Have you recruited staff from overseas... is it working well?
Could you be working better with your migrant workers?

Migrant workers come to New Zealand from a wide range of cultures. People from different cultures value different things from New Zealanders and from one another. These values affect how people think and act in the workplace.

This toolkit can help you better understand and support your new migrant workers so they:

› settle well
› stay in your business
› contribute to its success.

Ways you can use this toolkit

We suggest you:

› refer to it before and after recruiting migrant workers
› discuss the topics with your managers or team supervisors
› use it for in-house training programmes.

Tip Useful advice.

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Everyone works in the same way don’t they?

But why didn’t he tell us that at the meeting?

Because he thinks he has to be asked before he can speak in a meeting.

Ever wondered why some of your migrant staff work differently from you?
Things workers from different cultures say about the way they work

What would you say about how you work?

How I like to work

I show respect by not looking my boss in the eye.

I like to know exactly what I have to do and that my job is secure. I will work hard and stick by my employer.

I often ask direct questions as I like to get things right.

I think it is rude to ask the boss questions.

I like to know who is in charge and who the big boss is. I do not usually address people older or more senior than me by their first name.

I am usually quiet in meetings until I am asked to speak.

I like to call everyone by their first name. I expect to be consulted and want things to be fair.

I do not like being told what to do all the time.

I use quite a bit of slang and often make suggestions without being asked.

I do not like being told what to do all the time.
Do you know what makes your migrant workers tick?

José never looks that happy but clams up when I ask him if he’s OK.

He’ll talk to me. Do you want me to ask him?

Migrant workers come to New Zealand bringing different cultures with them.

Do these different cultures have an impact on your workplace?

Different people value different things. These values affect how people think and act in the workplace. Everyone in the workplace can benefit from knowing a little about these differences so they can work better together.
Cultural value differences

Adapted from Geert Hofstede

New Zealanders place the lowest value on status, compared to people from the top 10 countries that provide migrants to New Zealand. What are the implications of this for your workplace?

**Important**: This chart is based on generalisations so please remember that people from the same culture can be different from each other.
How will your style of work and management fit with your new migrant workers?

Work styles and management styles

Knowing about the work styles of different cultures can help you to better understand and supervise your migrant workers when they first arrive.

Adapted from Yang Lin
Cultural preference in management styles

0 = like to be left to get on with the job  100 = like to be told exactly what to do

Adapted from Geert Hofstede

My new staff like to be told exactly what to do but I can’t be there all the time. So I wrote a detailed list of tasks, so they knew what they had to do and could just get on with it.
ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS

Do your new migrant workers take ages to get the message?

New Zealanders have a strange accent and they speak so fast. It took me a few weeks to ‘tune in’.

His accent was so strong when he first arrived. We thought his English wasn’t up to the job, but we soon found out how wrong we were!

Is it because they can’t understand what you’re saying?
What about English language skills?

New Zealanders use lots of informal language and slang at work. This makes it difficult for those new migrants who have learnt very formal English.

Just because someone has a strong accent it doesn’t mean they have poor English skills or can’t do the job.

Migrants want to do well and are keen to improve their performance. If their English language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) do need enhancing there are several ways that can be done.

Employers who invest in language training for their workers usually see noticeable improvements in productivity.

Visit: newzealandnow.govt.nz/english

Keep it clear

› Slow down! Pause more.
› Be very clear when giving instructions.
› Use simple direct language and explain workplace jargon.
› Provide important instructions in written form as well as spoken.
› Check understanding of instructions by asking your worker to repeat what they have to do: I ask them, “So, what are you going to do first?”
› Get expert help if necessary – it really pays off.
Getting things done
Requests and instructions at work

Why do some new migrants have problems with requests and instructions?

Many new migrant workers are used to a hierarchical workplace structure and managers who speak very directly. New Zealand managers usually speak in a less direct way and make their instructions sound like requests rather than orders. It is common for New Zealand employers to use softeners such as:

Do you think you could bring me that file – rather than – Bring me that file
It would be a good idea to add this section – rather than – Add this section

Many migrants find these softened or tentative requests and instructions confusing and they are not exactly sure what is expected of them.

How can you make sure that a migrant worker has understood your instruction?

› Avoid giving more than one instruction at a time.
› Be clear about who is to do the task. Use “you” rather than “we” or “I” Could you find that file – rather than – We will need that file.
› Repeat or summarise the key points. Give the message at least twice and emphasise the most important details.
› Avoid saying “Do you understand?” A new migrant worker might say “yes” to appear willing, capable and respectful but may not understand completely. Instead, check understanding by asking:

What will you do first?
What will you do if you have questions or problems? Tell me the things you have to do.
Fitting in
Being part of the team

Being able to communicate and interact with workmates is one of the key aspects of fitting into a new team. Most new workers need to learn how people in their new workplace communicate and work together. This can be more challenging for your new migrant workers who are trying to adapt to communication styles in a language that is not their first language. Also, in some cultures small talk and developing personal relationships with workmates is not the norm.

How can you help new migrant workers to fit in?

› Greet your new migrant workers in the morning, even if they do not respond at first. Remember, even simple greetings and farewells may not be the norm for some migrants. They do not mean to be unfriendly, they may just not be used to talking to superiors in an informal way.

› Encourage your new migrants to join in the small talk at tea breaks and lunch breaks. Show an interest in their background and find out what they see as normal workplace behaviour.

› If there is a lot of joking around in your workplace, include them in this. Again, this may not be something they are used to, but you can help them understand that it is an important part of friendly behaviour in many New Zealand workplace teams.

› Give new migrants time to adapt. For some new migrants even ways of showing interest such as nodding and saying “mm, yes,” when listening to someone are not usual. An attentive silence is considered respectful in many cultures.

› Speaking up when making a contribution in a meeting is not the norm in some cultures. In China, for instance, you must always use a quiet voice when talking to a superior. Encourage your new migrant workers to speak up, like their workmates do, if they are very softly spoken.

Developed in collaboration with the Language in the Workplace Team, School of Linguistics & Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.
Difficult talk at work
Refusing, disagreeing and complaining

In many cultures it is difficult to refuse a request from the boss, even if it is beyond what is normally expected. Sometimes employees need to refuse, disagree or complain. Sometimes you want and expect other opinions and you need to know when there are potential problems.

Making refusals and disagreement possible

When asking for something beyond what is normally expected, for example asking your new migrant worker to stay late, make sure they have no other commitments first, eg *What are your plans for this evening?*

If you do not prepare in this way for your request, they may not tell you that they have a family commitment or a ticket for an event.

When asking for feedback, make it clear that you want to hear about any problems as well as about things that will work or that are going well. Ask: *What changes would you suggest? What problems can you see?*

Expressing refusals and disagreement

New Zealanders tend to be very indirect and polite when they refuse, disagree and complain. While some new migrants find it difficult to speak out, others struggle to express refusals, disagreements and complaints in a suitably polite way.

Try not to react too negatively if disagreement is expressed directly or bluntly. Understand that learning to disagree less bluntly and to refuse and complain politely can take some time. Suggesting your new migrant workers read the next page might help them with this.
Maybe we could...
Suggestions and advice at work

In some cultures people only give their opinion or make suggestions when invited. In other cultures advice is expected and given at times when New Zealanders would not give advice. New migrants can be unsure when it is appropriate to give advice and opinions in New Zealand workplaces.

New Zealanders also often soften suggestions or opinions at work to avoid imposing their views too strongly on others and risking a relationship breakdown.

Some people use the same words when they are making a suggestion or expressing their opinion as when they are making a request or giving an instruction, eg *I wonder if we could*...

New migrants may have difficulty understanding whether they have been given a suggestion rather than an instruction. They can also find it difficult to soften suggestions.

**How can you help?**

1. Directly ask new migrants for their opinions or suggestions if they do not contribute when you feel they have knowledge or expertise that is appropriate. Start with their name, eg *Cheung, do you have any suggestions about how we can do this?*

2. Understand that if they give advice too strongly or bluntly, they may just be having difficulty understanding what is appropriate. English courses often teach the use of “you should” for giving advice for example, but New Zealanders tend to avoid saying this as it is too strong and direct.

3. Make it clear when it is just a suggestion and not an instruction. Use phrases such as: *this is just a suggestion, what do you think? or... can you think of another way we could do this?*

Developed in collaboration with the Language in the Workplace Team, School of Linguistics & Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington.
Topic 7  
THE SETTLEMENT PROCESS

Have your migrant workers gone off the boil? Does it affect their work and your business?

Maybe it’s because they’re having second thoughts.
It’s quite common to feel like that – it’s one of the settlement stages

The Settlement Curve

Being well prepared and knowing about what to expect can help them adjust to their new environment.

Offer support

› Offer support to your migrant workers and their families during the low period – it can make all the difference to their work.
Are your new migrant workers juggling too many things?

Many new migrant workers have partners and families and need time at the beginning to organise the essentials for starting their new life in New Zealand.
Helping new migrants settle means they’re able to perform well in your business, faster

The Workplace Settlement Model

Maintaining an interest in how a new migrant and their family are settling in will help them to perform well and help you to identify what kind of support, if any, they need along the way.

My tips

› A happy new migrant gives 100% to the business.
› A happy family means a happy new migrant.
› Organise some staff and family days to get everyone together.
› Set up a partners’ network so the partners can support each other.
How do other employers get the best from new migrant workers?

As with most of my new staff, I give migrants really clear instructions and close supervision to begin with.
My Filipino guys were so upset by the swearing they heard on the farm that they became really miserable and their work was affected. Once I found out about the situation, I asked the New Zealanders to cut out the swearing and the Filipino guys now feel much happier and their work’s improved.

Try these ideas

› Give migrant workers a ‘buddy’ to help with practical and cultural differences that come up every day.
› Demonstrate how we do the task and then ask your worker to do it.
› Ask about how they would do it in their country.
› Talk about the differences between NZ and their country.
› Be open minded – there may be more than one effective way to do things.
› Be tolerant of different styles of expression. Don’t let unfamiliar body language get in the way of good work relations.
› Allow time for both you and your migrant worker to adapt.
› Try putting yourself in their shoes – how would you like to be treated if you worked in a different country?
› Watch out for unexpected behaviour – it might be due to a cultural misunderstanding that you need to talk about.
› Work out compromises or make changes where possible.
What’s so strange about how New Zealanders work?

In New Zealand workplaces we do things differently from many other countries. So what are we like?

Compared to workers from some other parts of the world, New Zealanders:

› expect everyone to be treated fairly
› respect the boss but usually speak to them in an informal way
› like to work on their own without being closely supervised
› are willing to turn their hand to a range of tasks, not just those they were hired to do.
New Zealanders at work

New migrant workers might find the New Zealand workplace very different from what they’re used to. You may have to explain a few things.

What else can you do?

› Arrange for someone to act as a ‘buddy’.
› Prepare a written job description or list of tasks and targets.
› Prepare written information about how you operate – staff structure and roles, lines of communication, hours of work, break times, use of internet etc.
› Prepare existing staff for the new migrant worker’s arrival.
› Find out about the values and work styles of the new migrant worker’s country.
› Find out how they prefer to be managed.
Won’t a buddy system for new migrant workers cost time and money?

No. A buddy system *saves* time and money by getting new migrant workers up to speed faster.

It also helps iron out any small problems that come up along the way and gives new migrants someone to talk to.
What does a buddy do?
› Explains how the business works.
› Explains the usual way of doing things in the workplace.
› Explains New Zealand slang.
› Answers questions.
› Gives moral support.
› Helps sort out any problems.
› Includes the migrant in social activities.
› Learns about other cultures.
› Learns mentoring and leadership skills.

How does this help?
Migrants understand workplace systems and culture better and:
› settle more quickly
› become more productive
› stay in your business.

A good buddy is often one who has something in common with the new migrant worker, like children the same age or similar interests.
Have you ticked all the boxes?

A simple checklist can be useful for remembering all the things you can do to help new migrant workers to settle quickly into your workplace.

The new guy starts next week. Ron will be his buddy and show him the ropes but can the rest of you make sure he’s OK too? It will all be pretty strange for him when he first gets here.

The faster migrants settle the faster they add to your productivity.
Your checklists

✔️ Before your migrant worker arrives ask yourself

☐ Have I arranged for someone to meet the new migrant on their arrival in town?
☐ Have I arranged for someone to act as a ‘buddy’ or mentor?
☐ Do I have a written job description or list of tasks and targets to give to the new migrant?
☐ Do I have written information about how we operate – staff structure and roles, lines of communication, hours of work, timings of breaks, use of internet, e-mail, telephone etc.
☐ Has their office/workstation and/or equipment been set up and is it ready to use?
☐ Are existing employees prepared for the new migrant worker’s arrival?
☐ Do I know something about the values and work styles of the new migrant worker’s culture?
☐ Do I know how they prefer to be managed?
☐ Have I allowed for some time off in the first week for the new migrant to organise their home life in New Zealand?

✔️ First day at work

☐ Welcome your new migrant worker.
☐ Meet with immediate supervisor.
☐ Introduce them to a ‘buddy’ or mentor.
☐ Introduce them to workmates.
☐ Show them around the office and workplace and their work area.
☐ Give them the prepared written documents about the job and the workplace.
☐ Show them how to use any necessary equipment.
☐ Explain workplace etiquette, eg use of kitchen, recycling.
☐ Set up regular meetings between the migrant worker and their buddy, at least during the first month, to help them settle in.

✔️ Next days

☐ Provide on the job training.
☐ Arrange an official orientation programme.
☐ Introduce your new migrant worker and their family to relevant social opportunities.
Support for employers of migrant workers

Settlement information for new migrants

Immigration New Zealand provides free information services for new migrants. You can put migrant workers in contact with these services, which will provide them with information about living in New Zealand. For example, where to find a doctor, how to choose a school for their children, understanding the health system, and clubs and community groups that migrants can join.

You can help your migrant workers to access this information

1. Visit: newzealandnow.govt.nz
2. Phone 0508 558 855 to ask questions (they can ask for ‘Language Line’ to speak to someone in their own language)
3. Email their questions to newmigrantinfo@mbie.govt.nz
4. Get them to visit a Citizens Advice Bureau near you. See newzealandnow.govt.nz/local for details about the locations, or look at Topic 14.

Immigration New Zealand

Information and resources about employing migrants, the visa options available, and how to help your new migrant workers settle in New Zealand.

Visit: immigration.govt.nz/employers 0508 558 855
### Ministry Of Business, Innovation And Employment Contact Centre
Information about Employment Relations.
**Visit:** [employment.govt.nz/contact](http://employment.govt.nz/contact) 0800 20 90 20

### Worksafe New Zealand
Information about health and safety.
**Visit:** [worksafe.govt.nz](http://worksafe.govt.nz) 0800 030 040

### Worktalk
An online tool designed to improve communication between New Zealand employers or managers and their new migrant workers.
**Visit:** [worktalk.immigration.govt.nz](http://worktalk.immigration.govt.nz)

### Visaview
To check if a person who is not a New Zealand citizen has a valid visa to work in New Zealand.
**Visit:** [immigration.govt.nz/visaview](http://immigration.govt.nz/visaview)

### Interpreting New Zealand
Interpreting or ‘spoken translation’ to support effective communications between non-English speakers and government agencies or private businesses.
**Visit:** [interpret.org.nz](http://interpret.org.nz) 0508 468 377

### Office of Ethnic Communities
For information or advice about ethnic groups and contacts.
**Visit:** [ethniccommunities.govt.nz/contact-us](http://ethniccommunities.govt.nz/contact-us)

### The Employers Hub
For information and resources to help you find, hire and retain migrant staff.
**Visit:** [immigration.govt.nz/employers](http://immigration.govt.nz/employers)
Local information for new migrants

Immigration New Zealand provides a free local information service for new migrants about living and working in New Zealand.

This service can be accessed at the Citizens Advice Bureau in 30 locations around the country.

**South Island**

- **Nelson–Tasman**
  - CAB Nelson-Tasman
  - 9 Paru Paru Rd, Nelson
  - Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm

- **Marlborough**
  - CAB Marlborough
  - Marlborough Community Centre, 25 Alfred St, Blenheim
  - Monday–Friday 9am – 4pm

**Canterbury**

- **CAB North Canterbury**
  - Trevor Inch Memorial Library, 141 Percival St, Rangiora
  - Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm
  - Sat 10am – 1pm

- **CAB Christchurch City**
  - Ara (formerly CPIT)
  - 18 Williams St, City
  - (Cnr Ferry Rd & Williams St)
  - Monday and Friday 9am – 12pm
  - Tuesday–Thursday 9am – 3pm

**CAB Christchurch West**

- Hornby Community Care Centre, 8 Goulding Avenue, Hornby, Christchurch
- Monday–Friday 9am – 5pm
- The Loft – Eastgate Mall
  - Tuesday 11am – 2pm

**Free help in your language**

Call [0800 InfoNOW](tel:0800 463 6669). You can ask to talk in your language.
South Island continued...

**Otago**

CAB Dunedin  
Ground floor, Rodgers House  
155 Princes St  
Monday–Thursday 9am – 5pm  
Friday 9am – 3.30pm  
Saturday 10am – 12 noon

CAB Queenstown  
44 Stanley St  
Monday–Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm

**Southland**

CAB Invercargill  
36 Don St  
Monday–Friday 9am – 5pm  
Saturday 10am – 12pm

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**North Island**

**Northland**

CAB Whangarei  
Municipal Building, 71 Bank St  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm

CAB Auckland Central  
1st floor, Auckland Central Library, 44-46 Lorne St, City  
Monday–Friday 9.30am – 4.30pm  
Saturday 10am – 12pm

CAB Pakuranga-East Manukau  
Library Building, Aylesbury St, Pakuranga  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm  
Saturday 9.30 – 11.30am

CAB Browns Bay  
2 Glen Rd, Browns Bay  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm

**Auckland**

CAB New Lynn  
New Lynn Library Building, 3 Memorial Drive, New Lynn  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm  
Saturday 10am – 1pm

CAB Northcote  
Northcote Library Buildings, 5 Ernie Mays St, Northcote  
Monday–Friday 9.15am-3.30pm

CAB Eden Albert  
82 St Lukes Rd  
(by Public Library) Mt Albert  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4pm

CAB Manurewa  
Library Complex, 7 Hill Rd, Manurewa  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4pm  
Saturday 9am – 11am

CAB Mangere  
Shop 17, Orly Avenue, Mangere Town Centre  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4pm

CAB Onehunga  
Community Centre & Library Building, 81 Church St, Onehunga  
Monday–Friday 9.30am – 4pm  
Wednesdays open until 7pm  
Saturday 10am – 12pm

**Whanganui-Manawatu**

CAB Palmerston North  
Community House, 77 King St  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4.30pm

CAB Tauranga  
38 Hamilton St  
Monday–Friday 9am – 5pm

**Waikato**

CAB Hamilton  
55 Victoria St  
Monday–Friday 8.45am – 5pm

CAB New Plymouth  
Community House, 32 Leach St  
Monday–Friday 9.30am – 3.30pm

CAB Porirua  
2nd floor, Pember House, 16 Hagley St  
Monday–Friday 9am – 3.30pm

CAB Kapiti  
1st floor, Coastlands Shoppingtown, Paraparaumu  
Monday–Friday 9am – 4pm

CAB Wellington City  
Ground Floor, 101 Wakefield St  
Opens 9.30am Monday – Friday  
Closes 6.30pm Tuesday – Thursday  
Closes 3.30pm Friday  
Saturday 11am – 1pm
Acknowledgement

Immigration New Zealand is grateful for the assistance from the Language in the Workplace Team, School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies, Victoria University of Wellington in the preparation of these resources. We would also like to thank the employers and individuals who provided feedback on these materials.

A copy of this guide is available online

Visit: immigration.govt.nz/employerresources