

Transdev Auckland

Empowerment

Getting more women working in rail is the key to ensuring the industry is sustainable and able to take advantage of the business benefits of gender diversity, according to the company operating Auckland's passenger railway services.

Transdev Auckland delivers 3,300 train services a week, accounting for 20 million annual passenger journeys, on behalf of Auckland Transport.

In 2016, only 151 of its 658 staff were female. With the rail industry entering an exciting period of change as a result of unprecedented investment and expansion in New Zealand – the City Rail Link project alone will require Transdev Auckland to increase its workforce by 50 per cent – the company saw an opportunity to improve its gender diversity.



Transdev Auckland launched its Women In Rail campaign in 2017. Focus groups and an online survey canvassed existing female operational staff to uncover what attracted them to the organisation, what discourages women from applying for jobs in rail, how Transdev Auckland could retain female staff and what the biggest barriers were to increasing the number of women working in the industry.

This research showed that to combat the historic male-centric nature of the rail industry, the company needed to try a new approach to attract and retain women. It also provided some clear themes, which drove several initiatives that were introduced to the company.

From August 2017, the organisation targeted women in a recruitment campaign, via social media and print channels, using its female drivers to break down stereotypes and showcase that women can work in rail. Quotes from existing staff and photographs illustrating what the job is really like were used alongside language such as 'second career' or 'return to work' to target mothers coming back to work after having children.

Transdev Auckland also got involved with career fairs and presentations at tertiary institutions so that the company is top of mind when women start applying for roles after studying.

Unconscious bias training was introduced for hiring managers to help make them aware of any bias they may take into interviews and to give them strategies for focusing on the skills and competencies of the individual. Even if the new advertising campaign increased the number of female applicants, without this training there was a risk actual job offers to women would continue to stagnate.

Transdev Auckland launched a buddy system, allocating each new female staff member a female buddy to chat to and provide support during the training period. This was aimed at decreasing any sense of isolation or culture shock women may experience coming into a male-dominated industry.

A project, initiated by a team lead by Senior Recruitment Consultant Lianne Maskell as part of a Transdev global innovation competition for staff, has resulted in a flexible working framework being

implemented in all Transdev Australasian businesses. It will provide flexibility options for all staff to choose from, including phased retirement, job share, preferred shifts and part-time roles. It's hoped the job share and part-time roles will attract women coming back from maternity leave who only want to work two or three days a week.

The initiatives, which have received support from the senior leadership team, including Diversity & Inclusion Lead Kelly Weekes, have resulted in an increase in the number of women taking up jobs with Transdev Auckland. In the operations area, nine female train drivers were employed in 2017. To put this in perspective, Transdev Auckland had employed only two female drivers in the prior three years.

In July 2018, the company's first transgender (male to female) driver will start work at Transdev Auckland

The company has also seen an increase in the number of women accepting roles throughout the organisation. In 2016, 28 per cent of those who accepted job offers at Transdev Auckland were women. This rose to 31 per cent in 2017.

"We want our workforce to reflect the community we work in," says Lianne Maskell.

A gender diverse workforce offering great career opportunities is proven to generate loyalty, which will help the company retain institutional knowledge, she says. It also brings different approaches to solving problems and a workforce that will question the status quo.

"We are changing not just the culture but also the mindset of those who have been in rail for many years who think it is more of a male-oriented environment. We are demonstrating that females adapt and excel in the rail industry and that times are definitely changing."



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