



Yellow – ‘Creating change begins with stepping into discomfort, asking the hard questions and being brave enough to take action with the answers’

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Yellow are a digital marketing agency, connecting Kiwi businesses with their customers and communities. They currently have a team of 130 people, mostly based in Auckland, and have gone through a huge transformation over the last few years. With a history spanning 60 years, Yellow have transformed from a traditional corporate company, to an agency supporting small to medium New Zealand businesses.

An initial part of this transformation was talking to their people to find out what they thought needed to change. It was important to Yellow to get a true baseline of where their staff were at, and where changes needed to be made. From the feedback received, some key structural changes were made in the gender equity space, making sure they were transparent with their people throughout, in order for everyone to understand the ‘why’.

At a strategic level, the People Strategy and the Business Strategy were tightly interwoven, so there was solid understanding around the business case for this work. Tracey Taylor, Yellow’s Chief Executive Officer, acknowledges the importance of policies and processes, but believes that culture is the key to change.

So in March 2019, Yellow launched the Parallel Project, a collaborative and inclusive initiative created with the aim to start to address the lack of women in leadership in New Zealand. The aim was to create a culture where women had a voice and all young women would be encouraged to fulfil their potential, with men in the business given an opportunity to become better allies to their female colleagues.

The key pillars of this initiative are:

1. Inclusion

We will create an inclusive culture and lead change by actively seeking and promoting women in our business to achieve equality

We commit to intentional selection of females in senior management positions until we have achieved at least 50/50 gender split

Yellow women will be advocates of ‘putting the ladder down’.

2. Opportunity

We will foster learning and provide opportunities for women to attend relevant conference and training to upskill and be inspired by other successful women in business

Opportunity may not be climbing to the top for all women, it's finding ways for women to be successful however that manifests for each individual.

3. Change

We will create the chance for women at all levels to lead, learn and have a voice so they have confidence in their ability and to back themselves

We will provide access to resources which will inspire, tell stories and give our people the language and tools to embrace and foster change.

One of the first actions was to analyse all salaries within Yellow, and made increases to remove their gender pay gap. Conscious that salary requests are often influenced by gender, they use pay bands for all their roles, paying what the role is worth regardless of gender, and focusing on talent and value-add. There has also been a movement to actively support women within Yellow to step up into roles rather than recruiting externally, and continually measure for any pay gaps.

Another initial step they took was to restructure and reduce their executive leadership team, and when their Chief Financial Officer resigned, they proactively recruited a female for the role. This wasn't easy, as the recruitment agent used sent them 10 CVs who were all men, but they continued to push and finally found the best person for the job. They now have three people on their executive leadership team, of whom two are women.

They also began both a Speaker Series bringing in a guest to share their story, and internal Lounge Chats where Yellow staff are free to discuss topics and experiences in an informal environment. This not only created strong and genuine connection between employees, it also motivated them to become activists for gender equality, including many of their male employees. These events occur regularly throughout the year.

The Parallel Project has been a catalyst for several other changes at Yellow, including increasing parental leave, flexible working, regular kids at work days, and Friday afternoons off every week.

Yellow also acknowledges the importance of broadening their impact on gender equality, and they currently support Wāhine Kakano and Tupu Toa, and are in the process of putting together plans to take the Parallel Project outside of Yellow.

When reflecting on the journey they have taken on progressing gender equity, Tracey thinks that the key things that helped were listening to their people and bringing them on the journey, creating a business case that connected it to measures, setting targets, just starting and going from there, and getting the board on board. "Creating change begins with stepping into discomfort, asking the hard questions and being brave enough to take action with the answers."