

Griffins

Skills Highway

One of New Zealand's most recognisable brands is committed to improving literacy and numeracy skills in its production facilities, a move that is creating benefits both in the organisation and in its employees' lives.

Griffin's is a household name, manufacturing iconic snacks for more than 150 years. It employs nearly 800 people around New Zealand, including in factories at Papakura and Wiri, where Griffin's is focusing its efforts to improve literacy and numeracy skills.

To help staff at the Papakura and Wiri factories improve their understanding of English and numeracy, Griffin's developed an initiative in partnership with workplace literacy provider Upskills.

A broad curriculum was developed, which wove together the organisation's goals alongside participant goals. Line leaders, manufacturing managers and potential participants all had input. Training interventions were designed to target the specific issues in the plants, and metrics were developed so that success could be measured.

The programme, called Be Brave, after one of Griffin's organisational behaviours, was designed to help staff communicate more effectively, more fully understand the important numbers and metrics they deal with daily and raise overall levels and capability of reading, writing, problem solving, financial literacy, computer confidence, speaking up with respect and listening to others.

It began in 2016 and has been delivered to more than 90 people so far at the company. Training sessions took place weekly over the course of five months, with each session taking two hours.

The programme has now expanded to include a computer confidence course, and a pop-up event at Papakura where Upskills staff helped Griffin's employees with their digital questions. These initiatives reached another 35 people not involved in the original Be Brave course.

Managers and senior leaders were extremely involved in the process, acting as mentors and helping give the programme a position of importance. This involvement from all levels of the organisation helped to ensure its success, according to Wiri Site Manager Craig Rooks. "Participants see that we're there to support them, we're all one team and while we have different functions we're all after a common goal."

Video Link:

<https://vimeo.com/286802418>



At the end of the programme, Griffin's held a graduation and certificate presentation ceremony, and all participants were encouraged to present their ideas to help the business to mentors and managers, a first chance for many of them to have input into the organisation's operation.

One of the noticeable effects of the programme can be seen at monthly meetings, where key figures, statistics and information is presented by the site manager. Some of the information presumes prior knowledge of acronyms and technical vocabulary, and before doing the Be Brave programme some staff did not engage with this information. Managers all agree that participants in the programme better understand the information. Papakura Site Manager Morgan Willing says, "There has been more interest in company and site performance."



The workplace has benefited through the implementation of participant projects and suggestions, and one of these projects included the development of an action plan to ensure respect in the workplace and deal with any workplace bullying. Respect in Workplace training is being rolled out across the sites.

The Be Brave staff group has shown a clear lift in their numeracy and reading scores, which has improved their comprehension of workplace documentation and confidence around health and safety.

Staff retention rates are also significantly higher for the group that went through Be Brave, and 19 per cent of the cohort at the Papakura site and 60 per cent of the Wiri cohort went on to further career development within the organisation. This includes promotion, gaining NZQA qualifications or participating in the organisation's cadet programme.

The participants have seen great benefits in their home lives, too. One participant says, "I feel free and I can interact with people much more often. I used to hide myself before. Interaction means you can get to know more and get to know yourself more."

Another says, "Instead of me getting frustrated and not saying anything, I now speak out - at work and at home. At home I would choose the bad words but now I sit back and take a moment to cool down and then talk. It's improved my relationship with my kids."

The Be Brave programme included sessions with local librarians to build awareness of the role of public libraries in lifelong learning, digital literacy and as a reading resource and community hub. Many of the Be Brave participants joined the library as a result.

"I took my little girl there and she was so excited. We've been to three libraries since I got my card. Got one for my little girl too - she wanted to take out hundreds of books."

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