

AGM Column

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KiaOraMai Essential Service Skills

Delivering outstanding service every time

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The Rugby World Cup 2011 is an unprecedented opportunity for New Zealand to showcase its tourism offering to the world. The biggest event ever held in this country, the Government forecasts it will attract over 60,000 international visitors and a global television audience of over four billion.

If we can deliver the holiday of a lifetime for those 60,000 international visitors, New Zealand will reap the rewards. Those visitors will spend more while they are here; they are more likely to come back for a repeat visit; to tell their friends and family what a great time they had when they return home; and probably to blog, Twitter and Facebook about their fabulous holiday. Conversely, if the service isn't up to scratch, they'll tell twice as many people!

The opportunity RWC2011 holds for New Zealand was the catalyst for KiaOraMai Essential Service Skills, a new training programme designed for entry-level employees across the wider service sector – hospitality, accommodation, travel and transport, tourism events and activities, retail, hairdressing, beauty and spa. It is designed to ensure we deliver a positive, uniquely New Zealand customer experience every time, everywhere, for every visitor and customer in the country.

Launched in Wellington in late October by the Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism John Key, KiaOraMai will boost the economic return New Zealand gets from major events like the Rugby World Cup 2011. It will establish a legacy that will provide lasting benefits to the economy and importantly, to your business. If your employees know what to do to create a memorable New Zealand experience and engage positively with customers, based on your business's service promise, it will ultimately improve your firm's reputation and your bottom line.

TIA spearheaded the development of KiaOraMai after we identified that there was industry-wide concern at the lack of an accepted single, recognisable entry-level standard for employees working directly with visitors and customers in the service industries. Employers told us they were confused by the proliferation of local qualifications (hundreds in the sector, typically with no links to national qualifications) and at the poor alignment of local courses to industry needs. Our findings were supported by research conducted by ATTTO (the Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation) and the Hospitality Standards Institute (HSI).

KiaOraMai addresses those employer concerns. It is a single entry-level standard for employees working across the service industries. It is linked to unit standards on the National Qualifications Framework, offering employees a career path and a starting point for further training.

The programme takes about four months to complete, and features a mix of off and on the job training. The content, developed with industry input, covers a broad range of skills such as customer service, personal presentation, managing customer complaints, knowledge of New Zealand tourism features, activities and events, and the two values central to the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 –

kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga. Manaakitanga implies a reciprocal responsibility upon a host and an invitation to a visitor to experience the very best we have to offer. Kaitiakitanga is about guardianship, care and protection.

One of the unique things about KiaOraMai is that it is a collaborative effort, developed by TIA and the Services Industries Training Alliance (SITA), which comprises industry training organisations from six service industries – ATTTO, Hospitality Standards Institute, NZ Hairdressing Industry Training, Retail Institute, Skills Active and Tranzqual.

Our target is for 8000 to 10,000 trainees to go through the KiaOraMai programme before the Rugby World Cup kicks off in Auckland in September 2011. The first two training providers have been appointed – Air New Zealand Training and Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology (NMIT) and more will be added. Popular visitor destination Rotorua has greeted KiaOraMai with typical enthusiasm, becoming the first city in New Zealand to officially sign up to the programme.

TIA was delighted that the Government provided funding support for KiaOraMai through the Ministry of Tourism and Te Puni Kokiri. It highlights that this is a government that recognises tourism is a substantial and dynamic industry, a bedrock of our economy.

KiaOraMai is an opportunity to lift the whole customer service experience throughout New Zealand. For employers it's a chance to take a fresh look at what makes your business and service experience special in a New Zealand context. By doing this, we'll all win – better job satisfaction, increased customer loyalty, stronger businesses, and a stronger New Zealand economy.

Find out more about KiaOraMai and how it can help you, your employees and your business at www.kiaoramai.co.nz.