



TupuToa

IMPACT

SMALL ORGANISATION EXCELLENCE AWARD

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THE STORY

Over four years, non-profit TupuToa has developed and successfully delivered an innovative internship programme creating pathways for Māori and Pacific students into professional careers.

TupuToa and its internship programme were developed by a working group set up by the diversity-championing Global Women organisation, along with representatives from leading New Zealand businesses, including Fonterra, PwC, Fletcher Building, Westpac and Genesis Energy.

The group's research showed that Māori and Pacific people were severely under-represented in the corporate sector. No independent service providers existed to connect employers with Māori and Pacific students or to develop graduates early in their careers.

The group consulted with Māori and Pacific leaders and tertiary institutions, surveyed HR department heads of 64 large New Zealand businesses, and conducted tertiary student and graduate focus groups.

It found that though 85 per cent of corporates had or were planning a programme tailored for Māori and Pacific talent, only 17 per cent were successful. A lack of knowledge, preparation, self-confidence and self-belief were found to be the main barriers for Māori and Pacific students navigating graduate-recruitment processes.

Modelled on similar initiatives in Australia and the United States, TupuToa’s internship programme has been adapted to suit local needs. It provides three-month summer placements – during which the interns are paid – but also workshops and tailored support before and during an internship.

After an internship, an alumni network provides a platform for peer-to-peer support, free membership of professional networks, leadership opportunities, global internships, and access to psychometric assessment tools.

“Our internship programme provides rangatahi the opportunity to be nurtured and to grow, creating pathways into meaningful careers,” says TupuToa Chief Executive Anne Fitisemanu. “For our intern hosts, TupuToa opens the doors to a significant portion of the future workforce, and access to cultural capability development services.”

To date, more than 450 interns have been placed in corporate and public-sector roles, with more than 80 per cent securing graduate jobs after their internships.

Many TupuToa interns are the first in their families to undertake tertiary education, or enter a corporate environment. In a “student-centric” recruitment process of assessments and workshops, applicants gain new skills, even if they are not finally matched to an internship opportunity.

“We don’t just recruit interns on behalf of corporates, we prepare talent for the workforce over a 12-month cycle,” says Anne. “This ensures that our interns don’t just have the aptitude for their internship, but also self-confidence and pride in their culture.”

She says TupuToa’s kaupapa enhances organisations’ understanding of Māori and Pacific culture, and strengthens social cohesion within and between corporates and communities. “We build cultural capability and provide guidance on recruitment, retention and development of Māori and Pacific staff.”

Rob Campbell, the Chair of SkyCity Entertainment Group, has seen TupuToa’s programme in practice at SkyCity and elsewhere. “It is a two-way practice where the interns contribute to their hosts significantly,” he says. “TupuToa is the kind of social action which will make diversity and inclusion real...”

Interns themselves are just as positive: “Applying for TupuToa is on par with some of the best decisions in my life,” says BNZ intern Tito Alatimu. “The programme provided me with real opportunities that I wouldn’t have been able to access otherwise.”

Bell Gully intern Kasanita Veikune says TupuToa’s help was invaluable. “I felt supported throughout. TupuToa workshops enabled me to fully embrace my cultural identity.”

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THE CHALLENGE

Many New Zealand corporates wanted to get better at sourcing Māori and Pacific talent, but struggled to put together successful programmes. No independent organisation existed to connect them with Māori and Pacific students or to help develop Māori and Pacific graduates early in their careers.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- The initiative began with research: Māori and Pacific leaders and tertiary institutions were consulted, HR department heads at large New Zealand businesses surveyed and focus groups conducted among tertiary students and graduates.
- TupuToa learned from overseas initiatives, but adapted its programme for New Zealand.
- A recruitment process of assessments and workshops gives applicants new skills, whether they win a placement or not.
- Along with paid internships, support is provided before and after placements.
- An alumni network provides extra benefits for participants.



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- In four years, more than 450 interns have been placed, with more than 80 per cent securing jobs after their internships
- TupuToa's partner network has grown from 20 in its first year, to more than 90.
- The number of interns has grown from 28 in the first year to 210 in the latest round (2019/20), with more than 620 applications for the 2020/21 programme
- Ninety-nine per cent of respondents to an independent survey of organisations with interns agreed that TupuToa is creating future Māori and Pacific leaders, while 92 per cent agreed that TupuToa had enhanced their understanding of Māori and Pacific cultures and perspectives.
- Survey results show the internships greatly increase self-belief and confidence among participants. Ninety-six per cent of interns who were surveyed said they would recommend TupuToa to other students.

KEY LEARNING

When a pressing need is identified, a well-designed programme can be quickly scaled up to have a widespread and growing impact.

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