ENGAGING BUSINESS AND ACADEMIA

A PROOF OF CONCEPT REPORT SUMMARISING
FOUR YEARS OF FACILITATING ENGAGEMENT
FOR BUSINESS PROSPERITY IN NEW ZEALAND

**Reporting on 16 workshops
from 2019 – 2023 to support
engagement between
business professionals and
business school academics**

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BusinessFirstNZ
Engaging Business and Academia

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Executive Summary

This report highlights the development and refinement of the *BusinessFirstNZ* initiative –a structured series of workshops to facilitate engagement among the business and academic communities in New Zealand's lower North Island regions. We include reflections at key points across the four years and 16 workshops that have comprised the initiative, including input from business professionals obtained through two surveys. The intent of the report is to demonstrate a proof-of-concept for facilitating engagement among business professionals and academic staff and provide information about future pursuits.

Specifically, we report on the evolution of the workshops, the topics covered, and how our reflections and survey results continue to inform the future of this engagement to meet the needs of the business community. Expanding on the findings from our earlier report, *Business First New Zealand (2022)*, which covered our first ten workshops and an initial survey of business professionals, we now highlight workshops 11 through 16 and explore the results of the second industry-focused survey. Summaries, key takeaways, and practical questions for businesses to consider are included throughout the report for these latest workshops.

Underpinning our discussion remains our desire to answer the question: *How can business professionals and business school staff engage to support business prosperity in New Zealand?*

In answering this question and focusing on the content and proof-of-concept, we highlight how this topic-based facilitated engagement provides a recognised structure for the aims of this initiative. That is, as recognised in our first report (1) ensuring knowledge, skills, and experiences are enriched through reciprocal exchange and development, so that (2) local business communities prosper, and (3) university teaching, research, and civic engagement remain relevant.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to demonstrate a proof-of-concept for facilitating engagement among business professionals and academic staff and provide information about future pursuits. To do this, we highlight the development and refinement of the **BusinessFirstNZ** initiative as a means of structured engagement among business professionals and business school academic communities.

The report draws on the delivery and reflections of 16 workshops across four years and leverages reflections and feedback from business professionals to discuss the evolution of the initiative and refinement of our approach. Workshops one through ten (which were a focus of our previous report – *Business First New Zealand, 2022 [1]*) are summarised together, with key points of reflection highlighted to detail changes made in our approach.

Individual workshop summaries for workshops 11 through 16 are then provided, followed by a discussion of our reflections and findings from a survey of business professionals to inform our future planning. The focus of each of those workshops, key takeaways, and practical questions for businesses to consider are included, to provide insight into the topics covered and engagement at each session.

The report concludes by highlighting the impact of the workshops and providing information about future pursuits that will enable us to keep our focus on answering the question: *How can business professionals and business school staff engage to support business prosperity in New Zealand?* In answering this question and focusing on the content and proof-of-concept, we highlight how this topic-based facilitated engagement provides a recognised structure for the aims of this initiative.

Businesses in Attendance

To date, more than 30 businesses have been represented from the following sectors:

Table 1. Sectors represented by businesses in attendance 2019 -2023

Agricultural Services	Food Preparation	Leather Products	Sports Protection
Aviation Engineering	Fuel Dispensing Systems	Machinery & Equipment	Structural Metal Fabrication
Business Development	Garden Supplies	Online Security & Networks	Technology
Cheese Products	Gas Delivery	Packaging	Transportation
Confectionery Manufacturing	Honey Production	Plastic Moulding	Winery
Economic Development	Horticulture -Flowers	Poultry Products	Workwear
Education & Training	Horticulture - Orchard	Powersports Products	
Export	IT Support	Real Estate	

[1] bfnz.massey.ac.nz/wp-content/uploads/sites/115/2022/10/BusinessFirstNZ-Industry-Report-2022.pdf

Creating Engagement: Workshops 1 – 10

When we began the *BusinessFirstNZ* initiative in 2019, we did so with an intention of bridging the academic-practice "gap" – we wanted to bring academic staff and business professionals together to advance business prosperity through collaboration. During the first 10 workshops, we found the need to embrace the strengths of both communities: academic staff were skilled in teaching and research and bringing cutting edge theoretical perspectives to problems, while business professionals were attuned to the contemporary challenges in various industries.

As the series evolved, we began to develop a rhythm for working together to articulate and acknowledge common problems, build a reciprocal relationship, and understand what the workshops could deliver in terms of practical outcomes for all involved. We focused on tailoring the topics and bringing in expert facilitators, based on the feedback and identified needs of participants. These are shown in Table 2.

After each workshop, we reflected on what worked and where we might improve. This led to crafting a structure of engagement that not only benefitted the attendees but provided clarity for future facilitators. Our reflection considered the dynamic of engagement among the various stakeholders, including workshop hosts, subject matter expert facilitators, academic staff, and business professionals in attendance.

Table 2. Topics for workshops 1-10

	Workshop Title
September 2019	Collaboratively identifying business dilemmas through engagement with business, for business: Part 1 – The issues
November 2019	Collaboratively identifying business dilemmas through engagement with business, for business: Part 2 – The potential solutions
February 2020	Business models: Developing tailored business models and plans to work for you
July 2020	Letting go: Effective delegation for enhanced decision making
October 2020	Fail fast: How to fail your way to success in a crazy world
Nov 2020	Reflection for excellence: Reviewing and refining for next steps
March 2021	Understanding your market
June 2021	Supply chain management: Part 1 – Market risks, mega trends, and negotiation
October 2021	Supply chain management: Part 2 – Applying SCM concepts to your business
March 2022	Business and sustainability: Part 1 – An environmental focus

What we found was a workshop structure that began with the facilitator delivering a mini, seminar-style presentation, followed by small group discussions. During the small group sessions, having an academic staff member working with each group, using worksheets with prompt questions, and encouraging each participant to consider the topic for their workplace ensured the material was relevant for each person. We also recognised that following the small group sessions, having a full group debrief led by the facilitator, and having each individual or table share what they found provided a means for sharing challenges and opportunities across the full group. This small group followed by large group debriefing would occur two to three times during each workshop. If the debrief did not occur, the concepts did not "sink in" or feel tied together for the group. It was also a lost opportunity for attendees to help others by sharing their own perspectives on common issues.

Following each workshop, we produced a short industry report which summarised the key aims of the workshop, an overview of how the workshop was run, the key points discussed, and key takeaways. These were circulated to all participants as well as the full mailing list, so those who were unable to attend any given session were still afforded the summary and any collateral used (e.g., the worksheets and slides). We also began hosting all material from the workshops on a webpage as publicly available resources[2].

After the first ten workshops, we also ran a survey for business professionals in NZ to provide feedback on how we could continue advancing the engagement among the business school and the business community. This survey, which resulted in 260 responses, offered support for the next iteration of our initiative. Not only did the survey provide insights into the structure of our engagement but it also provided key topics that informed our planning for workshops 11 – 16. The findings also provided alternate perspectives for our reflection after driving the initiative for two and a half years.

Reflecting on the evolution of the initiative, industry insights from the survey, and feedback from participants across the ten workshops gave us a basis for future planning.

➢ We acknowledged the need to focus on benefitting both business professionals and academic staff, rather than trying to force a singular agenda.
➢ We recognised that the workshops were, indeed, helping all parties to embrace the various perspectives, and providing a time and space where
   o business school academics could continue to explore, research, and teach theory and develop new ways of thinking about and solving complex problems
   o business professionals could continue to bring practical, complex examples and challenges academic staff to support practical solutions.

With this understanding, we began planning for future workshops.

[2] bfnz.massey.ac.nz/

Proving the Concept: Workshops 11 – 16

The following tables summarise workshops 11 to 16. We planned and ran these following the refined structure that had evolved from reviewing the first ten workshops, plus the feedback from the industry survey. This enabled a template format for inviting each facilitator to provide clarity on what they could expect (how to plan their content and delivery), the structure and suggested timing of the workshop (the back and forth of small to large groups with time to debrief, to support their planning of delivery and sub-topics), and assistance to create worksheets using a standard format (to ensure each participant could consider their individual organisation). Using this template approach created consistency for the hosts and the attendees, while creating a simple, standard approach for inviting and on-boarding new facilitators.

Workshop 11: Business and Social Sustainability

Table 3. Workshop 11 summary

June 2022	Business and Sustainability Part 2 – The Social Focus
Facilitator	Dr Kazunori Kobayashi
Workshop Objectives	To explore the "social" pillar of sustainability and how this fits with the other two environmental and economic pillars to drive business prosperity. Specifically, key areas of focus included: • Collaboratively developing a list of current social issues within businesses and local communities • Identifying material issues that businesses in attendance were impacted by or might have an impact on • Identifying and articulating risks, opportunities, and action points to address the identified material issues
Key Takeaways	In considering the human element of business and the need for social sustainability at the global, national, and local levels for successful business operations, productivity, product quality and workplace morale, a number of common issues were identified: • A lack mental and physical robustness • The cost of living crisis impact on staff • A lack of positive contribution to their community • A lack of desirable employee traits Businesses can proactively engage with these issues by: • Providing a fair wage • Considering the ergonomics of labour • Enabling work-life balance • Instilling pride in each employee This may be as simple as 'making work fun' so that employees are pulled to work each day, rather than feeling pushed away.
Questions for Practical Workplace Consideration	• What social issues are you or your business most impacted by or which issues do you have the most impact on? • What evidence do you have and use to support this? • What challenges and opportunities to these material issues present? • What is the value proposition of employees going to work each day?

Workshop 12: Flexible Working Patterns – Employee Desires

Table 4. Workshop 12 summary

August 2022	Future Work-Life: Organisational responses for a(n apparent) shift in individual practices and preferences
Facilitator	Dr Jennifer Scott
Workshop Objectives	To provide an overview of current trends of employees' working "patterns" – noticeable shifts in employee desires and practice, industries being affected, key demographics, and how this might impact their businesses. The workshop focused on identifying and exploring the tensions and conflicts that might arise, and current practices that organisations are already using, future challenges for businesses, and possible management practices for responding to employee pressures and expectations. Specific focus was on: • Landscape scan – What are businesses experiencing? • SME employees' perceptions, practices, and preferences • Navigating pressures or engaging with new practices and preferences before they settle as new 'norms' • Implications for organisations' management practices
Key Takeaways	• Employers are moving to navigate, and even negotiate, future work styles taking into consideration needs of the company and those of employees. • Instead of concentrating on the inputs of labour (hours worked) they could target productivity outcomes to drive how employees work, develop their skillsets, and secure future employees whose personalities and skills match the requirements of the future company and industry. • Examples of management strategies and decision-making for navigating a new environment were shared among the group, including how different businesses were catering to or offering flexible work practices, while ensuring productivity.
Questions for Practical Workplace Consideration	• What are the patterns of practice you are seeing in your workplace or sector? • Do you notice any trends based on employment factors or demographics relating to these changes or requests? • When employees ask for more "flexibility" what do you understand that to mean? What do you think is driving their request? • What CAN employees currently do within your organisation – is this optimal and are they aware of this? • What challenges might your company or industry face with increased employee behaviour changes/demands? Why? • Has your company introduced or modified policies relating to flexible working arrangements? (why/why not?) • How can your company continue to ensure (or enhance) productivity through engaging with employees to navigate new ways of working?

Workshop 13: Management Strategies & Value Proposition

Table 5. Workshop 13 summary

November 2022	Unpacking management strategies for your future workplace: Back to basics
Facilitators	Dr Wayne Macpherson & Dr Jennifer Scott
Workshop Objectives	To spend time supporting businesses to reflect on the nature of their business and revise strategy elements as relevant. Specific areas of focus included: • Reviewing the nature of the business and current markets • Consideration of stakeholders and supply chains • Performing a landscape scan to identify current and future issues and risks, supported by a SWOT analysis • Working though the Business Model Canvas to identify and articulate each business' value proposition • Future planning – Identifying strategies and markets through revision of core business goals, statements of business purpose, primary business objectives, strategies to achieve goals and objectives, and critical success factors.

Key Takeaways	• Sharing and agreement of what material issues companies in NZ are facing, and how those significantly influence. These included:
	  o people power
	  o awareness of how global issues, such as climate change, influence the thinking and choices of future generations
	  o international supply chain challenges (including costs, reliability, and availability)
	• Completion of a Business Model Canvas for each organisation, including identification of internal (within the business) and external (customers and market) factors businesses can use to refine business value propositions.
	• Articulation of customer relationships, customer segments, channels, and revenue streams as well as key partners, activities, and resources, and cost structures to clarify the characteristics of the uniqueness of the business.

Questions and Actions for Practical Workplace Consideration	• Now that you have a good idea of where you want to do and a realistic idea of what it will take to get there, what specific actions will you take?
	• Set time aside (make time!) to revisit vision, mission, and values to confirm they still encompass what the business seeks to achieve; ensure business goals and objectives are fit for purpose.
	• When refining business goals and objectives – do not try to do everything. Instead, focus on what is critical for success, then allocate efforts (time and resources) accordingly.
	• Give thorough consideration to short, medium, and long-term issues, risks, and opportunities. Then consider how these align with business objectives and market trends.
	• Keep asking 'why'
	  o *why do stakeholders engage with us up and down our value chain (suppliers, contractors, customers, end users)*
	  o *why do they choose our business over an alternative?*
	  o *why (and how) do we provide value for them?*

Workshop 14: Conflict and Dispute Resolution

Table 6. Workshop 14 summary

March 2023	Conflict and Dispute Resolution for SMEs
Facilitator	Mrs Megan Gordon
Workshop Objectives	To consider the impact of unresolved workplace conflict or conflict that is not managed constructively, and how differing negotiation styles might affect the outcome of a negotiation and its implementation. Specific focus was given to: • Sharing of real-world examples to explore the differences between task, process, and interpersonal conflicts and recognition the dynamic nature of conflict, with various options for interventions. • The spectrum of dispute resolution options, ranging from negotiation and mediation through investigation to arbitration/adjudication, and finally litigation. • Strategies to recognise and address conflict as close to the origin as possible – recognising triggers and being proactive.
Key Takeaways	• Negative impacts of conflict (or unresolved/poorly managed conflict) include causing severe harm, triggering stress, or obstructing efficiency, collaboration, and creativity. Conflict that is not managed constructively is costly for organisations and can affect work, home, and life relationships. • Positive effects of conflict (or when managed well) support the creation of opportunities for development, learning, creativity, and innovation. • Principled/integrative negation is a process based on four main points: (1) separate the people from the problem, (2) focus on interests not positions, (3) invent options for mutual gain, (4) insist on using objective criteria. • Examples of strategies for addressing conflict in the workplace: simply checking on employees daily, informal conversations to read body language, on-the-job training to ensure employees are set up for success, and investing in frequent, quality social interactions to strengthen the social fabric of the organisation.
Questions and Actions for Practical Workplace Consideration	What can managers do to prevent and manage conflict at work? • Support and role-model positive workplace behaviours • Educate team members about expectations • Prioritise low-level, informal, early intervention strategies • Understand when to refer the dispute on to someone else Management skills and competencies for fostering healthy work and laying the foundation for effective conflict management: • Availability, trustworthiness, communication, consistency, confidence, resilience, compassion, and empathy • Dealing with work problems: organising and supporting work, taking responsibility for behavioural issues, taking staff concerns seriously • Empowering staff: providing opportunities for growth and development and fostering team cohesion • Treating team members as individuals: personal investment in staff & genuine care for them • Ability to reflect on own behaviour, admitting fault and allowing staff to challenge.

Workshop 15: Regional Entrepreneurial Ecosystems

Table 7. Workshop 15 summary

June 2023	Entrepreneurial Ecosystems for Advancing Regional Business
Facilitator	Dr Tanya Jurado
Workshop Objectives	To consider entrepreneurship and how leveraging the concept of ecosystems to support entrepreneurial thinking and activity for reginal businesses. Specific focus was given to: • Origins of the ecosystem concept and entrepreneurial thinking • Entrepreneurship for regional advantage • The elements of entrepreneurial ecosystems: Place, People, Processes, and Purpose • Focusing on your business – ecosystem elements businesses can engage with for advancing regional collaboration
Key Takeaways	Overarching key takeaways included: • Entrepreneurial ecosystems are communities of entrepreneurs or people with entrepreneurial thinking • Entrepreneurial thinking involves identifying and acting on opportunities, but it does not need to be done in isolation – the value created in collaboration will be greater than when done by individuals or individual firms • Relationships are key to building and sustaining ecosystems • Leveraging human and build capital, curiosity, and passion will help drive entrepreneurial ecosystems – knowledge sharing and collaboration are fundamental • There are many connections that are not necessarily immediately apparent in terms of actors and factors within an ecosystem that could be leveraged – mapping out possibilities is a useful exercise to see where gaps might be able to be filled
Questions for Practical Workplace Consideration	• What entrepreneurial activities are we already engaged in - those that include elements of taking risks, being imaginative, experimental, and innovative. How can we leverage these as more than a quick fix – can we approach challenges and opportunities with a view to not letting obstacles get in the way and thinking of different and new ways of achieving a goal? • How can we leverage entrepreneurial thinking to enhance existing operations, problem solving, recognising opportunities that might not exist elsewhere, and focusing on value creation? • What relationships do we already have, or could we foster, where there is a common goal, purpose, or set of values will help sustain the ecosystem? Who are the actors that exist and who are those that might not be readily apparent, but who would be valuable collaborators and contributors to support our goals?

Workshop 16: Māori Business Perspectives

Table 8. Workshop 16 summary

August 2023	Māori business perspectives for contemporary business challenges and opportunities
Facilitator	Professor Jarrod Haar
Workshop Objectives	To give consideration to Māori values and strategic decision-making approaches in business, including an exploration of various approaches to help businesses improve their attraction and retention for improved performance and competitive advantage. Specific focus was given to: • Understanding Māori business and Māori cultural values • Current business challenges and opportunities • Applying Māori approaches for firm strategy
Key Takeaways	• A focus on broader community development for the future is helpful to employees, the business, and society • Investing in employees reduces unnaturally high turnover, with costs ranging from 100 – 300% • Offering non-salary benefits can support businesses attracting and retaining employees • Drawing on whānaungatanga (community relationships), whānau (extended family), and being kaupapa focused (supporting networks based on principles) offer innovative approaches to business
Questions for Practical Workplace Consideration	• Are there unique factors (including cultural values) that define your business? • Do you work with any Māori business? Can you name any or those you would like to? How do you think your business and your values might align with their values? • HR Practices are key to supporting competitive advantage, especially with respect to five factors: job design, recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, performance management. Which of these do you think your business is especially good at? Bad at? What opportunities might you be able to leverage? • Māori cultural values might be utilised/embraced by any NZ firm. Which values might resonate with your business (or are you already doing something similar? Are there other values you might consider? What are the barriers holding you back? • What steps might you undertake to improve your HR practices and overcome (perceived or actual) barriers?

Reflecting with Industry Insights 2.0

Hosting the workshops and supporting and inviting the facilitators using a standardised approach as above proved beneficial. This approach ensured the attendees were provided an overview of the topic to commence each session, before shifting to focus on how to apply the concepts to each attendee's organisation. Supporting facilitators to create worksheets that also followed the structured approach also ensured the small group discussions within each session enabled participants to articulate their individual circumstances. In doing this, participants were then able to share their examples and experiences and support one another in navigating common challenges relating to the overarching workshop topic. The full group debrief sessions extended this sharing, and participants often noted that this approach was both comforting (recognising they were not alone when others shared similar challenges) and inspiring (hearing about innovative approaches or exploring ideas sparked by other stories). The structure of the workshop also supports a time and space for attendees to build trust and feel safe to contribute to the conversation, while ensuring attendees have tangible outcomes tailored to their business.

While we continued with workshops 11 – 16, we did notice some apologies being sent by regular attendees, due to demands in the workplace. We wanted to explore this further, to understand how the future of the *BusinessFirstNZ* series could support business professionals, and so undertook a second survey to consider the structure and content for planning our next workshops. We sought to understand what was important for businesses when engaging with the business school, how the workshops should be structured, and key areas of focus. Though we were happy with the existing structure, we want to ensure stakeholders from the business community were as well.

Survey insights

This recent survey, to support our reflection, yielded 40 responses from business professionals. Although this was a smaller overall sample size than the first survey (260 responses), it was targeted to businesses in the Manawatu-Whanganui region rather than all of NZ. Notably, this second survey had more than double the responses of businesspeople from the Manawatu-Whanganui regions. To this end, we have received an increased quantum of feedback specific to our region, which can be used to our planning with the local communities.

Of the respondents for this recent survey, 13% represented primary industries, 23% represented goods-producing industries, and 64% represented service industries. The company sizes represented in the responses were those with 1 – 9 employees (18%), 10 – 19 employees (14%), 20 – 49 employees (36%), 50 – 99 employees (5%), and more than 100 employees (27%). Finally, the roles of respondents were 55% company owners or directors, 23% executive managers, 14% middle managers, 4% senior managers, and 4% senior team members.

Survey respondents were asked about the content and structure of engagement among universities and local businesses, noting the overarching intent was to advance engagement for business prosperity in New Zealand. For the following questions, respondents were asked to rate benefit and importance to them and/or their organisation. Tables 9 and 10 show statements that more than 80% of respondents agreed with as beneficial or important to future engagement, while Table 11 provides insights about a future structure, with options selected by more than 50% of respondents.

Table 10. Important elements of engagement

When considering business school-business community engagement, it is important that…
There is a focus on practical, tangible solutions I/my business can easily implement and business representatives receive tangible solutions to problems
General business problems are discussed
Different industry sectors are represented at events
Sufficient time is spent establishing mutual trust among attendees
I/my business feel committed to an ongoing partnership with the university
The university is able to share resources (e.g., infrastructure/technology/people) with businesses
I/my business feel committed to an ongoing partnership with the other local businesses

Table 11. Suggestions for future structure of *BusinessFirstNZ*

When considering elements of a series of events that would attract my attendance , I would like…
Shorter events (a couple hours rather than half or full day)
Sessions that have a clear problem, challenge, or topic for the specific event
Events held at different industry partner locations
Events with a strong practical industry focus
Events held quarterly

Table 9. Beneficial activities

When considering university-business community engagement, the types of activities I and my business would benefit from are…
Support in developing tangible solutions to business problems
Pre-reading material to explore before facilitated discussion
Reading material provided at the event, to take away
Worksheets or workbooks provided at the event, to takeaway
Brainstorming possible solutions to common problems with other business professionals
Hands-on or discussion-forum type workshops led by other business professionals
Support in articulating business challenges
Hearing what current academic research says about the future of business
Brainstorming possible solutions to common problems with academic researchers

Future Focus

Given the feedback from participants, our reflections, and the industry insights, the next series of workshops will follow the pattern of seminar-style overview of a topic, followed by small group discussions focusing on considering the concepts for each individual business, and the large group debrief. However, we will aim for a slightly shorter duration (two hours) for each workshop, acknowledging the time commitment from participants, who are often stretched for time in their business. To ensure the sessions remain relevant, we will seek input on key challenges prior to the day, so the facilitator can have what normally would be done in the workshop, articulated beforehand to leverage the examples of participants. The topics will continue to be driven by the needs of the industries being represented. To help forward planning, noting the responses to the recent survey were completed by business professionals in the Manawatu-Whanganui region, we also leverage suggested topics as insights into our local business communities. In that survey, respondents were asked to identify key topics they would be interested in or that they consider critical for the academic and industry communities to collaborate on when engaging to advance business prosperity in New Zealand. The following are key, overarching themes that were identified:

- ➢ Technology – use, cost vs benefits, keeping up with changes, making sure the business is utilising opportunities, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, automation and robotics
- ➢ Workforce – attraction, retention, and planning; resource and capability development; flexibility in employment (hours/location, generational expectations)
- ➢ Marketing and communication – marketing as a business strategy, use of social media
- ➢ Business performance – remaining relevant, adapting to change, planning for change, creative and strategic thinking, productivity, problem solving, upskilling small business management
- ➢ Sustainability – preparing for certifications (e.g., Bcorp), encouraging growth of the region with students and workers, being economically viable and 'sustainable', being culturally and socially responsible, dealing with climate change
- ➢ Economic insights – financial management, taxes, rising employment costs, economic growth, areas to focus (more and less), banking structures
- ➢ Human resource management – stress and its effect on performance, supporting employees' wellbeing (mental and financial), engaging people in different industries, implications of HR/legal policies, enhancing capabilities for diversity and inclusion
- ➢ Partnerships – understanding Māori business and perspectives, identifying opportunities for partnering with other groups, considering international markets

Final Thoughts

We conclude this report by highlighting key points that will help business professionals and business school academics in their pursuit of advancing business prosperity in NZ. Through the structured facilitated workshop series, we have not only learned and proven a concept that enables engagement among these two groups, but we have fostered a collaborative and progressive approach toward sustainable and effective business practices. Below, we share some of the diverse insights from the experiences and knowledge shared at our most recent workshops, along with some keywords from each session.

Workshop 11 emphasised how social, environmental, and economic factors are interconnected, driving business success. When businesses prioritise human elements within the workplace, the results are beneficial for both effective business operations and employee well-being.

> sustainability, social impact, prosperity, well-being

flexibility, new
ways of working,
productivity,
innovation

Workshop 12 delved into shifting employee expectations about working patterns, and focused on how businesses could balance the needs of the company and the employee desires. Recognising new ways of working and responding creatively can allow businesses to foster innovation and improved performance. Rather than resisting change, businesses can work with employees in a shift towards outcome-driven productivity.

business goals,
value proposition,
strategic alignment

The management strategies discussed in Workshop 13 highlighted the importance of setting time aside to review business objectives alongside evolving needs. An emphasis on continuous adaptation, supported by SWOT analysis, was highlighted to address contemporary challenges and shape future business strategies. The Business Model Canvas was offered as a means to support businesses in this activity.

Workshop 14 focused on conflict resolution as a driver for creativity and efficiency in the workplace. When businesses can embed effective leadership and early interventions, they are able to minimise conflicts and reduce escalation, to enhance workplace harmony and productivity.

Conflict management,
dispute resolution,
leadership, constructive
and informal approaches

Collaboration,
community,
relationships,
entrepreneurial

Workshop 15 supported businesses to consider engaging in regional entrepreneurial ecosystems for sustainable growth. Through collaboration and community relationships, businesses can access, share, and leverage skills, knowledge, and resources for positive impact. Businesses were reminded of the value of human capital, supporting entrepreneurial thinking, and investing in relationships to drive business prosperity.

In Workshop 16, businesses explored how they could embrace Māori values and approaches to conducting business for their own sustainable business strategies. There was a specific focus on employee attraction and retention, with discussion and shared experiences highlighting the advantages of investing in broader community development for the benefit of employees, the business, and society.

Māori business
perspectives,
community, alternate
approaches

The workshops we have reported on, and the structure of engagement, have underscored the integral role of collaborative and adaptive strategies in achieving business success. They emphasised the necessity of balancing social, environmental, and economic aspects for sustainable growth, while acknowledging the importance of employee well-being and community development. The takeaways noted above encompassed innovative approaches that align with market needs, drive constructive conflict resolution, and leverage human capital within entrepreneurial ecosystems. This approach aims to foster sustainable business practices rooted in cultural values and supportive leadership, leading to enhanced workplace harmony, employee satisfaction, and overall business prosperity.

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