

# A Foot



*Opening the door  
to ethnic diversity*

# in the Door



New Zealand Government



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Kia ora and welcome to *A Foot in the Door*, a guide to bias-free recruitment to unlock the potential of ethnic diversity.

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New Zealand's cultural diversity and immigration rates mean it is likely that job applicants will come from a wide range of cultures. In order to make a good selection, the recruiter needs to gather enough information about the applicant to accurately assess their potential.

What can sometimes interfere with this process are assumptions we make about a person and, in the case of cultural diversity, our

attitudes to different cultures. These assumptions and attitudes can cloud our judgement before we even meet the person.

Allowing such attitudes to affect the selection of candidates can severely limit the skills, experience and knowledge available to an organisation. The test for the recruiter is to set aside their assumptions and take time to explore a person's potential.

This resource has been developed by the Office of Ethnic Affairs to encourage employers and recruiting managers to:

- recognise the value of diversity
- broaden the pool of job applicants
- evaluate each candidate on merit
- recruit the best person for the job.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us here at the Office of Ethnic Affairs (see the back page for contact details). Together, we'll help New Zealand grow into a diverse, prosperous society, well into the future.

**Mervin Singham**

Director, Office of Ethnic Affairs

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# Introduction

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*“No employer can afford to overlook talent. An inability to see skills and abilities across ethnic boundaries is business blindness.”*

Wilson et al. (2005)

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Tight labour market conditions and global competition for the best talent means employers are increasingly considering hiring people born overseas.

Employing staff from diverse backgrounds can create substantial benefits.

Research with local and international employers shows that cultural diversity can add:

## Creativity

*“Somehow, diversity breeds creativity. Maybe it’s because people with different backgrounds challenge each other’s underlying assumptions, freeing everybody from convention and orthodoxy.”*

Xerox, Ireland (2008)

*“Differences are not barriers to be overcome but rather important opportunities for generating a wider range of ideas and possible action than would be available to any one party alone.”*

Antal & Friedman (2003)

## Innovation

“Most economic growth comes from productivity growth. Most productivity growth comes from new ideas, and new ideas tend to come from people with different perspectives, different experiences and different ways of thinking.”

Philippe Legrain (2009)

## Access to markets

“If you want to serve the market, you have to hire the market.”

Zabeen Hiriji, Chief HR Officer, Royal Bank of Canada (2007)

## A magnet for talent

“Ethnic diversity has become a competitive advantage that is proven through business growth, staff engagement and the ability to attract and retain top talent from around the world”.

Matt Ensor, General Manager, Beca Transportation (2010)

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*We need people who have a global attitude to business; people who are outward looking, and people who bring a diversity of views so that we can do our job better.”*

Simon Barnett, Founder of Obo, Palmerston North

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The cultural diversity in New Zealand is increasingly being recognised as a prime business asset. Many public and private sector organisations are developing ways to attract and retain suitably skilled people from diverse backgrounds.

However there is work to be done. People from minority backgrounds have reported difficulties in finding work equivalent to their skills and experience, especially those from ethnic groups that are more recognisably different.



# Opening the door to diversity

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*“The manager who knows only his or her own country is doomed to become obsolete. Most organisations can no longer afford to employ culturally myopic managers.”*

Harris, Moran and Moran (2007)

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Given New Zealand’s cultural diversity and labour migration patterns, it is statistically likely that job applicants will represent a wide range of cultures. In order to make a selection decision, the recruiter needs to gather enough information about the applicant to accurately assess their potential.

What can sometimes interfere with this fact-finding phase are the assumptions we make about a person and, in the case of cultural diversity, our attitudes to different cultures. These assumptions and attitudes can cloud our judgement before we have even met the person.

Allowing such attitudes to affect the selection of candidates can severely limit the skills, experience and knowledge available to an organisation. The test for the recruiter is to set aside their assumptions and take time to explore a person’s potential.

# Recruitment process

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*“The key to labour productivity is the ability of our managers and industry leaders to find and use the resources available to them.”*

NZ Skills Strategy, 2008

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If we are convinced that diversity is good for business, the first step is developing a recruitment process that speaks to people from all cultures. This recruitment process should:

- effectively seek diverse talent
- minimise the potential for cultural bias
- provide everyone with a fair chance to compete for job opportunities.

The ability to attract a diverse range of candidates is influenced by a number of factors:

- a reputation as a good employer
- understanding the potential benefits
- the channels and networks used to recruit.

The pre-employment guidelines An A to Z for Employers and Employees ([www.hrc.co.nz](http://www.hrc.co.nz)) offer advice aimed at ensuring equality and fairness for all job applicants.

# Preparing the job description

Each vacancy presents an opportunity to take a fresh look at the job.

- Will you be re-advertising the current position or is it time to make some changes to the role? Could cultural knowledge, linguistic skills or international experience be harnessed in some way to expand your business?
- Have alternative employment arrangements (part-time, working from home, job sharing) been considered that could improve opportunities for some employee groups?

The potential candidate will need to know what the job entails so that they can relate their previous work experience to the requirements of the job.

- Are the tasks of the job clearly described?
- Is the language clear - no colloquial terms or acronyms?
- Are the qualifications, skills, experience and personal attributes listed really necessary for the position? Say which attributes are essential and which are desirable.
- Is the job description free of bias towards any one group of job seekers? A request for local knowledge and networks will rule out a potential candidate from offshore. An introduction to professional and social networks can be incorporated into a good induction and coaching process.



# Preparing the Advertisement

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*“Marketing today is not a function; it is a way of doing business. Its job is neither to fool the customer, nor to falsify the company’s image.”*

McKenna (1991), Harvard Business Review

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The job advertisement presents an opportunity to market your business. Make sure it reflects the job so that potential candidates can accurately assess whether they have the ability to do it. Don't oversell. A major reason that people leave a job prematurely is because the actual job differed from the way it was advertised.

Showcase the aspects of your organisation that job hunters from diverse backgrounds may value. They may be interested to know about the cultural profile of your workforce or your client base, career opportunities, induction or training and development options.

- Ensure that the advertisement is worded in plain English. Colloquial language such as 'make our services fly' is likely to act as a barrier for people who are unfamiliar with our New Zealand style of expression.
- Say that you welcome applications from all sectors of the community.

# Reaching your audience

Finding the best person for the job may depend on how widely you cast your net. Put yourself in the shoes of the potential candidates. Where are they and how do you reach them? Recruiting for diversity may call for a shift in the way you have traditionally approached the labour market.

- In addition to mainstream media use a range of ethnic media.
- Target the newsletters and journals of professional and trade groups.
- Connect with community groups and cultural networks.
- If you use recruitment agencies, let them know that you welcome applications from all sectors of the community.

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## Pak 'n Save, Mt Albert, Auckland

A multicultural employer recognised by the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust

- A commitment to diversity is driven from the top “We have an evolving plan; we’re flexible around diversity in the workplace; it’s an on-going process; we’re always finding new things to do.”
- Cultural knowledge is a marketing asset “We use multi-cultural groups of staff as product consultants; we get good inside knowledge from their experience; our staff wear badges indicating the language they speak – this helps our customers.”
- Knowledge of customer needs drives the business “We’re able to keep in touch with the changing demographics within the area and the multi-cultural groups that we draw our staff from.”
- Working styles are inclusive “We work as a team regardless of cultural background.”
- Career development “My boss saw the potential in me and nominated me for a management development course.”
- Policies show respect for culture “We celebrate cultural holidays, encourage national pride, allow people to speak in their native language, if this is functional, and we recognise religious holidays and obligations.”

And the results? “This gives us a happy staff, and that’s good for business!”

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## Some suggestions for ethnic media where you might advertise your vacancies:

<b>Auckland</b> EMINZ New Zealand Chinese Herald WTV Chinese Express Mardarin Times Radio Chinese I-New Zealand Times Goodday New Korea Herald NZ Korea Post Auckland Times Indian Newslink Indian Weekender Kuk Hindi/kuk Punjabi The Global Indian Radio Tarana Filipino News Migrant News E Cube Gekkan NZ - Auckland office	<b>Wellington</b> NZ Chinese Times Home Voice Wellington Access Radio 783 AM  <b>Christchurch</b> New Zealand Messenger The Sun Bilingual Sky Kiwi Christchurch Branch Korea Review  <b>Hamilton</b> Waikato Weekly News and News Community Radio - Hamilton FM 106.7
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# Identifying the selection panel

Ideally the selection process should include more than one person's perspective. It may be helpful to include in the selection panel people who are:

- from diverse backgrounds
- trained and committed to a fair and equitable recruitment process
- familiar with the requirements of the job being filled.

# Examining the CV

Recruiters have a natural tendency to hire people they perceive as similar to themselves or the person previously in the job. Research shows that the greater the perceived difference between the job applicant and the recruiter, the more difficult it is for the job seeker to find work.

Recruiting and managing a diverse workforce calls for fresh thinking – expect difference. The CV may reflect your industry but with different degrees of specialisation and different scales of operation and budgets. It may list qualifications or teaching institutions that are not familiar.

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The New Zealand Qualifications Authority has a service that can:

- verify international qualifications and map them against the New Zealand Qualifications Framework
- check the accreditation of an overseas institution.

Check out the NZQA website for more information on international qualifications assessment.

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The challenge is to unpick the skills and experience in the CV and relate them to the job at hand or identify potential for your organisation.

Seek more information from candidates if necessary. Offer them an interview. Offering an interview puts you under no obligation to offer a job. It does however give a potential candidate an opportunity to demonstrate their potential.

# The interview

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*“Most interviews want the same information, there are just different ways of getting it.”* The Dominion Post, 21 June 2008

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## Before the interview

- Ensure that the applicant has a clear understanding of the recruitment process, the style of interviewing, and what happens afterwards.
- Some groups may appreciate the opportunity to bring whanau or other support to the interview.

## During the interview

The job of the interviewer is to enable the candidate to demonstrate their full potential. The best candidates are not necessarily the best interviewees.

Interviewers may need to amend their interviewing style to help candidates demonstrate their ability while at the same time maintaining consistency across interviews. Bear in mind that in some cultures, people may feel uncomfortable talking about their accomplishments and personal strengths.

The way people come across in an interview is as much cultural as it is personal. If you notice behaviours that you're not familiar with, check them out with the candidate. It's OK to ask.

## Interviewing checklist

- Use information in their CV to prompt candidates to talk about their previous experience.
- Ask questions to clear up any cultural misunderstandings as they occur.
- Provide more background about the New Zealand environment so that all candidates can respond appropriately.
- Try to avoid colloquial English and idioms and be prepared to rephrase questions as required.
- Use open-ended questions beginning with who, what, why, where, when and how to encourage people to share information.
- Be aware of questions that are unlawful to ask in an interview. See the Human Rights Commission's Pre-employment Guidelines.

## Work tests and presentations

In addition to effective interviewing, a candidate's ability can be assessed in the following ways:

- Give the candidate a realistic work situation with supporting information and ask them to prepare a presentation or write a report on how they would handle it (set a maximum number of words).
- Give the candidate a number of project reports to read, summarise the main issues and briefly discuss with you.
- Ask the candidate to bring along a piece of previous work and explain how they planned and completed it.

# Selecting the best candidate

In order to select the best candidate for a position:

- Focus on the selection criteria and match these to the candidates' skills and experience.
- Rank applicants according to performance against the essential and desirable job requirements. Where are the skill gaps? Can you provide support to a person who doesn't have the ability to do the job 100% but has potential? Which skills can be taught on the job?
- Acknowledge any cultural assumptions and set them aside – including any irrelevant personal characteristics.
- Record the decision and the reasoning behind it.
- Ensure the process is confidential.

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*“Being interculturally competent or aware doesn’t mean knowing everything about every culture. It is instead, respect for difference, eagerness to learn, and a willingness to accept that there are many ways of viewing the world.”*

Adapted from Brenda Rodriguez, Family Resource Coalition

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# Feedback

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*The EEO Trust resource, Tools for Tapping into Talent, has some useful tips on giving feedback.*

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Anyone who has invested their time in an interview deserves to get feedback. Feedback can offer the candidate an opportunity to adjust their behaviour for future job applications. Common good practice for giving feedback is to provide an open and honest overview of what went well and which areas could be improved upon.

Bear in mind that people may take feedback on board differently, depending on cultural background. You should check to see how feedback is being received.

*Check that the candidate wants the feedback before you give it!*

# Monitoring your recruitment process

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*“Diversity and inclusion must be measured like any other business issue. If you cannot see it, you cannot fix it.”*

(McPherson, 2006)

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If you are finding it difficult to attract job applicants from a wide range of groups, look at the methods you use to hire people and ask if they could be benefiting one group over another.

Keep a track of who reaches each stage of the recruitment process.

- What percentage of applicants was from culturally diverse backgrounds?
- How many of these applicants progressed to interview?
- How many were selected and recruited?
- To what type of position were they appointed?

## Review your recruitment process.

Take a fresh look at the role and function of the job.

- Use criteria that can be tested objectively.
- Seek to tap into a wider pool of talent.
- Ideally include trained people of various ethnic backgrounds on the selection panel.
- Use the same panel to shortlist and then interview the candidates.
- Create a welcoming environment for the interview.
- Use a variety of exploratory techniques to ensure that all candidates have the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and experience.
- Examine your own behaviour and speech in the interview and do not make judgements about unfamiliar behaviour.
- Clearly explain the procedure in the interview and what happens afterwards.
- Recruit staff based on merit.
- Monitor and evaluate the recruitment process to see what works and what could be done differently next time.
- Having done well recruiting the best person for the job, aim to keep them!



# Productive Diversity

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*“Managed effectively, cultural diversity is a key asset to employers with potential for improving the business. “*

Brian Carran, General Manager, Pak 'n Save, Mt Albert.

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A successful diverse workforce goes beyond having people from diverse cultures in your organisation. A key task is to make the most of what diversity has to offer, including the skills of your staff and providing a supportive working environment.

## Workplace culture

Each organisation has its own set of 'rules' that can best be described as 'the way we do things around here.' The New Zealand workplace can generally be described as relaxed and informal with a 'do-it-yourself' culture. This may differ from people's previous experiences.

For example, people who come from a more hierarchical culture may expect more guidance until they become acclimatised to the new workplace. Familiarise your new recruit with your organisational culture so that they can respond appropriately.

## Share your local knowledge

The new recruit may bring international experience, new skills, different languages and perspectives but may need local knowledge and networks to make best use of their ability in a New Zealand context. Share your local knowledge by introducing the newcomer to your professional and social networks. Allow the newcomer to learn through observation by shadowing you (or others) at client meetings and relevant events.

## Provide ongoing support

Providing a buddy to new employees during the early stages of employment will give them social support as well as help them acclimatise to your organisation's culture.

Additional language support may be required for newcomers where English is a second language so that they improve their fluency as well as familiarise themselves with 'Kiwi English'.

## Learn about each other's cultures

Building a diverse workforce will require adjustment from both sides. Learn about each other's cultures, the similarities and the differences, and different ways of doing the same thing.

Keep the communication channels open and clarify issues before they lead to misunderstanding. Asking the question 'what do you think' indicates that your staff are valued and listened to.

# Building an inclusive society

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*“Work is arguably the single most important element in the integration of immigrants to New Zealand. Work is about income, about individual fulfilment, about identity and about social inclusion and cohesion.”*

Brain Gain, Human Rights Commission (2008)

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Building a good relationship at home, at work and at school requires adjustment from both ‘sides’ – the migrant and the receiving society. Getting this relationship right in the workplace will promote similar gains towards a well adjusted multi-cultural society.

Evidence suggests that when an individual finds fulfillment in their workplace, this may also lead to a more meaningful settlement experience generally.

Achieving social and economic integration is essential both for migrants and New Zealand’s economy. It is also necessary to maintain New Zealand’s social harmony (Department of Labour, 2009).

## This resource has been prepared by the Office of Ethnic Affairs.

We welcome:

- your comments and contributions
- requests for information
- success stories that you can share.

The Office of Ethnic Affairs recently produced *Riding the Wave*, a guide to maximising the benefits that ethnic diversity brings to our workplaces.

To view *Riding the Wave* and our other resources online, visit the Office of Ethnic Affairs website at [www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz](http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz)

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