity and inclusion module gave me real hope that people will finally realise that certain comments they say to people in the office are actually not ok.'"

The same employee has been on a personal journey developing the confidence to speak up about these behaviours and shared her experiences in front of an audience of more than 100 people.

"Her story proved to be a watershed moment for many male managers, making them aware of their own subtle and often unconscious behaviours," says Sally.

Since the introduction of the module, the total number of female staff has increased from 28 per cent to 31 per cent, and rolling female turnover has decreased slightly.

"This means that in the short time since the module has been released we have made some progress towards our goal of attracting and retaining more women in the organisation, therefore ultimately increasing our diversity," says Sally.



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