

ETITO'S MAORI AND PASIFIKA PROJECT SHOWING THE WAY FORWARD

ETITO's pilot project to get more Maori and Pasifika pre-trade graduates into electrical apprenticeships is already showing success.

Eight new apprentices are now employed by the group apprenticeship scheme ETCO, where they have impressed tutors in training with their calibre and determination. The pilot is part of an ETITO project to increase the participation of Maori and Pasifika groups, who have traditionally been under-represented in the electrotechnology industry.

The project doesn't fly the flag of affirmative action, nor does it suggest that different standards should apply to people of different ethnicity. Rather, it seeks to put into practice research and evidence which show Maori and Pasifika people learn best when they have strong social networks to support them through their training. Generally speaking, Maori and Pasifika trainees are more likely to come from families that traditionally have not engaged with tertiary training, and so may not have the associated 'institutional literacy' that other groups take for granted.

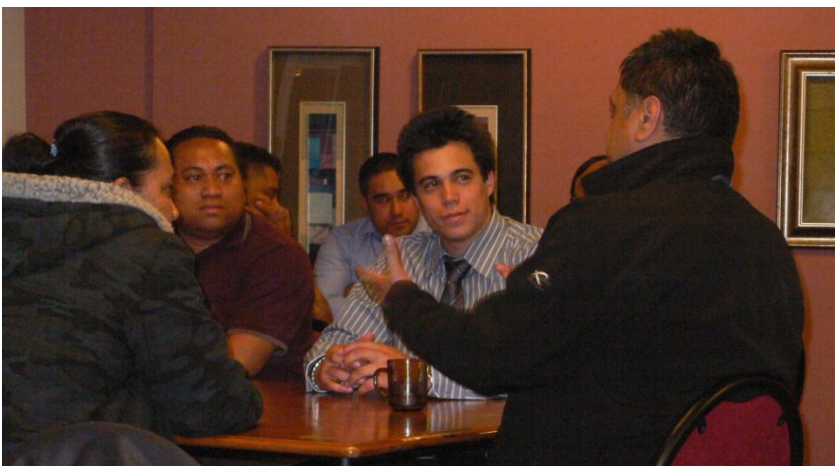
Key to the success of the project, then, has been developing a mentor network to support the apprentices as they complete their qualifications. Stuart Lawrence, ETITO Training Manager in charge of the project, says the mentors are most effective because they have a similar cultural background to the apprentices and either have a trade themselves, or have worked with young people before. "The most important thing was that they'd be able to relate to the guys in terms of where they are in their lives, and the kinds of challenges they have to face."

While the apprentices are expected to check-in with their mentors by phone at least once a month, some found the network invaluable – calling their mentor a couple of times a week. "One of the guys lost his father over the Christmas holidays, and another's partner was expecting a baby. These are quite stressful things at the best of times, but when you're working full-time with classes and study in the evenings it can be disastrous, unless you have support."

Stuart says bringing the whanau into the equation was also important. "We met with their families on a one-to-one basis and in some cases even spoke with their ministers – we wanted as many people to get behind the guys in their training as we could find."

So far everything's going great for the project. Feedback from ETCO tutors has been overwhelmingly positive, and the apprentices are held in high regard for the commitment they've shown to their training. Stuart sees the project as something that can grow stronger each year. "It's our hope that when this group has finished their qualification, some might want to act as mentors for a future group."

To find out more about ETITO's Maori and Pasifika project, contact Stuart Lawrence on 09 583 1335 or stuartl@etito.co.nz.



Quintin Tupe [left] and Kerry Dawson meet their mentor