



Vodafone New Zealand

EMERGING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FINALIST



THE STORY

Mental health and wellbeing issues are complex, and interrelated. Vodafone New Zealand, in line with its “no one gets left behind” philosophy, has been dedicating resources to ensure that it supports its people in a way that recognises these facts.

Vodafone New Zealand has approximately 2,400 employees nationwide, providing connectivity to 2.9 million customers. In 2017, the company launched Manawa Ora, its wellbeing programme, which has led to a growing internal awareness of and conversation around mental health and wellbeing.

In late 2018, Lani Evans, Vodafone Foundation Manager, had the idea to create a network where Vodafone employees could support each other in more sensitive and personal situations. Importantly, the network would be non-hierarchical and would not be specifically tied to any one issue. Evans says these factors will allow “all participants to contribute and be valued equally, no matter their background or day job.”

This network, called Manaaki, which means kindness and nurturing, is comprised of 13 volunteers who have been through mental health first aid training. The network was launched in October 2018 during Mental Health Awareness Week, alongside stories and profiles on internal communications platforms.

The Manaaki Support Network has been supported from the very top levels of the organisation, with a promotional video at launch from CEO Jason Paris, to team leaders who support their team members becoming volunteers for the network.

Since implementing the Manaaki Support Network, Vodafone has seen an increased uptake of its Family Violence policy to a level that is, unfortunately, more reflective of societal behaviour. This means that the conversations around these issues are becoming more open, which will hopefully lead to people being able to address the issues in a well-supported manner.

The leaders of this initiative have also looked to promote this model externally. Safety and Wellbeing Manager Max Riley, Lani Evans and Diversity and Inclusion Lead Kirstin Te Wao have promoted it to a number of business leaders, including more than 60 Diversity Works New Zealand members in February and a pan-company working group established by the Human Rights Commission.

The network has also caught the attention of Vodafone internationally, and all Vodafone markets adopted Vodafone New Zealand and Australia's Domestic Violence policy on International Women's Day. There is also potential that this will be followed up by international versions of the Manaaki Support Network.

On average, a network member is approached every day by a colleague. One such employee who accessed paid family violence leave says that it was like Vodafone "wrapping its arms around me," and that this support meant she could take steps which allowed her to keep her job and support herself personally.

"We're delivering on a big kaupapa here - tackling mental health and wellbeing. It was really important to get it right and deliver something meaningful for our people," says Max Riley.

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THE CHALLENGE

New Zealand has very concerning mental health and wellbeing statistics, particularly in relation to family violence. Vodafone had a paid family violence leave policy, but found that it was not being used very often, and conversations about these issues were not easy in the workplace.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Started the Manaaki Support Network, a group of volunteers who are trained as mental health first aiders.
- Supported employees in being able to contact members of the network for help.
- Allowed volunteers to access a Rehabilitation Consultant or supervision via the company's Employee Assistance Provider if they need more help.
- Promoted the network externally, to other organisations and other international Vodafone offices.

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- On average, a network member is approached by a colleague every day.
- Much higher usage of Vodafone family violence leave, allowing more people the support they need
- Positive and constructive feedback from staff that has allowed the network to improve.
- Was featured as a case study in a UN Women and International Labour Organisation handbook to “address violence and harassment against women in the world of work.”

KEY LEARNING

In order for people to be truly supported, they must feel comfortable accessing the benefits available to them and be encouraged to do so if needed.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

Visit diversityworks.nz or call 0800 DIVERSITY (0800 348 377)