

Getting great people in changing times

Finding the right people can be tricky – and once found, we want to keep them.

Aotearoa's job market is in flux with a shortage of skilled workers in all sectors, including recreation. Thinking differently about recruitment and retention is proving successful.

The NZ employment market

Our current employment situation faces:

- Low [unemployment rate](#) of 3.2%
- Increased [cost of living](#) (at 8.2%) impacts lower income earners
- Many employers competing for staff
- [High job churn](#) of more than 20%.

Employers need to consider:

- Creative [recruitment approaches](#)
- Reviewing retention –what makes staff [stay in the job](#)
- Supporting staff to [manage change](#): personal, social and professionally
- Negotiating [flexible working conditions](#) with a focus on work/life balance
- Adequate compensation: wages/salary commensurate with expectations.

What motivates workers?

The best thing employers can do right now is stop thinking of the Great Attrition as a business problem, and start thinking of it as a human problem. McKinsey & Co



Figure 1 The Washington Post, July 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/why-your-pools-lifeguard-is-more-likely-to-be-a-senior-citizen/2018/07/03>

Understanding people's motivations at work is a key factor in successful recruitment and retention of staff. Employees are leaving for a range of reasons, sometimes because they are upset, or simply [exhausted](#) – and women are disproportionately affected.

The top three employee experiences driving [attrition and retention](#) are:

- Workplace flexibility
- Meaningfulness of work
- Adequate support for health and wellbeing.

Workers need clear expectations and plans for [hybrid work situation](#). Overall, [flexibility makes us happier](#). This makes sense for those with conflicting demands on their time. However many of the roles in our sector require attendance on job.

Seeking staff

Thinking differently about recruitment is making a difference for some organisations.

Consider some potential employment "personas" say [McKinsey and Co](#).

- **The Idealists:** students and [young part-timers](#), need wooing with flexibility and a willingness to invest in development
- **The Relaxers:** often older adults and [retirees](#), don't have career as their first priority, instead they seek meaningful work.
- **Non-traditional workers:** actively lower the [barriers to employment](#).



Remember to offer other benefits – free use of facilities, paid training and a secure plan for development as part of the employment package.

People stay in [“sticky” workplaces](#) – with employers who are listening, anticipating and addressing concerns, fostering psychological safety and a sense of community.

Create opportunities for people to engage in innovative projects, recognise staff performance, and provide job security.

Case study: Use your networks

Talk to current staff, says Community Leisure Management (CLM)¹, about approaching people *they* know who might be the right person for the job.

Many organisations offer a recruitment bonus to staff who successfully recommend their company to potential employees.

Case study: Consider your customers

Consider customers as potential employees, or look within your current team for people who may step into another area of the business. Maybe the someone who swims laps after work might be keen.

Organisations across the globe are conducting recruitment drives for older staff, targeting their customers first. There may be someone who used to be a lifeguard or instructor back in the day, had time off to raise a family, wants to re-certify or go through the certification process for the first time.²

“We’re surrounded by strong swimmers and water enthusiasts who have time on their hands, want to keep active and to give something back to their community too, all while getting paid and boosting their social lives”

Melina Van Hoogevest, recreation supervisor at RDKB’s Grand Forks & District Recreation Dept.

Case Study: Recruit older adults³

Think outside the box: baby boomers, seniors, retired lawyers and accountants.

In his early 60s, and at a crossroads following an unexpected redundancy, even with an impressive resume, and following dozens of applications, the phone sat silent, perhaps because of his age. Although not much of a swimmer, a few weeks training to pass the entry test and everything else was leaned on the job.

One of the things he liked about the job was the lifestyle and flexibility of working shifts.

I leave work at work. There’s no stress following me home. We have a passionate, skilled team who I really enjoy working with, and three years in I’m still challenged and learning every day.

A career in aquatics can be anything you need it to be. You choose your own adventure – you just need the right attitude.

Principle	Action
Creative recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit from among your customer base Be open-minded about ‘who’ can do the job Win back your workers
Inspiring leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address work culture Embrace the preferences of your workers Make policy change for flexible workplaces
Understand employee motivations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay appropriately Provide meaningful work Flexible employment practices
Health, wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported staff and their development Address pay gaps, gender-based violence and childcare

References

The [Government’s Green List](#) to address labour shortages

1 CLM (2022), Surviving and Thriving in a Covid Environment, Australasian Parks and Leisure, Vol 25, Winter 2022

2 <https://boundarysentinel.com/news/rdkb-urges-seniors-step-lifeguard-chair>

3 This case study is modified from the Kapiti Coast District Council website. The staff member remained in the job for over 4 years, but has since moved on.