

OJI Fibre Solutions Skills Highway

A leading manufacturer is working to help its diverse staff achieve real qualifications and to improve their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy, ensuring better outcomes for the company and its employees.

OJI Fibre Solutions employs approximately 550 employees in its packaging business, across five main sites. It manufactures more than 34 million kilometres of cardboard annually from just one of those sites, and exports more than 50 per cent of its output. Its Packaging Northern site in Mangere employs a diverse range of people, and only 30 per cent of employees at the site are Pakeha.

Because of this diverse workforce, there are a number of unique challenges, including cultural differences and language difficulties, that can negatively impact the operation of the organisation.

To address these challenges, OJI Fibre Solutions instituted a suite of programmes known as Beyond the Boundaries, developed with Education Unlimited, which actively addressed each site's issues in a way that created change without forcing people into training and contained the content required to achieve the Level 2 and Level 3 qualification available to staff.

After a previous failed attempt to sign staff up to a Level 3 qualification, OJI Fibre Solutions worked to design an improved structure for the training of staff.

The training sessions were developed around the use of real-life forms that staff are required to fill in daily to ensure that the programme was providing practical skills for the employees. The sessions were delivered in small groups, and each participant built up their own portfolio of evidence, which they could then use to complete unit standards.

OJI management supported the programme in a number of ways, allowing the course to take place during working hours, checking in weekly with staff, and employing a full-time training advisor to engage with the tutors and participants and ensure the programme was on track. Since the first round of participants graduated, OJI has also started a financial wellbeing programme for its staff.

Each group of participants was encouraged to complete a project based around improving the company in some way, which are all being evaluated and implemented by internal focus groups.

Ian Jennings, the training advisor for OJI Fibre Solutions, says, "At the start of the course we gave Education Unlimited 54 people who were so apprehensive of what lay in front of them and the hill they had to climb. Education Unlimited built up their confidence with the hands-on interactive sessions, addressing relevant documentation and policies and procedures that relate to unit standards within the qualification, and building confidence to equip them for the final group projects."

"Each participant found their voice and contributed to their group project and they have continued their self-discovery journey. They now take genuine active participation in their workplace team talks. They express their ideas with confidence."



A Māori female participant, Charley, felt she was being restricted from gaining knowledge on other sections of the machine by the guys she worked with. The course empowered her to speak up about her frustrations at the following team talk and she discovered they were just trying to protect her because of her size. The guys then re-configured the machine so Charley could work all sections comfortably and safely. Charley is now training to be an operator on the machine.

Levin Facility Manager Trevor Pouwhare says the course has allowed Charley to believe in herself. "There's been an astronomical change."

Charley says that she started the programme with some apprehension. "Now I've learnt how to explain our situation more, and help others understand. It's given me the confidence I need to go into Level 3 qualifications and for my future, looking at options that I didn't get at school."

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