

***Māori Business Perspectives
for Contemporary Business Challenges & Opportunities***

A *BusinessFirstNZ* Workshop Report

Held 29th August 2023
in The Refectory, Massey University
Facilitated by Professor Jarrod Haar,
with Dr Jennifer Scott, Dr Wayne Macpherson,
and Dr Kazunori Kobayashi from the School of Management

8th September 2023

Executive Summary

This report summarises the third *BusinessFirstNZ* workshop for 2023, and 16th in the series, hosted by the Massey Business School to engage local businesses. The initiative seeks to assist business leaders to highlight business problems and seek practical solutions in their pursuit of business excellence and sustainable competitive advantage.

In this half-day workshop, Professor Jarrod Haar from the School of Management helped attendees explore what “Māori Business” entails and how lessons from his research on Māori businesses and other New Zealand businesses can help leaders tackle challenges and exploit opportunities. Jarrod facilitated discussions on Māori business differences, cultural values underpinning decision-making, and how the biggest challenges businesses articulated in his research aligned with those of the participants’ organisations.

The workshop provided time and space for attendees to reflect on the current challenges facing their businesses. These included people (morale, building resilience, attracting, and retaining talent), technology (keeping pace, understanding how it is changing business, predicting impacts), and uncertainty in the external environment (regulations, educating the market about/communicating strategic direction/offerings, operating within financial constraints).

Giving consideration to Māori values and strategic decision-making approaches, Jarrod helped attendees explore how various differentiation approaches could result in increasing business attraction and retention for improved performance and competitive advantage.

This report focuses on the highlights of the workshop including:

- Understanding Māori business and Māori cultural values
- Current business challenges and opportunities
- Applying Māori approaches for firm strategy

Key takeaways for attendees included:

- 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

Businesses in Attendance

Across the *BusinessFirstNZ* workshops to date, the following business have been represented:

| Business | Sector | Business | Sector |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Advantage | IT Support | Genoese Foods | Food Preparation |
| AFC Motorcycles | Powersports Products | Gillard Honey | Honey Production |
| Ali Arc Industries | Structural Metal Fabrication | Gropak | Agricultural Services |
| Avatar Honey | Honey Production | Henergy | Poultry Products |
| BakerAg | Agricultural Services | JR's Orchards | Apple and Pears |
| Betacraft NZ | Workwear | Manawatech | Tech NPO |
| Business Central | Business Development | NZ Delphiniums | Horticulture |
| Carousel Confectionary | Confectionery Manufacturing | OBO | Sports Protection |
| Cartwheel Creamery | Cheese Products | Palliser Estate | Winery |
| CEDA | Economic Development | Prepack | Packaging |
| Cyber Consulting | Online security and Networks | Property Brokers | Real Estate |
| E&T Consultants | Education & Training (E&T) | Quest Industries | Plastic Moulding |
| ExportNZ | BusinessNZ Division | Speirs Foods | Food Preparation |
| FieldAir | Aviation Engineering | Steelfort | Machinery & Equipment |
| Flamingo Scooters | Scooter Sharing | Tasman Tanning | Leather Products |
| Gallagher Fuel Systems | Fuel Dispensing Systems | Turks Poultry Farm | Poultry |
| Garden Barn | Garden Supplies | UCOL | Education |
| GasNet | Gas Delivery | | |

Other highlights and contact

We would also like to draw your attention to our new BFNZ logo. The gold honeycomb draws on our past imagery of busy bees going about their work for the greater good of the hive; highlighting the importance of *Engaging Academia and Business*, as this is what we do.

To summarise the engagement across the past four years, there will be another comprehensive industry report published in October – keep an eye out for it, as it will include an overview of all topics *BusinessFirstNZ* has covered to date.

For more information on [our past workshops](#), [our previous industry report](#) titled, “*Business First New Zealand: Advancing engagement among industry and academic communities for business prosperity in NZ*”, an [editorial piece in The Conversation](#), and more can be found on our [website](#).

If you have any questions or would like to suggest or request any specific workshops, please contact the BusinessFirstNZ team at bfnz@massey.ac.nz.

1. Workshop Overview

As mentioned in the previous Workshop Report, the *BusinessFirstNZ* workshops afford businesses time and space to engage with other local businesses and academic staff with expertise in various business disciplines. With a focus on advancing engagement and advancing business prosperity, these workshops support business leaders to explore challenges and opportunities in the current environment, and work through practical solutions supported by cutting edge research findings. This workshop aligned with this purpose as we welcomed Professor Jarrod Haar from our Auckland campus to facilitate the discussion on Māori business perspectives for contemporary business challenges.

Jarrod is the Dean's Chair in Management and Māori Business for the Massey Business School, currently acting as the Massey Business School Director of Research, and is heavily involved in the [Science for Technological Innovation National Science Challenge](#) (a 10-year investment including a mission to enhance the capacity of Aotearoa-New Zealand's economic growth and prosperity). Drawing on this experience, and especially his most recent research that reached out to interview 25 Māori and 25 New Zealand businesses owner/managers across 2022 and 2023, Jarrod expertly guided the group through considerations of various approaches, values, challenges, solutions, and strategy to help advance their business.

After welcoming the newest business in attendance, we jumped straight in to defining Māori business before considering research findings on the cost of unnaturally high turnover for businesses. The group, having articulated their own current challenges, considered Māori business examples about the biggest issues being surfaced by business leaders. They then looked at the data on why attraction and retention matter. Jarrod offered data to support discussion on how human resource practices can help businesses attract and retain employees, while recognising that although firm strategy is key, it does not necessarily differ among Māori and New Zealand businesses. However, when embracing and applying Māori cultural values to drive decision making and business approaches, organisations were able to overcome some of the challenges and issues they were facing, and exploit opportunities.

Embracing manaakitanga (caring and support), especially for those new to discussing Māori business, Jarrod provided a genuine space for attendees to ask questions, explore ideas, and work together to see how their businesses might be able to embrace some of the practices discussed. This was underpinned by acknowledging that as long as the group was thinking, engaging, asking questions, and contributing to the conversation, there would be learning. Jarrod highlighted that as long as attendees left the workshop with a recognition of different ways of doing business, then the workshop would be considered a success. The workshop concluded with a mihi, as an expression of thanks, that reminded attendees of the purpose of engaging in these workshops:

Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou
kua hui mai nei
ki te tautoko te kaupapa o tenei wa
Nau te raurau
Naku te raurau
Ka ki te kete

Warm Greetings to you
who have gathered
to support the reason of this time
with your basket
and my basket
the kete will be full

The sections below set out key takeaways from various parts of the workshop.

- Understanding Māori business and Māori cultural values
- Current business challenges and opportunities
- Applying Māori approaches for firm strategy

2. Key areas of focus

2.1 Understanding Māori business and Māori cultural values

Given the title of the workshop, it was key for the group to commence the afternoon with a discussion about what “Māori business” meant. While this terminology might mean different things for individuals, there has been some recent work undertaken with Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure to identify three Māori enterprise types:

- Māori-owned businesses (with a majority of shareholders who are Māori)
- Māori sole traders
- Large employers of Māori (businesses that have minimum 75% employees who are Māori)

When considering the number of Māori businesses that meet those conditions, the breakdown is:

- Approximately 8,800 Māori-owned businesses
- Approximate 14,700 Māori sole traders
- Approximately 10,200 employers where there are a minimum 75% Māori employees

In trying to understand the importance of recognising Māori business, the group suggested there is interest from a government perspective, being able to track statistics, understanding where Treaty pay-outs might be in terms of investment back into the economy, and a recognition that such businesses exist. As someone suggested, 30 years ago there was little “care” that Māori businesses existed, and now there is a recognition through various enterprise type.

When discussing what might be different about Māori businesses and other New Zealand businesses, there was a recognition that while there are some differences, there are many elements of business that do not differ. However, to continue the focus on perspectives of Māori business for contemporary challenges, the group discussed the long-term orientation of Māori business, a multi-generational approach with many hapu and tribal representation that can lead to lengthy decision making because of the number of people involved. Further, many of the top Māori businesses in terms of total assts are tribal entities (rather than enterprises), which leads to complex, slow, political, bureaucratic mechanisms for decision making.

As the discussion continued, there were also acknowledgements of the Māori cultural values that were apparent in many Māori businesses. These included:

- Leveraging and supporting whanaungatanga – focusing on upholding and contributing to community relationships and networks
- Caring for whanau – ensuring extended family or those that interact as extended family are offered employment and supported through non-salary benefits
- Being kaupapa focused – basing decisions on principles, such as keeping funding and business interactions within the Māori business community and supporting other Māori businesses before other New Zealand or international businesses

Understanding these cultural values helped the group explore how Māori businesses dealt with challenges and opportunities they were facing.

2.2 Current business challenges and opportunities

Through 50 in-depth interviews with Māori and New Zealand businesses, Jarrod's research surfaced the biggest challenges currently facing business leaders. The group in attendance at the workshop also responded to the question "what is the biggest challenge for your business right now?" as well, for comparison. While there was a slight difference in the responses around the workshop table and the research data, we recognised that at the time the research was conducted attendees at *BusinessFirstNZ* workshops were also highlighting similar challenges.

Those previous challenges of the attendees and of the interviewees in Jarrod's research focused on recruitment and retention of employees. While that was still a challenge for businesses in attendance at this workshop, there were also concerns about uncertainty in the market, including:

- People – morale about job insecurity, seeking to building resilience, attracting and retaining talent or skilled workers
- Technology - keeping pace by learning to do things differently before it is an urgent requirement, understanding how technologies are continuing to change business, predicting impacts of new technologies
- Uncertainty in the external environment – changing and incoming regulations (especially in an election year), educating the market about strategic direction of the company, communicating product and service offerings, operating within financial constraints

While the surfaced concerns were broader than "recruitment, attraction, and retention," the group acknowledged that ensuring a strong, stable workforce was crucial to continue weathering the future uncertainties. There was also recognition that in times of uncertainty, not all businesses can compete on salary – something that was key to the findings about Māori business challenges.

2.3 Applying Māori approaches for firm strategy

To consider how the Māori businesses were applying their values to overcome their challenges, the group explored examples from Jarrod's research. Some examples included businesses that knew they were unable to compete on salary alone, and therefore provided benefits through land use (for farming, hunting, timber, hives, or stock), while others offered pathways to ownership through shares, and one even let staff use company property for engineering projects. The focus on whanau meant that family and friends who might not have experience to get a job elsewhere or have a troubled history that might limit job opportunities, were able to gain work experience in family businesses.

Some of the business leaders also noted that access to whanau and whanaungatanga was a win-win, in that the business got workers and individuals got their first job. They also recognised this as a means to offer training and development of skills and simply being in a workforce. The group recognised that Māori businesses that were operating in such a manner were able to draw on their networks to drive up business in times of need, and supporting their wider community when the jobs did not required qualifications.

Attendees recognised that these strategic approaches were not necessarily limited to Māori but cross many other cultures. They also recognised that some of their businesses were engaging in similar activities, such as financing higher education qualifications, providing training and development, and supporting continuing professional development.

The group also recognised that by investing in current workers they could avoid the high cost of unnaturally high turnover. As Jarrod highlighted, this type of turnover can cost from 100 – 300% (and can sometimes mean your past employee goes to work for and support your competitor). Research has also shown that those firms with high turnover perform poorer than those with lower turnover.

3. Key Takeaways

Overarching key takeaways included:

- 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

Further, after a great afternoon of discussion, the group were reminded that Māori cultural values can be (and often are) embraced by any New Zealand firm – so businesses should not hesitate to embrace them as relevant.

4. Proposed Next Steps

To continue our engagement among the business school and business community, as we seek to support business prosperity in NZ, the following workshops are planned for 2023:

| Workshop | Overview | Logistics |
|---|--|---|
| AI in the Workplace Associate Professor David Brougham | David will give us an overview and update of AI, and how it can be utilised in our working and daily lives for greater efficiency, effectiveness and ultimately productivity. The only barrier to this newfound power is not taking up this opportunity. | November 21 st 1:00 – 5:30pm, with nibbles and drinks provided. The Refectory, Massey University |

Thank you

We would like to thank you for your continued participation in these workshops, and welcome any feedback, comments, ideas, or questions you may have. Please note, if there are any issues or amendments required, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on this report. Feel free to contact the *BusinessFirstNZ* team via Dr Wayne Macpherson, bfnz@massey.ac.nz.