

Spark New Zealand *Positive Inclusion*

Spark's #thankstoyou campaign acknowledging the Rainbow community was so successful it led to an increase in members of the community wanting to work for Spark and at the same time attracted new customers.

The #thankstoyou campaign aimed to acknowledge the historic efforts of individuals and organisations within the Rainbow community, hopefully leading to younger generations being able to grow up in a country that's becoming more accepting, loving and respectful.

Spark New Zealand provides fixed line telephone services, a mobile network, and an internet service, and is a major ICT provider to New Zealand businesses. The company employs nearly 5,000 staff.



The campaign was headlined by a thought-provoking video to bring #thankstoyou to life and encourage people to share their own #thankstoyou moments. It was supported by a new partnership with OUTline and Spark's participation in the Auckland Pride Parade.

The #thankstoyou video shows a same-sex male couple with their young son at home, beautifully illustrating a Rainbow family growing up in a supportive and loving environment. The video got huge attention, with more than 5.5 million social media impressions and more than 2.1 million views via TV.

As a result, Spark experienced increased interest from members of the Rainbow community and allies in working at Spark. A number of customers also joined Spark because of its progressive point of view and support for the Rainbow community.

The vast majority of reactions to the #thankstoyou video were enormously positive, but a vocal minority were very homophobic. However Social Media Manager Frith Wilson-Hughes' defence was instant and her comments went viral on social media and across mainstream media (The AM Show, Newshub, Breakfast on TVNZ, NZ Herald, Stuff.co.nz, The Spinoff and more).

The support from senior leadership was strong. Managing Director Simon Moutter publicly supported the stance with a tweet: "Extremely proud of my staff acting in accordance with our company values and making a stand on behalf of gay NZers."

The campaign was boosted by engagement from Rainbow influencers such as Anika Moa, Kris Fox, Alison Mau, Eli Mathewson, Richard Hills and others who shared their own #thankstoyou stories, adding to the noise.

The OUTline partnership announcement had a natural fit with #thankstoyou. Spark announced its strategic partnership with the organisation, which provides confidential telephone support and face-to-face counselling services available to the LGBTQI+ community and their families and friends, by thanking them for the work they've done in the Rainbow community.

All communications were co-branded and Spark talked to media in partnership with OUTLine. This meant significant public exposure for OUTLine, resulting in increases in social media and website traffic, as well as donations. Spark staff also raised \$2,000 for OUTLine by purchasing rainbow flag pin badges.

The third component of the #thankstoyou campaign focused on Spark's entry into the Auckland Pride Parade. The campaign was created and implemented by a small team of volunteers including Spark's advertising agencies Colenso BBDO and Spur.



Spark's parade float was designed to be a beacon of pride and peace through the use of colour and light. More than 250 Spark staff, family and friends wore #thankstoyou t-shirts and light-up accessories and danced their way down Ponsonby Road.

An internal communications campaign celebrated these three components, providing ways for those working at Spark to get involved.

Spark staff were proud of the stand that Spark took for the community and of the way that New Zealanders shifted their perceptions to start to perceive Spark as a Rainbow-friendly brand. This was demonstrated through support on Yammer and increased participation from LGBTQI+ identifying Spark people in the Pride parade.

#thankstoyou built on the progress Spark made in 2017 to become a more inclusive workplace for the LGBTQI+ community by entering the Auckland Pride Parade for the first time, appointing its first Head of Diversity and Inclusion, and becoming the first telecommunications company to gain Rainbow Tick (RT) accreditation.

Feedback from employees on working at Spark includes:

"2018 was my first Pride Parade, and for the first time in my life I've gained the confidence to live the truest version of myself. Spark allows me, an LGBT immigrant, to bring the whole of me to work every day!" - Minnelise Louw.

"When I joined Spark three years ago I was not out to my family back home in India because I was not confident nor proud of who I was. The growing conversation and Pride movement within Spark gave me support and courage in my own process to understand who I am and what I stand for. Feeling comfortable in the workplace played a big part in making me who I am today." - Yohann Pereira.

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TOOLS OR RESOURCES TO MAKE
YOUR WORKPLACE MORE INCLUSIVE

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