

# Managing a Multicultural Workplace



when *life* works better,  
*business* works better  
*Pai ake te oranga, pai ake te pakihi*

Understanding and defining culture is a complex task, yet we navigate our way with a wide variety of people with whom we live and work on a daily basis. We identify ourselves in such differing ways that it may appear easier to make a kiwi culture as if personal culture doesn't really matter.

Some folk might think that culture is an artistic expression of traditional values and others will say that culture is a system of beliefs and values that we carry around with us. With all our individual and group beliefs we attempt to work together with varying levels of success.

Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, the incorporation of respectful workplace practices that are inclusive, that acknowledge diversity and which acknowledge our bicultural heritage as a country and Maori as tangata whenua gives us a strong bi-cultural base. From this base we can build together multicultural relationships with other Pacific Island and worldwide nations.

The question of culture reveals that Māori culture is made up of clearly identified sub groups, a good model from which to expand toward a successfully multicultural NZ.

In order to manage or maintain a healthy multicultural environment we can draw on Mason Drurie's Māori model of holistic health, Te Whare Tapa Wha, the House of Four Sides. This balanced view of health involves psychological-hinengaro, spiritual-wairua, physical-tinana, family-whanau. If we are unbalanced in any of these areas we will undoubtedly have an impact on those around us.

We often refer to European as an identity and yet Europe is made up of a very wide range of countries, languages and cultural differences.

In the workplace we benefit from awareness of our similarities and our differences. Cultural difference is often expressed around significant events such as births, marriages and deaths. Managers can be aware of employee's needs in relation to their beliefs and their families and openly enquire as to a person's need in a particular time of change. Employees can communicate their values and beliefs to contribute to a successfully multicultural workplace.

Sometimes, talking to a third party about cultural dynamics may help to improve your understanding of others and assist you in acquiring new communication skills. To access support from a Vitae coach click [here](#).

**If you need some support or are feeling overwhelmed by anxiety you can contact a Vitae Clinician by phoning 0508 664 981 or email The Vitae Team**