

**NEW ZEALAND BUSINESS CULTURE: NAVIGATING THE
CULTURAL BARRIERS OF THE MAORI AND THE NON-MAORI
NEW ZEALANDERS**

**CULTURA DE NEGÓCIOS NEOZELANDESA: SUPERAR AS
BARREIRAS CULTURAIS ENTRE OS MAORI E NÃO-MAORI**

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ABSTRACT: In a globalized world where international communication is essential for any company that is striving to stand out and achieve success, it is not surprising that many companies opt to establish partnerships with an international company. Doing business with foreign communities entails a series of challenges when different cultures are faced with the reality that they differ in certain aspects and need to find a middle ground to be able to understand each other clearly. New Zealand presents an interesting situation within business environment since this nation is composed of two ethnic groups of distinct origins – non-Maori New Zealanders and the Maori – which raises the question on how business is carried out in this prosperous country. The purpose of this article is to analyze the business world in New Zealand and explore the differences between these two main ethnic groups in themes such as the cultural values and the importance of heritage in business, business etiquette, linguistic features, the dress code and market features.

KEY WORDS: *international communication, culture, challenges, New Zealand, New Zealanders, Maori*

RESUMO: Em um mundo globalizado em que a comunicação internacional é fundamental para uma empresa que pretende se destacar e alcançar sucesso, não é de surpreender que várias empresas optem por criar parcerias com uma empresa estrangeira. Fazer negócio com comunidades estrangeiras implica ultrapassar uma série de desafios quando culturas distintas se confrontam com a realidade de que elas diferem em certos aspectos e que precisam de encontrar um meio termo para se entenderem com clareza. A Nova Zelândia é palco de uma situação interessante no meio empresarial, uma vez que é o lar de dois grandes grupos étnicos com origens bastante diferentes - os Neozelandeses não-Maori e os Maori, - que levanta a questão sobre como os negócios são realizados neste país próspero. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar o mundo dos negócios na Nova Zelândia e explorar as diferenças entre esses dois principais grupos étnicos em aspectos como os valores culturais e a importância da herança cultural nos negócios, a etiqueta, as características linguísticas, o *dress code* e características do mercado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *comunicação internacional, cultura, desafios, Nova Zelândia, Neozelandeses, Maori*

Introduction

There are currently plenty of nations that stand out in the business world for a myriad of reasons that go from social stability to international relations. New Zealand has over the last years risen to become one of the most prosperous nations in the world and a dream destination for people of different backgrounds. As a remote island with a considerably small population of just 4,7 million people as of 2019 and a steady birth rate, this country offers a great level of national security. Yet, there are other factors that place New Zealand as a world leader.

In 2018, New Zealand ranked 2nd place behind Iceland in the Global Peace Index. Two years before, New Zealand ranked 3rd in terms of stability in the Fund for Peace

2016 Fragile States Index (“Stability & security”, n.d.). New Zealand’s democracy was pointed out as one of the fairest with a high level of participation from the population in political decisions: approximately 85% of the eligible New Zealanders (those of 18 years of age or over) voted in the 2014 General Election. At the time, 29% of the population measured their trust in the parliament as low, and 37% felt the population did not have enough power when it comes to decision-making (“Voting and political participation”, 2018). Similarly, the Maori were even less likely to trust their government (44%). Even though these results do not seem optimistic, they indicate that New Zealanders have more trust towards the government than the Maori population. Overall, it seems clear that the New Zealanders are generally happy not only with their personal lives but their working life as well.

1. New Zealand economy and the business world

Economically, New Zealand has proved to be rather strong and remained considerably resistant throughout the decade long Great Recession in comparison to other developed western nations that were hit harder by the final crisis and the resulting austerity. Its stable economy with a GDP of around 205,9 billions USD coupled with the support from the government, allows and encourages many businesses, investors and entrepreneurs to settle there and contribute to the development of the country. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index of 2018, New Zealand ranked 2nd place with a score of 87 out of 100. Anti-corruption laws are enforced, and penalties can go from an NZD (New Zealand Dollar) 2,000 fine to a 14-year prison sentence (“New Zealand Corruption Report”, 2016).

1.1. Kiwi business environment

The business environment in New Zealand is built in a way that strives for the best and the most honest outcomes. Besides, New Zealand is known for its infrastructures and a model for environmental sustainability, stressing the importance of the Maori people in

that regard and their knowledge on natural processes and biodiversity. Considering how remote the country is, the scarcity of economic barriers in New Zealand and its openness to world trade not only benefits the country by creating opportunities but also attracts plenty of foreign investors and immigrants. It is said that skilled immigrants are more drawn to New Zealand than other nations and the reason is placed on the ‘great *Kiwi* lifestyle’ that the country offers to any person who lives or moves there (Southwick, 2017).

In terms of gender equality in the workplace, even though women’s presence in the workforce is huge, New Zealand still needs to improve as ‘there is a very small percentage of women in the highest positions in the police force and only small numbers of recruits to the police force at ground level are female’. Besides this, ‘less than 10% of the seats on the boards of publicly listed companies are filled by women. (‘New Zealand - Business and Workplace Culture’, n.d.).

The *Kiwi* business environment is one result of the upbringing of New Zealanders. It is not unusual for *Kiwis* to live and study in New Zealand all their lives and then travelling abroad for a short period of time, usually a gap-year. *Kiwis* are considered educated, competitive and down-to-earth and living abroad for a while is an effective way to gain experience and improve in terms of personality. As they gain insight and experience outside New Zealand, they ‘absorb’ it into their cultural values and behavior as New Zealanders which is then reflected in how they deal with decisions, clients and business partners throughout their working life. Family upbringing shapes the typical *Kiwi* as the values they are taught ‘bring traits such as empathy, discipline and responsibility’ which are soft skills they later emulate as they step into the job market and ‘are commonly found across the spectrum of executive talent penetrating the start-up and large corporate environment’ (Bray, 2016). Corporations in New Zealand will not succeed much if dialogue is not promoted from the beginning and its employees work isolated. To avoid this, employees are always encouraged to cooperate with each other and discuss among themselves the best solutions to any problem that might arise and reach an agreement instead of appointing a single person - who would normally be the manager - that will take the responsibility of fixing it.

The success of the New Zealanders and New Zealand as a nation lays heavily on its own culture that promotes dialogue, progress and inclusivity, and *Kiwis* are continuously learning about the best ways to manage a business. They are expected to look at the world and act in it rationally and as succinctly as possible and there a few characteristics that

are thought to “build” the successful *Kiwi* businessperson. When opening a business, a *Kiwi* must be aware of their number one competitors and how they can stand out from them. On the other side, the competitor must be equally aware of the new competitor and both will find ways to push each other. On top of that, New Zealand is surprisingly less bureaucratic than other nations which makes it more efficient to open a business, whether the entrepreneur is a New Zealander or a foreigner looking forward to operating there.

2. The impact of Maori business

The world tends to describe New Zealand as a typical Western nation due to the British and European influence in its culture, the large percentage of non-Maori population of European descent, the political model and its proximity to Australia. Despite this, non-Maori New Zealanders are not the only contributors to the economic growth of this country nor the only working ethnicity, as they do not make up the whole population but approximately 74% of it. In contrary to a few stereotypes that place the Maori as indigenous “lazy” people who are unable to adapt to the current fast-pacing technological world, the Maori have a large impact and participation in the economy and way of life in New Zealand. What’s more, there are a few factors that distinguish the Maori way of doing business from the non-Maori New Zealanders’ and those differences lay precisely on how both groups view the world.

As already stated, New Zealand is well known for its outlook on sustainability and guardianship of the environment, which is influenced and reinforced by the presence of Maori indigenous people. The Maori do not live isolated from the rest of the New Zealand’s population. They have a place in the work force as well and there are some Maori individuals have successfully become CEO’s. In 2018, an article revealed that Maori businesses accounted for “an economic asset base of more than NZ\$ 42.6 billion” and that small and medium-sized companies are what makes up the largest part of Maori economy (Mika, 2018). Moreover, the Maori economy “contributes more than \$12 billion to New Zealand’s annual GDP” (Wixon, 2017).

Estimates reveal that the Maori economy has been growing steadily since 2013 with no obstacle in sight. As of now they “make up 13 per cent of the current New Zealand labor force. But Stats NZ estimates the Māori labor force will double to make up one-fifth of New Zealand's working age population by 2038” (“The Maori economy

continues to grow'', n.d.). The vast majority of Maori businesses are dedicated to professional activities carried out outdoors and away from the urban areas. They are comprised of industries such as farming, fishing, tourism, forestry, horticulture, agriculture, etc. (''Hei Whakamārama i ngā Āhuatanga o te Tūrua Pō'', 2006). Those who live in urban areas tend to focus on businesses still linked to their identity such as ethnic restaurants.

3. Maori: the importance of identity, heritage and values in business

One issue that the Maori people face to this day is the dilemma between giving up their way of living or sticking to their cultural mindset but having less chances to achieve success in a place that does not fully recognize their way of doing things. The reality of doing business in a developed country such as New Zealand does not follow one straight line. In a region where two major ethnic groups coexist, a fact remains that doing business and adapting to someone else's fast-pacing world might be difficult for some individuals who are more nature-oriented and find it harder to disconnect from that environment, and this is the reality of plenty of Maori people in New Zealand. However, the Maori are just as capable as the non-Maori New Zealanders in all directions of life even if their way of living is done differently.

3.1. The principles of Maori Business

In context of business life, the Maori are always striving for the best they can achieve. Managing a business is managing life and nature so they combine the benefits of the economy with their own world view. Maori values mainly consist of relationships (*whanaungatanga*), leadership (*rangatiratanga* and *mana*), hospitality (*kaitiakitanga* and *manaakitangi*), honor (*utu*) and spirituality (*wairua*) (''Investigating Key Māori Business Characteristics for Future Measures: Thinking Paper'', p.17-19, n.d.). There is a fundamental concept in Maori culture named *Tikanga*. *Tikanga* is what Maori live by and it refers to a set of guidelines that define the behaviors in the community and is associated with the history and world view of the Maori (''Tikanga Maori'', n.d.). *Tikanga* is just as important in the business world as it is in the household: it only defines which cultural and moral values the Maori must uphold when carrying out business activities, but it does

not provide guidelines in terms of economics since making profit, although still important nonetheless, is not the actual end goal for the Maori in this respect. Owning a business is not only vital for economic gain and development. From the Maori view, a business sets the foundation for the success of the future generations and the preservation of their lifestyle.

Doing business with the Maori entails approaching the world from a different perspective than the one held by the non-Maori New Zealanders. Even though non-Maori New Zealanders recognize the seriousness of biodiversity and environmental sustainability, these concepts are paramount for the Maori whose livelihood and lifestyle are linked to the natural environment. Therefore, decisions such as where their business will be located is an essential component of their business plan: they call it *Papatuanuku* and *Taonga* which means “land and soil” and “culture”, respectively. A business must have a purpose which develops the environment and “serves the Earth” without causing any harm (“How to do Business with New Zealand’s Māori Culture”, 2018). Abiding by sustainable values is the gateway to getting through to the Maori when doing business with them. Due to this, many Maori will choose to operate in Maori land and away from the major cities, so that they can remain close to their tribe and relatives. Regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, etc., the Maori will appreciate a business partner that is considerate, environment-friendly and culturally sensitive.

3.2. Bianca Ranson: the success and hardships in the business world

Bianca Ranson is a well-known Maori businesswoman and entrepreneur who has been awarded several times for her achievements and contribution. Due to her achievements and successful business *Potiki Adventures*, Bianca was invited for a TED Talk in Waiheke to deliver a speech on how it is like to live and work according to Maori values (TEDx Talks, 2015).

Before her success, Bianca lived through hardships as a minority in New Zealand. She told the audience that throughout high school she was immersed in a Maori environment and Maori language. Upon finishing school, her wish to become an outdoors instructor led her to the far north of New Zealand to complete a year-long course focused on outdoors activities such as kayaking, gardening and scuba-diving. This was a journey that she willingly took as a way to learn how to engage with the natural environment from a Maori perspective. During this course, she witnessed certain aspects of the Maori way

of life that she found fascinating and “absorbed” into her way of doing things. At the end of her course, Bianca moved back to Auckland and enrolled in AUT - Auckland University of Technology - in order to get a diploma and more qualifications to work in the outdoor industry.

However, studying at Auckland University of Technology became an eye-opening and challenging experience to her and not for the best reasons, and this is an issue that a lot of Maori people experience both in the workplace and school. Bianca faced the challenge of studying in an environment that was the opposite of the one where she had been immersed for six years. Bianca was the only Maori student in the class which turned out to be difficult the moment she realized that Maori education was not the norm in New Zealand. A few cultural gaps between the Maori and the non-Maori New Zealanders became a serious obstacle for her that could jeopardize her academic life and she mentioned a specific example: within Maori culture, a woman is not supposed to go into the water during her menstrual cycle. If an exam required her to go into the water during that time, her most plausible decision would be to refuse and therefore fail the exam and the course altogether. As a minority, Bianca understood the struggle she would face as the only person of her ethnicity in class who did not share the same values as her peers. She had the choice of either becoming the “difficult one” whose education and exams would have to be adapted to her or, worst case scenario, she would be forced to leave, or putting aside a part of her identity in order to fit in, both in her class and later in the job market.

The “clash” between cultures in a context such as education and business might not be of particular relevance to the dominant group but for a minority it can be a problem when the individual feels like their identity is being erased. Even though the odds were not in her favor, Bianca refused to compromise her own culture and identity and her resolve opened the doors to her success. Upon finishing the course at AUT, Bianca decided that she would not be an outdoors instructor, so she started a new job at a Maori theatre company, not because it was what she truly wanted, but because she was driven by the fact Maori people worked there. However, a few months passed by and Bianca realized that she still wanted to work as an outdoors instructor with young Maori people. This was the moment Bianca’s hardships took a turn and she launched herself towards a successful life. She opened her own business and was advised to try to start a tourism company, which she did at the age of 24. This company became known as *Potiki Adventures* and it is thriving to this day.

It is worthwhile to note that Bianca's decision to focus her career on the outdoors and the Maori does not constitute a form of voluntary segregation. It is purely based on her own world view as a Maori person and how important her identity is for her without necessarily separating herself from the society she is inserted in. Besides, this company provided jobs for other young Maori who wished to stay close to their roots. For the Maori, cultural identity and the Maori teachings they are exposed to from the moment they are born are the elements that give them the "ground" for success that does not entail compromising who they are. With this business they still strive to communicate with others and show the world their way of living, hence the fact the company bridges the gap by setting its eyes on overseas visitors. One can infer that Bianca's experiences in both worlds has given her insight into different world views (Potiki Adventures, n.d.).

4. New Zealand business etiquette

Following business etiquette in New Zealand or in any other country is a courteous way to convey to the other person that one respects their values, way of life and well-being. When considering these differences, one is showing that they are willing to comply with their rules and way of doing things. All cultures have selected characteristics they value when they meet a potential business partner and those same characteristics may affect their final decision in negotiating with them.

a) Behavior and Personality

Culturally, New Zealanders are typically reserved in the sense that they do not immediately show to someone they do not know that well the other layers of their personality. However, as they develop deeper ties with people, they become gradually more relaxed, friendly and outgoing. *Kiwis* admire people who are compassionate, sincere, humble, focused and direct with a hint of humor and these are the types of people one usually encounters in a business context in New Zealand.

b) Language

Although there are three official languages in New Zealand - English, Maori, and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) – spoken English is the language used in business - unless specified otherwise - which is an advantage to foreign investors who speak

English as a second language and do not have to go through the process of learning a new one (‘‘New Zealand - Culture, Etiquette and Customs, n.d.). The only exception to this will be in businesses owned by Maori people solely – especially family businesses - although English will still be used regardless, considering a large number of clients are non-Maori New Zealanders.

c) Communication Style and Greetings

When meeting someone in a business context, New Zealanders shake hands while making eye contact. It is impolite to look somewhere else during the handshake. Maintaining eye contact conveys interest in engaging with the other person. The handshake is a common and acceptable greeting between people regardless of gender (Podnar, 2014). Calling a person by their first name is rude. Instead, the person must be addressed by their preferred title followed by their full name. Once a relationship has developed, it will be acceptable to address them by their first name although this might differ from one person to another, so it is advisable to always ask beforehand. Giving businesses card is not a requirement in New Zealand, it is up to each person’s choice. (‘‘New Zealand Business Etiquette’’, n.d.).

When greeting the Maori people in a business context, one should be informed beforehand on how greetings are done since in this case the tradition is very different. In comparison to the *Kiwi* greeting, the Maori greeting is more intimate and there is less concern over personal space. The Maori call it *hongi* and it consists of two people pressing their noses and foreheads together. Unlike the traditional *Kiwi* greeting, the Maori greeting is sacred and it symbolizes unity. The moment someone is invited to perform this greeting, they are no longer a guest but a ‘‘person of the land’’. This traditional greeting is not restricted only to the household and the Maori community, as it can be seen in the context of a workplace among members of the Maori tribe or between them and the non-Maori (‘‘Māori etiquette for everyday life in New Zealand’’, 2018). Since this greeting is more intimate and not everyone is willing to give up their personal space, some people might not feel comfortable with it. In this case, a hand shake or a kiss on the cheek will suffice.

d) Negotiating

When negotiating in New Zealand, one must avoid bargaining. It is considered inappropriate and insincere, and the rules, prices, etc. established must be respected. New

Zealanders are interested in people who are direct about their ambitions and base their convictions on facts (New Zealand, n.d.).

e) Dress code

The attire one chooses to wear in a business context may influence other coworkers' views on that individual. The clothes worn in New Zealand are the same as those worn in other western nations and in the workplace the situation is no different. In a business context, New Zealanders prefer a formal look which includes suits combined with a white shirt and a tie for men. Women are also expected to wear suits, but they are allowed other choices such as a dress, or a skirt combined with a blouse. In what concerns colors, both men and women wear tones that range from neutral to dark – black, grey and navy are the most common – and must avoid bright colors that draw attention. The importance of reputation in New Zealand varies from person to person but many individuals prefer to avoid drastic changes and choose to keep a steady appearance both inside and outside of work that reflects a balance between their personal lives and their jobs, so it is usual for some people to wear casual clothing of the same neutral colors (Page, 2018).

In what concerns accessories, piercings and tattoos, it is up to each employer to decide whether they want to hire or not someone with visible body modifications and the employee must follow the rules although this policy carries a moral issue when it comes to the Maori. Tattoos have a significant cultural value to the Maori who often tattoo their arms and faces, which symbolize social standing and family genealogy (“Ta moko – significance of Māori tattoos”, n.d.) and turning down a potential Maori employee might be considered an act of discrimination because tattoos are thoroughly linked to their ethnicity (“Got a dress code? What if your receptionist gets a neck tattoo?”, 2018).

f) Punctuality

The concept of punctuality in New Zealand is strictly respected. Although New Zealanders are normally easy-going and laid-back, all workers with no exception are always “expected to arrive at work on time, take appropriate breaks, and keep to deadlines.”. If one wishes to have a meeting, they must schedule it in advance (“Cultural information – New Zealand”, 2018). This mindset applies to most events in New Zealand from working life to friendly social gatherings.

g) Small Talk

Small talk is where people normally resort to when they want to meet someone but not all cultures are open to talk about certain subjects. In a business context, before the beginning of their shift, New Zealanders engage with strangers by talking about the weather and sports. Questions about the other's private life are inappropriate and should therefore be avoided (Girao, 2018).

h) Cultural Awareness

In New Zealand, showing respect towards both non-Maori New Zealanders and Maori is fundamental and mandatory in that society. Racial discrimination is illegal and socially frowned upon and in a business context prejudice is thoroughly unacceptable and a deal breaker.

i) E-mail etiquette

When beginning a conversation by e-mail, the tone and writing style must be formal and it is advisable to address the other person by their title similar to the British style (''New Zealand Country Profile – Business Etiquette'', n.d.).

j) Gift Giving

New Zealanders do not follow the tradition of offering gifts to other coworkers in a business context. It is only acceptable in friendly context when visiting someone's house (''Culture Crossing'', n.d.).

5. Lost in translation: getting around the workplace

Although there are three official languages in New Zealand, New Zealand English – or *Kiwi* English, colloquially – is the one used in the workplace. *Kiwi* English is one of the several varieties of English and it contains cultural and linguistic traits of their own that differentiate them from the other varieties. For both non-native and native English speakers this might turn out to be an obstacle when doing business with a New Zealander. Although some *Kiwi* terms do not diverge much from their intended meaning, there are a few useful expressions likely to be used in the workplace that one must be aware of so there will not be any misunderstanding between the parties involved.

In a typical New Zealand workplace, the use of informal language is fairly frequent as well as the use of slang and swear words, although this might also depend on the level of closeness between employees. For a foreigner who is used to follow hierarchical rules strictly and use formal language in their workplace, this might come across as disrespectful. However, from a New Zealander's perspective this is a normal occurrence, so it is important to make sense of what the New Zealanders are trying to say when they resort to typical *Kiwi* and slang words.

Idiomatic expressions are fairly common and might be used in the workplace. Some of these include "hook your mutton" which is the *Kiwi* way to say "clear out" (also used in Australia). In certain situations, one might hear a New Zealander saying they "have the wood on" a decision instead of saying they "have an advantage" on it (Crystal, p. 354, 2003).

In addition to idiomatic expressions, slangs are a key feature of *Kiwi* English but in some instances they might get lost in translation considering the context they are normally used. Similar to the Australians, New Zealanders address their friends by "mate" in instances such as "Did you finish your part, mate?". Occasionally, "cuzzy" might be used instead of "mate". The difference is minimal but "cuzzy" is more affectionate and used to address someone who is considered a special friend. When something goes well, New Zealanders might resort to using "mean". This normally confuses foreigners because this word carries a negative connotation but in New Zealand it is used to express feelings of happiness or gratitude, so if an individual says something along the lines of "Did you get promoted? That's mean!", they are not trying to be offensive. On the contrary, they are congratulating the person on their achievement (Coates, 2018). There are other ways to congratulate someone other than the last one. "Good on ya" is extremely common and a more general statement that can be used in different contexts, including the workplace. As shown previously, *Kiwis* enjoy engaging in small talk before work and often ask how the other person is out of politeness. A common question that might arise is "How is it going?", which is simply another way to ask someone how they are feeling and is a direct question despite the third person pronoun. This is not the only case of a pronoun deviation in an expression: when there is a problem going on and *Kiwis* are confident that it will be solved, they will claim "She'll be right" or "She'll come right". *Kiwis* seem to have a preference towards short terms. Instead of saying "This machine is expensive", *Kiwis* will most likely say "This machine is dear". At the end of

their working day, when *Kiwis* are feeling tired they might say they are ‘‘knackered’’ (*Kiwi Slang*, n.d.).

One of the traits that make New Zealand English unique on its own lays on this small phenomenon that the speakers do not rely much on the use of extensive terms. It is likely that this is linked to the typical cultural *Kiwi* behavior – straight to the point and laid back – and the tendency to be concise and brief gave rise to these slangs. What’s more, this trait manifests through other forms: New Zealanders tend to speak quite fast without making pauses which also gives the effect they are ‘‘swallowing’’ the vowels (Burdes, n.d.) and a foreigner that is used to speak clearly and slower might face some difficulty trying to comprehend an individual that speaks and ‘‘lives’’ faster than them. Yet, this does not necessarily represent a serious issue if the people involved find a common ground in the way they speak to each other. Besides, the more fluent a foreigner is in English, the easier it will be for them to interpret what the other is saying.

6. Work-life balance and new developments

The established maximum number of working hours in New Zealand is of 40 hours per week and New Zealanders typically follow a 9-to-5 routine. However, the work-life balance in this country is not actually considered the best from the perspective of the population and a growing number of companies in New Zealand – such as Xero – have tried to shift this situation from the beginning and allowed more flexibility in their employee’s schedules. It was revealed by the Census that most people still work between 40 to 49 hours weekly (Cann, 2016) which often leads to employee burnout and psychological problems. Despite these issues, a great percentage of New Zealanders (74%) feel satisfied about their work-life balance (Fellers, 2013).

6.1. Andrew Barnes and the four-day-week policy

In 2019, during a TED Talk in Auckland, the speaker Andrew Barnes brought up the question ‘‘What if I gave my staff a day off a week in return for them delivering the same amount of productivity over 4 days?’’ (Barnes, 2019). Andrew Barnes is a New Zealander businessman and philanthropist who came up with an idea for his company that transformed its overall dynamic. Proposing changes in work policies that have been

the norm for so long is not easy and most of the times a new idea is either dismissed before even being addressed or met with negative criticism. Andrew Barnes himself was aware of that possibility. However, this possible scenario did not deter him from pursuing his wish.

Inspired by an economist article regarding productivity hours in the UK and Canada that he read during a flight, Barnes came up with the idea of introducing a four-day-week policy in the company where he works: the idea was that his employees would work for four days but earn the same amount of money they do when they work five days during the other standard weeks. The company leadership team accepted this proposal and began a trial to evaluate the outcomes which surprisingly turned out to be positive.

In terms of team engagement, productivity and work-life balance there was a slight improvement and the employees' stress levels dropped by 15%, to say nothing of the employees' performance that suggested they worked better as a team. The employees admitted that they could handle better the same amount of workload during that week. This experiment also highlighted the meaning of family life for New Zealanders and how this can improve the well-being of a person: upon this four-day-week trial, it was revealed that the employees spent less time on social media on that day off than before, preferring to spend time with their loved ones. In this sense, the employees at Andrew Barnes' company would now be able to enjoy a more balanced work-life.

Another key point to remember is that this four-day-week policy will be beneficial in the long term for New Zealander women who became mothers recently and normally need time off work to attend to personal and medical matters. With this four-day-week policy established in their company, they do not need to feel as worried about the time they spend outside of work and the cuts in their salary since their productivity in the company will be prioritized instead of the time they spend there. Furthermore, this allows both men and women the opportunity to be at the same level in the workplace as neither of them need to sacrifice working hours and the same leverage to go further in their careers.

Conclusion

Although people normally do not hold this aspect in high regard, the culture within a business might set the direction that business will take. A corporation that encourages team work and shows interest in each employee's ideas is less likely to fail in the long-term. New Zealand has developed in such a way that is now seen as an example of successful business practice in all levels and how culture can affect a country in the face of an economic recession. In addition, New Zealand is known for redefining the concept of workplace and trying new ideas. Considering the location of the country, the *Kiwis* fair better when they tie their personal journey in New Zealand to their living experiences as they travel abroad.

New Zealand is often regarded as an inclusive nation. However, there is still some work that needs to be done. Regarding educational institutions, taking Bianca Anson's example, New Zealand still does not fully recognize the differences that separate the Maori from the non-Maori New Zealanders. Due to this, every person living in New Zealand is expected to live and work according to one single norm. At first impression it seems insignificant, but this situation can affect a person's future because cultural norms often clash and sacrificing "moral" values attached to culture is not something that everyone is willing to do. The term inclusivity involves understanding and being opened to the other but that is not enough. It is also necessary to recognize the differences and normalize them in schools, the workplace and other public areas, and possibly create alternative solutions to those problems so people are not left behind when opportunities arise. Ignoring this issue is disadvantageous when also taking into account the impact that minorities have in the economy of New Zealand.

Getting around the workplace can be a great challenge especially when it comes to following business etiquette and this varies considerably among the Maori and the *Kiwis*. It is possible that this explains why there are so many businesses owned by Maori people only even in urban areas: it can be a matter of abiding by Maori business practices in a single place without creating conflict with another group all the while living in a place that feels familiar. This is another issue concerning inclusivity and how both groups perceive the other, but this can be easily fixed if the people involved are willing to dialogue. When it comes to business etiquette, discussions around what concerns and what is acceptable should be encouraged as this is a faster way to learn about someone else's culture. There is no reason as to why businesses in New Zealand should not attempt

to bring the Maori and the *Kiwis* together and see how their dynamics work. From that moment on, businesses in New Zealand can only improve, if they were not already.

The power of culture and behavior in the workplace is immeasurable. New Zealand's culture which is described as laid-back still faces some obstacles although the work-life balance is one of the best in the world. *Kiwis* enjoy experimenting if they believe something will bring benefits and a solution to a problem. The four-day-week experiment was one of those cases. It brought a new idea to the table. The problem that originated this experiment was that the time employees spent in the company was too long in comparison to their productivity hours and it turns out that in that company people were more productive if they were given more free time afterwards. Curiously, the implementation of this experiment reflects quite well the social behavior in New Zealand and there is no doubt that this idea would one day have its origin or at least be implemented in New Zealand.

In spite of the problems that are still prevalent in New Zealand, the fact remains that the progressive vibe of its business culture allows the *Kiwis* and working immigrants to adapt quickly to new changes. Due to this, doing business in New Zealand is not as complicated as it might seem because so far this country has revealed to be welcoming, open with its priorities set on what the future brings and resistant to economic crisis.

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