



Woods Glass

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

FINALIST



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THE STORY

As with many construction companies, the workforce at Woods Glass has historically been male, but the business has made a concerted effort to ensure an increasingly diverse team feels safe and welcome.

Woods Glass is a specialist commercial glazing company working nationwide with offices in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and a combined workforce of 130.

Operations Manager Graham Berry says the business is growing significantly and successful growth requires an increasingly diverse workplace, giving access to a previously untapped pool of talent.

“We need to employ many more talented staff to meet our growing demand and we want them to walk in the door and see that this is a healthy place for them to work regardless of their ethnicity, gender or age. Therefore we need to support our existing employees to be comfortable with the changing demographics of our workforce and ensure that women and people from ethnic minorities who join Woods Glass experience a positive workplace culture.”

The business took a multi-pronged approach, reviewing and revising its company values and developing a Behavioural Competency Framework making it clear what upholding those values looked like. The Kapa/Teams value, with its clear expectation to “respect and value each other and our differences” and “speak up when something isn’t right”, was a particular focus.

“The refreshed values and the competency framework have enabled us to set clear expectations and have important conversations with people who are not meeting them,” says Graham.

The company worked with training provider Edvance Workplace Education to provide Team Leadership and Workplace Communication programmes. The programmes were designed to give people the confidence to speak up when there was a problem, seek clarification when they didn’t understand something, and to be able to engage with health and safety documentation and report incidents. Understanding appropriate communication for the workplace, including intercultural communications skills, was also a focus.

Alongside this programme, Woods Glass worked with Edvance to co-design a series of workshops delivered to small groups of 15 across the workforce.

“The workshops began with our values and were not about apportioning blame but rather raising people’s awareness of the value of an inclusive and diverse workforce, and how to be an upstander and ensure that all employees experience a positive work culture,” says Graham.

Based on feedback from participants, the training was modified as more groups went through it. Employees were very positive about the workshops submitting the following feedback about what they found helpful:

“The whole workshop. Being able to find different ways to help others and understand how other people are thinking and how to act.”

“Knowing how to approach bullies. Giving ideas on how to make Woods Glass a better workplace. Having the opportunity to have a voice.”

“Having senior management understand that different ideas come from a range of places and having a platform to express our experiences and struggles.”

Graham says the initiative has provided clear guidelines for team leaders in terms of what to expect and enabled powerful conversations with staff who are not meeting those expectations.

“In general, as each issue is dealt with appropriately, confidence has grown in both the complaints process and in the managers who not only demonstrate the company values, but are also seen actively realigning the behaviour of those who don’t.”

THE CHALLENGE

Woods Glass needed to employ more staff to cope with growing demand and wanted them to be part of a safe and healthy workplace regardless of their gender, ethnicity or age.

“We need to support our existing employees to be comfortable with the changing demographics of our workforce.”

