



## Yellow

### LEADERSHIP

#### SMALL-MEDIUM ORGANISATION WINNER

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### THE STORY

A transformative spiritual journey equipped Yellow's leadership team with the skills and insight needed to become aligned with the company's values and goals, and influence and advocate for social change in its community.

Yellow is a multi-channel marketing agency, employing 70 people across bases in Auckland and Palmerston North, with remote workers around the country. The organisation has been on a journey of transformation in recent years, working to optimise its solutions to support Kiwi businesses.

Human First Partner Jovita Stellmacher says to create a connected, inclusive workplace where employees feel a sense of belonging and can contribute wholly to the Yellow culture and its transformation, those values needed to be wholeheartedly backed by leadership.

In 2020 the leadership team, comprising senior and executive leaders from all departments at Yellow, undertook a programme developed by CEO Tracey Taylor and an external consultant.

"It was unique in that it was a spiritual journey, based in Māori principles, with our extended whānau TupuToa helping bring cultural awareness into the programme," says Jovita.

“The programme was designed to take our leaders on a transformative spiritual journey, to open their minds, hearts and spiritual energy to help them step into their true alignment.”

It was set up to grow the leaders personal and collective power in three areas: Aroha – heart centred leadership; Thought – new ways of thinking and mindset; Courage – daring greatly, being brave and keeping a safe distance from the ordinary.

“Through this programme we wanted to effect social and community change by giving our leaders the skills to influence those changes and have impact at Yellow and beyond.”

The programme consisted of several offsite overnight stays and events including horse whispering, working with a futurist and a kayak excursion – all chosen to encourage leaders to step out of their comfort zones and into a space of vulnerability. Leaders had regular personal coaching sessions to help them unpack and continue their personal learnings and use them within Yellow and the community.

“Leaders were invited to look within and find the courage and vulnerability to acknowledge where they were at and how they could improve and grow,” says Jovita.

“Naturally they also learnt more about each other, their similarities and their differences. This has been hugely beneficial in connecting them and enabling them to thrive as a team, holding each other accountable whilst supporting each other with love.”

Jovita says the spiritual journey has helped Yellow’s leaders become deeply and authentically aligned with the company’s values and goals, and positively impacted the business.

“Empowering our leaders to show up authentically has had a profound impact on our employees. It has paved the way for everyone to bring their whole selves to work – simply through role modelling – by being led by a diverse leadership team who are all backed to be themselves and are thriving because of it. The self-awareness and growth that our leaders have experienced through exploring their unconscious biases and saboteurs has created opportunities for others in the business to realise their full potential.”

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## **THE AIM**

Yellow needed a leadership team equipped to deliver a connected, inclusive workplace where people feel a sense of belonging so they can contribute wholly to the Yellow culture and the organisation’s transformation.

## **STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS**

- The CEO and an external consultant designed Te Haerenaa a Wairua, The Spiritual Journey, a programme for leaders designed to help them grow their personal and collective power
- Acknowledging that leadership can take many forms, several employees not formerly part of the leadership team were also invited to participate

- External events designed to take leaders outside their comfort zones were partnered with personal coaching sessions
- Leaders were held accountable for attendance at equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) events and expected to role model their values in that space every day



## RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Attendance at EDI events has increased from an average of 50 per cent to 90 per cent, with leaders understanding the importance of active participation and role modelling it themselves
- Leaders have been able to form strong relationships with direct reports and across the business, leading to the elimination of employee relations cases
- There has been a great awareness and enthusiasm for opportunities to embed EDI throughout all areas of Yellow and try new things. For example te reo Māori translations have been added to the emergency section of the Yellow Pages, and the font size increased to make the book more accessible
- EDI has become a focal point of discussion with external stakeholders and organisations, and has become a priority when leaders decide who to partner with and what initiatives to support

## KEY LEARNING

For equity, diversity and inclusion to be done authentically and have impact, these values need to be backed wholeheartedly by the leaders within the organisation

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL  
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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