

Workplaces of the future

Does your office work from nine till five? If so... why?

Offering flexible work hours is now a strong trend overseas for companies competing for the best employees.

In a tight labour market employers need to promote themselves as offering more than just a good salary. Flexible work hours, leave provisions and working from home options can be very effective non-financial incentives.

Futureintech's next Fact File for employers looks at the potential costs and benefits of such schemes, the research behind it, and employers around the world who have trialled different options.

New expectations

The new generation of graduates have different expectations from those before them. They don't want to be locked into a rigid schedule of working from nine till five for no reason other than "it's always been done that way."

It won't work for everyone of course; some industries need to have staff available at certain times to work with clients and customers, and there are potential problems that need to be considered. It's different for everyone - the thing about workplace flexibility is that you have to be, well, flexible.

How it can work

One of the most popular options is staggered hours, which means starting and finishing at different times during the day. This can be a win-win option, making childcare and family duties much easier for employees, often without really affecting the employer.

Other companies allow employees to spread their working hours over a week or a month, such as working four 10-hour days a week, or 80 hours in nine days, to fit in with their other commitments.

Another idea is allowing employees to 'bank' hours, which allows staff to build up extra hours of work and then take the equivalent time off when needed.

Why?

Providing employees with more flexibility and freedom is a way to keep them for longer,



and reduce absenteeism.

Losing employees can be financially painful in terms of lost institutional knowledge as well as finding and training a replacement. Some firms estimate the cost is at least a year's salary in lost productivity.

Research by Cambridge University showed that nine out of ten companies offering flexible conditions in the UK found them cost effective, and with increased productivity. The reason is that staff are more loyal to a company which seems to genuinely care about their welfare, and that of their family.

Productivity is another benefit. People need to be in the right frame of mind to be creative, motivated and productive, and being able to structure working hours around other commitments means a better balanced life.

And it can be a unique recruitment tool, showing your firm is modern and forward-thinking.

Futureintech's Fact File will be published next month and sent to all stakeholders.

New partners
for Futureintech
Ambassadors

go to page 2

Speed job-seeking
for Massey
students

go to page 3

Futureintech news:

- QTV
- Engineering Awards

go to page 4

ISSN 1176-547X

Published by Futureintech

tel 04 473 2023

fax 04 474 8933

enquiries@futureintech.org.nz

www.futureintech.org.nz

Newpartners

So far this year 25 new companies have signed on as official partners of Futureintech. All are supporting us by releasing their staff to work as Ambassadors, providing scholarships, and/or promoting Futureintech and the work we do.

Big thanks to all employers who have supported us over the last two years – it's a good cause we're working for. Futureintech will only succeed through the partnerships we form with technology based organisations.

Some of our new partners include:

Fisher and Paykel Appliances – based in Dunedin, this company has been highly supportive of Futureintech by providing seven graduate profiles, two Ambassadors, and hosting school and individual visits.

NIWA (Lauder) – based in Lauder, Central Otago, this National Institute of Water & Atmospheric

Research Ltd (NIWA) station has organised school visits, hosted Futureintech Facilitator Bernadette Hannagan, and profiled four of it's staff.

Robotechnology Ltd, a Wellington based company that designs and creates robot for a variety of roles – including medicine, museums, even art and movies (including the robot sheep in the hit movie Babe).

Mighty River Power, an electricity generator, wholesaler and retailer that owns Mercury Energy and First Electric. Several of their employees have been profiled by Futureintech.

Carter Holt Pulp and Harvey – Kinleith, Australasia's leading forest

products company, with significant interests in wood products, pulp, paper and packaging, supported by forests. The Kinleith site, near Tokoroa, acts as host for Futureintech Facilitator Margaret Brunton and also hosted her Ambassador training day earlier this year.

Other new partners in 2005 include:

- **ABB Ltd**
- **Cadbury Confectionary Ltd**
- **ESR (Institute of Environmental Science & Research)**
- **Fisher & Paykel (Auckland)**
- **Harrison Grierson Consultants**
- **Maunsell Ltd**
- **Metrowater**
- **Mighty River Power**
- **MWH NZ Ltd (Wellington)**
- **Opus Consultants (Hamilton)**
- **Rotorua District Council**
- **Waratah NZ Ltd**
- **Watercare Services Ltd**



Tracey Petley-Hibbs Process Technologist, Nestlé Confectionery

"I work for Willy Wonka and I make lollies. My job involves taking raw materials, like sugar, and figuring out how we can use or modify our existing processes to transform them into a range of different products and lollies.

"When I was at school there wasn't a lot of information on the types of jobs you could get at the end of a degree. I didn't know a job like mine existed. I'm a hands-on person. I love being in overalls, covered in sugar, knee deep in a problem. While accounting suits some people, the idea of a desk and calculator, moving numbers round for the rest of my professional life makes me shudder.

"I was always the one in chemistry labs who, after hours of following a detailed step-by-step guide, ended up with a pink or blue powder when everyone else had nice bright white crystals. What I learnt though is that when things go wrong, it's the best opportunity to learn, because it pushes you to find out why. If you love to get in amongst it, not stand on the sideline and watch, then you should consider engineering or technology as a career."

Tracey is working with Year 11 Food Technology students at St Kentigern College, on the topic of convenience foods.

Speedjob-seekingforstudents

You may have heard of 'speed dating', but how about 'speed job-seeking'?

This innovative new event took place at Massey University (Palmerston North) in August, organised by the Manawatu/Wellington branch of the NZ Institute of Food Science and Technology.

The evening was planned in response to demand from employers and students for an informal way to meet each other and learn more about the food industry (which is one of New Zealand's biggest).

Interest from employers was high, with 28 food industry companies exhibiting or providing information, and the student turn-out was double that expected by the organisers.

Feedback from the event was very positive, with an even bigger and better version planned for 2006.

IBM pays staff to become teachers

Concerned at the US's decline in science and maths, computer giant IBM is financially backing its staff to become teachers.

Up to 100 IBM employees will be eligible as part of the trial scheme, aimed at making up teacher shortfalls. The company describes the shortage as "a ticking time bomb not just for technology companies, but for business and the US economy."

Workers will have to get approval from their managers, and if selected, will take a leave of absence from the company but with full benefits and up to half their salary. Up to US\$15,000 will also be provided to cover the fees and costs in becoming a qualified teacher.



Industries in the US have long been concerned at the low test scores in maths and science by American students, compared to countries like India and China which are churning out 3 million IT graduates a year each (with most Indian graduates speaking English).

Mackay's Crossing field trip

A group of students from Raumatī South school had a rare opportunity to go behind the scenes of a major construction site this month, thanks to the generosity of engineering firms MWH and Fulton Hogan.

The two firms gave the students

a guided tour around their construction of the railway overbridge for Mackay's Crossing, on SH1 just north of Wellington. The new development will take motorists over the railway line, hopefully ending decades of serious crashes and deaths.

Site forman Peter Sannazzaro explained some of the challenges involved in cutting and filling 300,000 cubic metres of earth - such as unexploded US Army bombs left over from their WWII base!

Big thanks to the MWH and Fulton Hogan who gave the tour free of charge.



Futureintechnews

QTV launches this month

A dynamic new multi-media series designed to engage young people's interest in the world around them has started on TV One.

QTV is presented by four young people with a passion for finding out what makes the world tick. Q takes science out of the classroom and goes where real scientists are working - underwater with giant spider crabs, on the edges of volcanoes, in front of a supercomputer, solving crimes or brewing bugs in the lab.

As part of the project a DVD has been developed, with the support of various companies, crown entities and the Ministry of Education, featuring 10 profiles of young scientists.

The show airs Wednesdays at 3:30pm on TV1.

Futureintech on the radio

Keep your ears peeled if you're in Auckland, Rotorua or Whangarei over the next month as Futureintech's radio campaign is aired on Mai FM. This is the most popular station in Auckland for teenagers, especially for Maori and Pacific Islanders, and follows on from a successful campaign last year.

Hi-Tech Awards blast off in Christchurch

The next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs are on display this Friday in Christchurch as the winners of the ETITO Bright Sparks Hi Tech Competition are unveiled.

The winning students, aged 11 to 18, will showcase their electronics, software and biotechnology projects at a cocktail function at Rydges Hotel.



The winning projects feature everything from a robot waiter that dispenses your favourite wine, an electronic paradise for frogs, an electric guitar that plays itself and a 4 ft flashing lighthouse.

Bright Sparks is one of the key classroom projects supported by Futureintech.

Asia comes to Auckland

Well, in a technology sense, with the largest technology event ever held in New Zealand taking place in Auckland this November.

The Asian-Oceanian Computing Industry Organisation (ASOCIO) hosts an ICT Summit each year in one of its 23 member countries, with New Zealand the hosts for 2005.

The event is a major opportunity for the New Zealand ICT industry to show just how good their technology is and to engage with potential customers and business partners in key Asian markets.

To find out more about ASOCIO 05 - The ICT Summit, and opportunities for exhibiting, visit www.asocio05.co.nz

New Zealand Engineering Excellence Awards

The inaugural New Zealand Engineering Excellence Awards are just eight weeks away, kicking off at the Duxton Hotel on Wednesday November 23rd.

Individual awards include prizes for engineering journalism, entrepreneurship, innovation, leadership and the Young Engineer of the Year, as well as a range of category awards for different disciplines. The Supreme Award for NZ Engineering Excellence will go to one of the seven category winners.

For more information and to purchase tickets go to www.nzeeawards.org.nz/