



Business not as attractive to Maori leaders

MARK TAYLOR/STUFF

NZTA regional director Parekawhia McLean says businesses need to recognise the importance of whanau.

Businesses are being urged to take the initiative to create a work environment that will attract Maori talent.

When she started her career in the public sector 20 years ago, regional director of the New Zealand Transport Agency, Parekawhia McLean knew she wanted her work to make a difference to the community.

McLean said she pushed herself to break out of her comfort zone and work alongside decision makers and leaders of the country. She went on to become a policy advisor for three prime ministers before setting up her own consultancy business a decade ago.

Although the public sector has seen better representation of Maori in leadership, there was a long way to go for the private sector, she said.

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Over the span of her career McLean said she had few female role models at work.

"My family were my role models. If it wasn't for my parents pushing I wouldn't have done the things I did.

"It's very disappointing when I see annual results and there is only one woman leading a company on the New Zealand stock exchange. We're not making the inroads that we need to."

SUPPLIED

Hays New Zealand managing director Jason Walker says diversity can be normalised when there is more than one voice representing a minority.

Managing director of Hays recruitment Jason Walker said while there was demand to develop Maori leadership within the private sector, there were few Maori candidates applying for leadership roles.

Walker is a Global Women champion of change and will be a speaker on a panel discussing greater engagement with the Maori workforce at the Global Women's 1 Day for Change summit on September 19.

"There's a cultural difference. Within an iwi organisation, the focus is on what you can do for your community, not so much the profits," he said.

"The private sector is not as attractive as the local iwis and central government because of the cultural set up they have in place. It's a mentality of 'well I've got everything that I need right here'."

The private sector needed to embrace the culture to appeal to Maori, Walker said

"This is not something that happens overnight, it's driven by leadership because there has to be an appetite for change from that level. Diversity is great for the community but also for the bottom line of a business."

McLean said it was important that the leaders of an organisation recognised the benefits of diversity.

Being in a position of leadership, she saw it as her responsibility to mentor and support young Maori women.

Businesses needed to be proactive in their recruitment process to attract Maori talent, she said.

"They need to normalise a family friendly workplace and recognise the importance of whanau.

"Fundamentally it starts from the top. If your leadership and CEOs are committed then you can see the change."

Walker said diversity needed to be addressed with the focus of harbouring new perspectives, not just to create to tick the box.

"A lone Maori voice can be powerful on a board but the magic happens when there's three or more together. Then it becomes a normal state of affairs, and no longer about whether you're a women or Maori on the board, it's about the view points you contribute," he said.

"Business need to represent their customers and community and it makes commercial sense to bring people who have a greater empathy and relationship with those communities into the workplace."

Registrations for Global Women's 1 Day for Change summit on September 19 are now open. Find out more, view the speakers and buy your ticket at <http://globalwomen.org.nz/1dfcnz>

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