

*Tena koe i o tätou aitua maha e ngapu nei te whenua i to rätou hinganga. Heoi ano, e taea te aha atu i te tangi, i te maumahara ki a rätou me tä rätou i mahiai? No reira, waiho rätou ki a rätou, ko tätou ki a tätou, tena ano koe.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Tikanga and its impact on Human Resource Management practice – Some signposts.**

Before I go any further it is important now, to tell you the reader, that this, and any subsequent articles, is not going to provide you with a prescriptive model to apply to address what is a complex issue. It is not dissertation for a Masters Degree, nor is it an authoritative view. It is the view of a practitioner who knows a bit about HR and a bit about tikanga trying to put the two together for people who have to work with these issues daily.

I see my role not to answer the questions for you, but simply to bring them to your attention, in the hope that you will seek your own enlightenment in whatever manner it is appropriate for you. How you do this will also be an experience in enlightenment in itself. To paraphrase the Dhammapada, “*You must walk, I can only show you the path*”.

There are some things, however, that you can do which will make the journey for you a little less fraught with potholes. One is not to assume that all Māori are alike and therefore share the same tikanga. Not only is this not true but also can be seen as offensive. Another is not to assume that one Māori has the authority to speak for others. Some may have, and some patently do not. Choose the wrong one and you could be in serious trouble. Tread warily if you think that tikanga or “cultural advice” is simply a commodity, which you can buy from a willing seller. You may buy a counterfeit product.

One way to minimise the problems above, and others you are likely to face, is to know your community. Talk to them share their celebrations and their losses, become part of them and they will share their knowledge with you and help you avoid the many potential

problems you could face in trying to deal with these issues.

### **Tikanga and Corporate Culture.**

There has been considerable discussion about corporate culture and the part it plays in organisational development and in particular the management of an organisation’s human resources. Corporate culture is about the way things are done in the organisation and that to a large extent, even in the most egalitarian of organisations, is driven by the values of the people with the power in the organisation. That power is bestowed to the individual by the organisation and can be exercised in that environment with few constraints.

In managing the people in the enterprise how much cognisance is given to their values? How much do you know about the values, which truly matter to your employees? In particular those that drive your Māori employees, or for that matter those of any other than those belonging to the dominant culture.

**Tikanga Māori.** What is it? Well the root word is tika, which means right or correct. The ngä part is about being right. Tikanga is therefore about doing the right, proper or correct thing. But according to whom. Well when you are describing tikanga Māori it must be the right or correct thing according to Māori.

What are tikanga Māori? To ask this globally is similar to asking what is the right or correct thing to do in an English, Dutch, Scots, Irish society, or subset of that society which has been transported to New Zealand, and then modified to work here. Each hapū and whānau may have variations on a commonly held underlying set of values and demonstrate these in different ways in the same manner as most other societies. To give an overall answer is impossible, the task is too big.

Most of the things we do as a family, community, or society we do because we have learned over time that they work for us but would have difficulty trying to give a rational explanation for them. The same applies to tikanga. To help overcome this problem I would like to borrow an approach from Chief Judge Joe Williams of the Māori Land Court, and look at some of the components of tikanga, which are important. As they are not things that can be addressed in a couple of

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<sup>1</sup> *Greetings to you and to the many dead whose loss leaves the land bereft. What else is there to do other than mourn their loss and remember their deeds? The dead have passed on and the living remain. Greetings to you.*

paragraphs I think an article on each would be an appropriate way of initiating discussions.

A note of caution here would be that unlike European models, Māori models are not comfortably dissemble downwards. They are so interrelated and interdependent that in doing this I risk diminishing the value or losing some of its meanings. I do believe however to start the discussion this is an acceptable risk as this and any following publications are designed to raise questions, not provide answers.

So what are they? Let's start the process with whānaungatanga.

**Whānaungatanga.** This is a key tikanga for Māori. It is based on the concept that in Māori culture, relationships are all important. These relationships are not only between people but also the relationships Māori have with their physical world (Note this relates to the concept of kaitiakitanga which will be addressed in another article) and with their Gods (Note this relates to the concept of tapu which will be addressed in another article).

It emphasises the responsibility that the individual has to the collective by way of their family, extended family and community. Traditionally rights between people were only as long lasting as the relationship; rights to land etc. were often sealed by relationships, arranged marriages.

Running parallel to this was the fact that the community accepted the responsibility for the actions of its members. Families could be required to compensate others for a wrongdoing by one of their own through the traditional institution of muru. Societies could levy other societies for larger scale infractions. (Note this relates to the concept of utu, which will be addressed in another article)

Associated with whānaungatanga is that of whakapapa. You are not only not an individual in the sense of standing alone in a physically, but you are also not an individual in a meta-physical sense. You represent not only yourself, but also all of those ancestors who have gone before you. This can be an immense number, as Māori are bi-lineal, having the whakapapa of both the male and the female line to track back on. (Note this relates to the concept of mana, which will be addressed in another article)

This value or tikanga, is the reason that some non-Māori people often experience a

somewhat discomfoting level of perceived personal intrusion, when on first meeting Māori they are asked to answer questions like, where do you come from? Who is your family? etc. These questions will generally lead to a point where there is some relationship able to be formed between the questioner and the individual which relate the two people. This relationship can be very distant through marriage but is very important to Māori. Chief Judge Joe Williams also suggests that Māori is an inclusive culture and that is why they use terms like ngāti engarani to describe people of English descent. This gives them a tribe to belong to and a reference point for Māori to relate to them from.

The importance of whakapapa in relation to the relationship Māori have with the physical world is based on the fact that all Māori are descended from the Gods Rangi and Papa. The earth and the sky are the common eponymous ancestors of all things. This serves to illustrate the interconnectedness of people with people and people with their environment.

I introduced this article with a reasonably common poroporoakī as an example of the importance of links, including those with the dead, for Māori.

What are some of the implications of whakapapa and the values, which support it, for the workplace?

**Potential Conflicts.** Where are potential stress point in your Human Resource Management policies and practices and the corporate culture of your organisation in relation to the tikanga of whānaungatanga?

**Hiring.** As an employer your objective may be to recruit the person with the most merit to the job. (This is particularly true in the Public Sector where that requirement is enshrined in legislation). Define merit. You may believe that it relates to qualifications, experience, competencies, etc., Māori may link it to whakapapa, the blood line, of the individual, and who they are related to in the organisation may be the most important merit criteria. All of the technical bits may come second. How would you deal with this?

**Setting remuneration levels.** You will probably pay for people according to your perception of their individual worth or value to your organisation. Māori however may expect to have not only themselves, but their heritage,

the accumulated value of the individual, their whānau, hapū, and their ancestors recognised in some way. What about the position where an individual is a manager in your organisation and remunerated higher than someone who reports to them, where the reportee is senior in terms of whakapapa. Even if the manager is not Māori the junior-senior issue in terms of age is extremely important to Māori. This leads on to the issue of performance management.

**Performance management.** A Māori employee is not performing to the required level. The manager whose duty it is to change that is much younger than the employee, and worse is Māori of a lessor lineage. There will be some really interesting dynamics develop when this dialogue starts. How are you going to manage these? What about when it comes to having to fire the individual?

**Issuing of management directions.** There are instances in the armed services, where the officer, usually non-Māori, gives an instruction to a non-commissioned officer (Māori) to get the troops to do something. The non-commissioned officer then pauses, looks to the ranks to an older private (Māori), gets some sort of affirmation and then carries out the instruction. This process is acknowledging the seniority of the private and making sure that the person with the organisational power does not use that to the detriment of the status bestowed on another individual by their whakapapa. What happens if they do not get positive affirmation? How do you manage this dynamic?

**Formal occasions.** What about the more prevalent, and some would argue inappropriate, use of the pōwhiri and hui by organisations as part of their corporate processes? There is a protocol (kawa) which should be recognised and followed. This is likely to, or should be, based on the local iwi kawa. Would you know what they are? Would you know who to ask to find out?

What if the kawa prohibited women speaking during the formal ceremony? Can your organisation handle this apparent contradiction with the thrust of EEO, gender bias etc.?

**Tangihanga or bereavement leave.** This is about the individual fulfilling obligations to both the living and the deceased. These obligations are inextricably wound up with who the individual is, and who s/he is descended from, and related to. These will

determine the role the individual will play, the time it will take, and whether there is any room for personal choice about whether they participate or not. You as the employer will have some expectations around time and commitment that you may see as appropriate from your values base. These are likely to have little to do with the reality when it happens. How are you going to deal with a older Māori male who is not a recognised member of the traditional clergy, and holds a very junior position in your organisation, taking three or four days at a time to attend funerals of people you did not even know he knew, let alone was related to? He will be doing this quite regularly. He will also be fulfilling a higher obligation than coming to work for you. Did you know that there was one?

As I said at the start this is not a dissertation, nor is it all encompassing and authoritative. It has been checked to see that what has been said is correct but I freely acknowledge that I have not said all the could be said. I also acknowledge that I have raised questions and given no answers. Part of the reason for this is that I do not have the right to speak for Māori and the assumption that one voice can represent all Māori is patently wrong. The challenge to you is to go out and seek the knowledge you want if you wish to.

If there is a desire to have information published about other aspects of tikanga in this publication along these lines I am happy to do this over time.

E hiahia ana ahau kia rongō i āu whakāro mō runga i tēnei.

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Kāore e kume roatia te kōrero.  
Nō reira, noho ora mai rā

Nāku iti nei, nā

Waddy Wadsworth<sup>i</sup>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people who have taken the time in the past to talk to me and expand my knowledge. I also thank those who were able to check my contentions and offer me advice so in no particular order kia ora to Simon Snowden, Robbie Larkins, Nikki Conrad, Harry Eruera and Akuhata Tangaere, kaumātua of great

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