

OCS Māori Cultural Strategy.

Whiria Te Tangata | Weaving the People Together

Background

OCS New Zealand (OCS) initially engaged Mather Solutions Limited (MSL) in July 2021 to assist with strengthening the cultural capability of its people and the wider organisation.

Three specific 'orientation' questions were posed by MSL to the OCS leadership team at that time:

1. Why do you want to strengthen the cultural capability of OCS New Zealand?
2. What benefits do you want your organisation to receive or acquire from strengthened cultural capability?
3. How committed is the organisation to changing?

After a series of individual discussions with OCS executive leaders and workshops with regional leadership teams in Auckland, Palmerston North and Christchurch, the responses to those key questions were collated as key themes.

Why do you want to strengthen the cultural capability of OCS New Zealand?

- *'It is seen (or perceived to be) a weakness within our business – both internally (with our staff) and externally (with our customers and prospective customers and the market in general)'*
- *'There is an opportunity for us to improve in this area'*
- *'To understand broader outcomes and what relevance they have to our business'*
- *'We have a diverse workforce (70 plus nationalities) and work with a broad range of organisations and people across NZ. Increasing awareness and acceptance of, and engagement with Māori history, language and culture would open more doors both internally and externally'*
- *'To strengthen and optimise our organisation's cultural competence'*
- *'We are driven by the financial bottom line generally, very hierarchical and a white male middle-aged centric viewpoint. Our discussions can be quite homogenous and can limit views, positions and ideas – we therefore often have pre-set answers before we even discuss the questions!'*
- *'I believe we don't encourage lateral thinking – may be this can also assist with that'*
- *'I think we need to strengthen our own identity – what really defines us – not only within ourselves but within the marketplace. If we all were asked what is the cultural culture in OCS we would get random ideas / views. A stronger identity based off a stronger cultural capability would provide an anchor for us all to share from.'*

What benefits do you want your organisation to receive or acquire from strengthened cultural capability?

- *'To gain an understanding (and agreement) of what it is and why it is important'*
- *'Improve our image both internally & externally'*
- *'Attract people to OCS and improve staff engagement and retention'*
- *'Improve customer value proposition – meet broader outcome requirements'*

- *'Understand from a different perspective what we are doing well now and what we need to improve. This gets everyone on board and singing the same tune'*
- *'See how we can articulate better staff wellness and welfare, customer support, what we contribute to the people the communities and environments that we work in and how do we measure and improve'*
- *'So we can win more business and create a more stable and sustainable environment within our business'*
- *'Staff engagement – understand better how to communicate with and work more effectively with our diverse workforce'*
- *'To be seen as an employer of choice'*
- *'Connection to community (25 branch network from Kerikeri to Invercargill)'*
- *'Feel more confident in integrating Maori culture in our OCS organisation'*
- *'To improve our value proposition to existing employees and potential employees, as well as our customers and stakeholders. To ultimately lead to future business growth'*
- *'I think the way we identify success, encourage performance, recruit and identify succession and staff is done in a very western centric way only. Therefore are we trying to fit our overarching business strategies within a very narrow western centric based model that is not a true reflection of our working environment and I believe limits and hold back our potential'.*

How committed is the organisation to changing?

- *'Difficult to judge at present. I'm unsure- as need to gain an understanding of what it is and where we need to be'*
- *'Will tell you when we understand what the benefits are'*
- *'I believe there's a desire to change but it will depend on the extent of the changes recommended and resource needed to implement the change. Some may be easy to implement quickly and we can get some quick wins. Others may be a longer journey that we take in stages. Some may not be possible or realistic and may need to be relooked at down the track'.*

From the responses to these questions a cultural strategic roadmap was to be developed before the untimely intervention of the COVID lockdowns delayed further progress.

It was in October 2022 that progress was resumed after it was recognised that an impactful initiative was required to regain the momentum previously building and to also bring together the OCS whānau in a meaningful and relevant way. The scene was set to develop a uniquely OCS Māori strategy and to unveil it the OCS Conference in March 2023.

Whiria te Tangata – Weaving the People Together

'Whiria Te Tangata' means weaving the people together.

To achieve the objective of re-defining the culture of OCS to reflect its unique identity as a progressive and unique Aotearoa business employing over 4,200 New Zealanders an innovative approach was sought. Discussions with Auckland Operations Manager Rawinia Wright ensued and resulted in her drawing on her experience as a highly renowned traditional Māori weaver (*'kairaranga'*) to design and weave a *'pākē'* or traditional cloak.

The *'pākē'* was to be a metaphor for a culture change strategy which will reflect all cultures (ethnicities) within the OCS whānau and bring everyone together with a unified sense of purpose and stronger value alignment.

The *'pākē'* was named *'Whiria Te Tāngata'* and designed to personify the people of OCS being woven together through all three regions contributing materials and support to the making of the cloak. OCS subsequently commissioned Rawinia to weave a *'pākē'* and for her to visit the regions to collect materials to be used in the weaving process.

The journey of Rawinia making the cloak was recorded and used to develop a corporate video for OCS. Interviews with staff were also incorporated to emphasise the widespread multi-cultural support for the initiative.

At the OCS Australia & New Zealand annual conference in March 2023 the *'pākē'* was subsequently presented by Rawinia to OCS Managing Director, Gareth Marriott and the story and meaning of the cloak was shared. This was complemented by the screening of the video especially commissioned for the conference (and to later be placed on the OCS website in both edited and long-form versions).

Through *'Whiria Te Tāngata'*, OCS has the opportunity to inspire, motivate and engage its workforce, stakeholders, clients and communities in an inclusive and distinctly Aotearoa New Zealand way. The initiative will also reinforce the cultural commitment of OCS and its unique identity as a progressive New Zealand corporate.



Vision for Whiria te Tangata – OCS Māori Cultural Strategy

The core components of *Whiria Te Tangata* are to ensure:

1. We are knowledgeable, confident, comfortable, and connected with te ao Māori (key aspects of the Māori world)
2. We are a culturally assured organisation in terms of our commercial operations
3. We are a trusted partner organisation that recognises and gives effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi principles and its spirit of intent
4. Māori and all others regard OCS as an equitable business and place to work.

Cultural Success for OCS

The destination for OCS in this cultural journey includes:

- Clear understanding of why cultural competency is considered important at OCS
- Incorporation of Te Ao Māori perspectives and practices into the culture of OCS and the way you consider and respond to issues
- Understanding of why Tiriti o Waitangi | Treaty of Waitangi principles are relevant to our business and those of our customers (and practical application)
- Ensuring OCS reflects the aspirations of the communities and overall society we operate within
- Ensuring OCS reflects the aspirations of the people who make up our workforce.

Plan of Action

Strategic Priority 1 – Build Māori Cultural Capability

- Identify current Māori cultural capability within OCS and provide opportunities for participation and further development
- Recruit permanent staff who have Māori language and cultural skills
- Offer internships to Māori graduates and develop relationships with Māori entities such as Tupu Toa
- Appoint Māori to leadership roles particularly those with Māori and wider stakeholder engagement responsibilities
- Provide support for tikanga and te reo Māori learning opportunities for all staff
- Practice tikanga through activities such as pōwhiri for new staff.

Strategic Priority 2 – Provide Learning Opportunities

- Ensure all key leadership staff undertake Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi training
- Provide te reo and tikanga learning opportunities as widely as possible with a specific focus on OCS staff in leadership roles at all levels
- Provide in-house Māori language tuition courses which are customised for the commercial cleaning and facilities management sector.

Strategic Priority 3 – Develop Relationships With Māori entities

- Actively seek out relationship opportunities that are culturally and / or commercially and beneficial, e.g. support of progressive procurement activities
- Demonstrate commitment to Māori business networks, and
- Schedule marae visits for all staff in leadership roles.

Measure and Monitor Progress

- Identify and agree on measurements for each of the strategic priorities
- Commit appropriate levels of budget and resourcing to ensure dedicated focus and successful outcomes
- Monitor progress at leadership meetings
- Commit to undertaking external / independent reviews of progress
- Demonstrate a preparedness to take remedial action(s) where performance is below expectations
- Lead successful implementation from the front!

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