

Seven Ways Enterprise can Learn from Pasifika to Improve their Workforce

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Workforce projections indicate that by 2026, Pasifika people will make up a third of the total workforce in Tāmaki Makaurau.



Here are seven ways you can improve your workplace culture to attract, retain and enable Pasifika talent:

1. Increase your cultural competency.

Organisations should increase cultural awareness if they want to recruit for diversity. Some of the barriers we came across were things like a lack of understanding of Pasifika values and the ways Pasifika demonstrate readiness for progression. There are some fantastic cultural competency training organisations like [Te Kaa, Vasa Consulting](#), [LeVa, Tutiramai](#), Pacific Education Centre, [Araatu, Courageous Conversations South Pacific](#) and [Diversity Works NZ](#) that can provide cultural competency training.

2. Change how you think about talent.

“Think about talent differently, not just qualifications and experience but emotional intelligence, values and how we want to grow humans who will disrupt and challenge what we think. Those are the people we need to bring into our organisation to make us better.”

– Teresa Pollard, Associate Director Strategic Partnerships, Datacom.

Think about the values, skills, and qualities you need for a role. Are you stuck in a fixed mindset about the kinds of people and skills you require and whom you hire? How diverse is your workforce, and what might you gain from diversifying?

3. Be clear in your communications about what you need.

As Datacom found, many of the people who wanted to apply for their roles simply didn't, as they thought they wouldn't have the right qualifications for the role or don't think it's possible because they don't see other people who look like them in the industry. Clearly communicate the kinds of values, qualifications, and skills you want. If no formal qualifications are needed or if certain attributes are more important than qualifications, say so.

4. Partner to recruit differently.

Identify organisations such as Uptempo that have the capability to connect you with the kinds of people you want to hire, who can reach into those communities to find those amazing people. Work closely with them to develop processes that attract those people into your business. Do not ask the intermediary to do something for free. Recognise their ability to connect you to a new talent pool and build relationships of trust with these intermediary organisations to develop ongoing talent pools that you can keep drawing from as you need.

5. Check your bias.

We all have our biases. We tend to hire people like us. Employers are in the privileged position of being able to observe how their personal bias and collective biases, such as racism, play out in their industry and do something about it. This means building your

own cultural competence and comfort with diversity of all kinds, addressing bias skillfully when it arises in yourself and others and growing an internal culture of acceptance and love of difference.

6. Change your employee experience.

Think about what it might be like to land in your business as a young Samoan woman or a young Māori man. Would they feel welcomed, comfortable, valued, and supported? How would you know either way? What do you need to do differently around onboarding and retention? Partner with organisations like Uptempo to help you gain the cultural competence to not just attract diverse employees but to keep them with you and share all they have to offer in a supported way.

There are resources to help; for example, Uptempo has created the Good Employer Matrix, which guides employers on how to become better employers of Pasifika people.

“When you lift one person, you lift their whole family.”

- Lolou Kini, Uptempo Job Detective.

7. Reorient your picture of ‘success.’

Reframe how you conceive and measure your success towards employing for equity and diversifying your workforce. Develop Board and management KPIs that reflect this and make people accountable for them. Ask your staff what success in equity and diversity looks like from their perspectives, including in terms of their own wellbeing, and reflect that too.

A first step is finding one or more organisations that might be able to help you on this journey and starting a conversation with them.

“Covid is making us focus on our national talent pool. This is a massive opportunity for New Zealand to step up for New Zealand in the way we hire and who we hire.”

- Anna-Jane Edwards, Uptempo Manager

"Why can't New Zealand model this stuff? Talent is number one, the right talent. This is an opportunity for us to do things differently in tech. We need to do better to create that economy of greatness."

- Alex Mercer, Head of Group Marketing and Communications, Datacom