

Learner-Focused, Industry-Led, Government-Enabled



EMPLOYER TOOLKIT Workplace Wellbeing and Culture

employertoolkitnz.org



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- Intended Audience: This toolkit is designed specifically for employers (business owners, supervisors, and managers) in the food and fibre sector. We recognise that while some content may be highly relevant to your work, other sections may not apply to your specific circumstances.
- Introduction to Te Ao Māori Concepts: The
 information and concepts presented provide a
 foundational understanding of te ao Māori. This
 toolkit serves as an introductory guide, and we
 encourage you to continue your educational
 journey, as understanding these concepts is an
 ongoing process.
- Diversity and Inclusivity: We acknowledge the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs of employees within the sector. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and it's important to consider this diversity when applying the information in this toolkit.

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References to external sites are provided throughout the toolkit to support the reader with additional resources that may be more detailed, contextual, or live. While care has been taken to review these, we do not endorse nor bear any liability for the content or accuracy of these external sites.

Access more chapters

Visit the Employer Toolkit website for free and simple information spanning the entire employee lifecycle. There are 4 downloadable chapters available in PDF form, including:

- Attracting the Right Individuals How do I hire and onboard new employees so they stay for longer?
- Māori Cultural Confidence How do I grow my understanding of Māori experiences in the workplace?
- Workplace Wellbeing and Culture How can I create a positive environment that boosts job satisfaction?
- Mentorship and Coaching How do I support employees in their growth journey?

Workplace Wellbeing and Culture

How can I create a positive environment that boosts job satisfaction?

Creating a happy and healthy workplace is important to ensure the job satisfaction of your employees. When our employees feel good and the work culture is positive, everyone benefits. A supportive and friendly workplace doesn't just increase job satisfaction—it also boosts productivity and keeps your team motivated and committed. Good workplace wellbeing and culture includes multiple factors.

We explore overall workplace wellbeing here, but for more information on mental, physical, cultural and social wellbeing see our website.

Important tools you can use to improve wellbeing, particularly of new and younger employees are explored too. These are:

• Tool #1: Communications

• Tool #2: Buddy systems.



What is workplace wellbeing and culture and why does it matter?

Wellbeing includes different parts of a person's life that affect their overall health and happiness. This means that things happening outside of work can greatly affect how employees feel and perform at work.

By the end of this chapter, you'll have practical tips to help create a place where your employees feel satisfied in their role, supported, and ready to do their best.





Workplace Wellbeing (Workplace Culture)

Creating a positive workplace culture can set a business up for success. A positive culture not only attracts and retains skilled workers but also boosts productivity and job satisfaction. Workplace culture is the shared values, beliefs, and behaviours that shape how people interact and work together. It's about creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and motivated to contribute their best.



Tip Different people value different things in a workplace – make sure to have a conversation with team members about how to develop the culture in a way that suits them.

When building your workplace culture, see below some principles to keep in mind.

- Inclusivity and respect: Create an environment where everyone can feel included and respected. Recognise and celebrate different backgrounds and perspectives.
- Communication: Encourage open and honest communication. Make it easy for team members to share ideas, feedback, and concerns.
- Shared values: Clearly define and communicate the core values that guide your business. Ensure these values are reflected in everyday actions and decisions.
- 4. **Employee wellbeing:** Give importance to wellbeing factors from outside of the workplace: the physical and mental wellbeing of your team. Provide resources and support to help them do well both at work and in their personal lives.
- Recognition and reward: Acknowledge and appreciate the hard work and achievements of your employees. Celebrate successes, both big and small through activities such as morning teas, and employee of the month awards.

What does good workplace culture and wellbeing involve?

Building a positive workplace culture

Acting in good faith is an important concept all employers should follow. Acting in good faith means to be holding up principles of honesty, communication, and transparency. More information on good faith can be found on our website and on the Employment NZ website. Beyond meeting these legal requirements, employers can take additional steps to create a positive workplace culture. By putting in effort to go above and beyond the legal requirements, you'll have an environment where employees feel more valued and supported. This will help reduce the likelihood of them leaving for reasons within your control.

The workforce demographic is changing fast, with younger generations preferring flexible learning and working environments, as well as having a say in their work processes. Here are some tips and tricks employers can implement to meet these evolving expectations.

What are some practical steps I can take to support workplace wellbeing and culture?

Have you considered how you are supporting employees to improve their wellbeing? Run through these steps to figure out what you can do to go the extra mile. See more tips for improving each of the five key components of wellbeing are below.

Workplace culture

 Assess workplace culture: Start by asking your employees what they believe makes a good workplace culture. Understanding their perspectives can help you tailor initiatives that resonate with your team. Consider how elements of te ao Māori can enhance the workplace culture, see chapter 2, Māori Cultural Confidence for more information.



 Foster a positive environment: Create a workplace atmosphere that is supportive, respectful, and positive. Encourage teamwork and collaboration, and address any issues of conflict quickly and effectively.

2. Mental wellbeing

- Put on your lifejacket first: Ensure you are looking after your own mental health, as leadership sets the tone for the entire organisation.
- Look out for others: Get to know how your staff view mental health, it may look different to different people. Encourage your staff to prioritise their mental health as well. Consider enrolling in a Mental Health First Aid course to better support your team.

3. Physical wellbeing

- Health and safety obligations: Ensure you are complying with Worksafe NZ's website for health and safety guidelines. You can find these on their website, including food and fibre specific information. Searching their website to find industry or sector specific information which fits your business will provide the most helpful and accurate information on how to manage health and safety.
- Enhance physical wellbeing: Think about ways you can go above and beyond minimum health and safety requirements to prevent burnout or injury.

4. Cultural wellbeing

 Celebrate cultural diversity: Get to know your employees' cultural backgrounds and encourage them to share aspects of their culture with colleagues. This creates a more inclusive environment with meaningful workplace interactions.

5. Social wellbeing

- Strengthen social bonds: Host social events, such as an end of year work-do to help your team connect and unwind.
- Connect over hobbies: Encourage employees to join clubs or collectives to build camaraderie and a sense of community.

See the communications and buddy system sections below for steps on how to plan or implement best practices.

What are some tools I can use to build a good workplace culture?

Here are some practical tools and resources to help you build and maintain a strong workplace culture.

- Team-building activities: Organise
 team-building activities to strengthen
 relationships and foster a sense of community.
 These can range from informal social gatherings
 to structured meetings.
- Mentorship / Buddy programmes: Introduce mentorship (see chapter 4, Mentorship and Coaching) or the buddy system section below to provide support and guidance for new and existing employees. This helps build a culture of continuous learning and development.
- Communication platforms: Use formal and informal social channels to facilitate easy and open communication among team members.
- 4. **Wellbeing initiatives:** Offer resources such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), workshops on stress management, or create time for the team to do some stretching at the start of a shift for ten minutes.
- Surveys and feedback tools: Use regular surveys and feedback tools to review employee satisfaction and collect insights on areas for improvement (more on this in the communication section).



What does good workplace culture look like in reality?

Building a strong workplace culture involves consistent, everyday actions. Here are some examples of what it may involve on a day to day basis.



Daily check-ins: Start each shift with a brief team check-in to share updates, celebrate wins, and address any challenges. This keeps everyone connected and aligned.



Open-door policy: Encourage leaders to maintain an open-door policy, making it easy for employees to approach them with questions or concerns as they may arise.



Regular recognition: Implement regular recognition programs, such as Employee of the Month, to highlight and reward outstanding contributions.



Professional development: Offer ongoing opportunities to help employees grow their skills and advance their careers. More information is available on our website.



Inclusive practices: Ensure all team activities, meetings, and communications are inclusive, considering different needs and preferences.



Tool #1: Communications

Getting your messages across

Whether you're managing production, or working with distributors, clear and effective communication ensures that everyone is on the same page, working towards the same goals. Simply put, good communication helps people do their jobs better and makes workplaces more satisfied and productive.

Good communications helps you maximise the impact of your policies and processes (see our website or the Employment NZ website for more information). Whether it's something compliance related that protects you as an employer, or some guidance that will improve an employee's work experience, people need to know what you expect of them so they can act accordingly.

Employees want their employers to listen to them, and most importantly to take action. Two out of three employees feel their voice is not listened to in some way by their manager or employer, which may have a negative impact on turnover ⁶.

The costs of bad communication are:

- People make avoidable mistakes, and need to re-do jobs - wasting their time (and your money)
- Delays occur and deadlines are missed
- Managers can't lead their teams well, when they don't understand what is expected of them and their teams
- A lack of buy-in or understanding around change
- People are afraid to ask for feedback, which stunts personal and professional growth.

What should I keep in mind when thinking about communicating with employees?

- Clarity: Make sure your messages are clear and easy to understand. Avoid using complicated words or industry jargon.
- Consistency: Keep your communication consistent. This helps avoid confusion and ensures everyone knows what to expect.
- 3. **Listening:** Communication is a two-way street. Make sure you're not just talking, but also listening to what others have to say. Show that you value your employees' input by asking for their perspective too. Acknowledge their concerns and work together to find a solution.
- 4. **Respect:** Always communicate with respect. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Try to avoid raising your voice.
- 5. **Timeliness:** Share information in a timely manner. Don't wait until the last minute to communicate important updates. Make sure your audience has enough time to read and respond if needed.

Remember everyone is at a different stage in their career. What is second nature to experienced farmers, growers, foresters, and fishers may not be for everyone on the team. A task that may seem simple to you might not be for someone else. When the pressure is on, it's easy to forget that. Be thoughtful of others and their skill level and ability.

Note: Reading and Maths

Everyone is at a different stage in their journey reading, writing and doing sums. Some people are not confident in reading and doing maths. Adjusting your communications to meet the needs of your employees will ensure the best outcome.

⁶ UKG (2021) https://www.ukg.com/blog/workforce-institute/new-research-the-heard-and-the-heard-nots

What does good communication look like in reality?

Have a range of formal AND informal communication channels that allow communication from you to employees, and employees to you.

Forma

InFormal

- Pulse surveys to check in on wellbeing*
- Videos
- Scheduled 1:1 meetings
- Exit interviews
- Regular performance check-ins
- All hands staff meetings / Daily / Weekly huddles
- team meetings
- Noticeboard messages
- Unscheduled one on one meetings
- Open Door Policy: Encourage an open-door policy where team members feel comfortable approaching you with their questions or concerns.
- Whatsapp / group messages / text chain
- Direct text / message
- Posters

Some questions to ask could include:

- How are you feeling at work recently?
 Multi-choice response options: Very Happy, Happy, Neutral, Unhappy, Very Unhappy
- 2. Do you feel supported by your team and manager?

Multi-choice response options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

3. Is there anything we can do to improve your wellbeing at work?

Open-ended response

These questions can help you gauge overall mood, the level of support employees feel, and gather specific suggestions for improvement.



Tool #2: Buddy systems

Supporting your employees from day one

Using a buddy system is a simple and effective way to support new employees as they settle into their roles during their first few weeks or months. A buddy system involves pairing an experienced employee (the "buddy") with a newcomer. The role of a buddy includes answering questions, introducing the new team member to others, and sharing tips on workplace practices to help them settle in. On an ongoing basis, a buddy can be someone who provides support to raise personal or professional issues.

By pairing them with an experienced colleague, you can help them feel welcomed, get trained up, and feel like a part of the team from day one. This approach can boost morale, improve retention, and boost overall productivity.

This system works best for people who are new to the business, particularly for younger workers or those making a career change. A good buddy would be a trusted person that has been in the new person's role before (typically two to five years further in their career).

Buddy system benefits

- Improves your welcoming / onboarding process
- Faster integration into your culture
- Improved learning and development
- Ongoing support and identification of issues
- Increases the likelihood of new hires staying on

What should I keep in mind when setting up a buddy system?

- Clarity: Ensure both the buddy and the new employee understand the purpose and expectations of the buddy system. Have an agreed timeframe for the formal buddy relationship.
- Compatibility: Pair buddies who will work well together and have compatible personalities, workstyles and work in the same area.
- Support: Provide buddies with the tools and resources they need to be effective mentors.
- Flexibility: Be open to feedback and willing to adjust the buddy system as needed.



How can I support buddies to succeed?

Training Materials: Here is a guide you can use outlining how to be an effective buddy.

My role as a buddy

- 1. To welcome your new workmate and help them settle in as smoothly as possible.
- 2. To create a memorable and positive experience for your new workmate.
- 3. To get them up to speed with the basics of getting around as soon as possible.



Principles for buddies

Be approachable and responsive

Make sure your new workmate knows they can come to you with any questions or concerns.

Be inclusive

Make sure to include your new workmate in team activities and events, and help them feel like a part of the team.

Be patient and understanding

Remember that starting a new job can be overwhelming, and be patient with your new workmate as they adjust to their new role.

Encourage and praise

If they've done a good job, say it. Make sure to encourage your new colleague when they do well.

Be a mentor

Share your experience and knowledge, and help your new workmate grow in their role.

Be a friend

Building a positive relationship with your new workmate makes their transition more enjoyable and will be beneficial for both of you.



Buddy system checklist: A list of tasks and topics for buddies to cover with newcomers.

Day one

- Meet new joiner, give them a tour, including toilets, kitchen, lockers.
- Help them navigate any administrative processes.
- ☐ Show them where to get tea/coffee/eat lunch.
- ☐ Introduce the new joiner to other team members.
- ☐ Invite the new joiner to have lunch with you.
- Provide a brief overview of the business culture, values so they know what to expect.
- Share a bit about your personal experiences and insights about working at the business / in the industry.

Week one

- If possible, coordinate shifts on the same days / times as the new joiner so you can be a familiar face.
- ☐ Set up informal check-ins.
- Provide an overview of the new joiner's team: other team members, roles, and responsibilities.
- Have the new joiner shadow you to get the hang of new tasks.

Week two - four

- Be available for spur of the moment questions.
- Continue to introduce the new joiner to other team members.
- Provide the new joiner with resources and materials to support their learning and development, such as training manuals or best practice advice.

What's my role in a buddy system as an employer?



Trainer:

Ensure buddies know their role as a buddy and are supported with training materials and a buddy checklist.



Introductions:

On the new employee's first day, introduce them to their buddy. From there, the buddy can give them a tour, introduce them to colleagues, and help them get set up.



Escalation:

Be available for support when issues or questions arise that need to be escalated beyond buddy assistance.



Feedback:

Ask the new joiner and buddy how the system is working and use feedback to improve the process.



What does this look like in real life?



Sam is the newest worker at the dairy farm he has just joined as a milker. He got hired recently to help with the busy season – the team is currently in the midst of calving. Clocking long days and early starts in the midst of winter is starting to take a toll on Sam, throwing off his normal positive attitude.

The challenge

Working on a dairy farm can be tough and often lonely work. Early morning shifts mean that he doesn't get to see his friends often in the evenings, as he has to go to bed early.

Sam is **learning how to do new tasks**, and learning how to manage his time efficiently.

When Sam joined, **most of the team was very busy** and feeling stressed – which was not very approachable.

Buddy support response

The buddy system means Sam has a mate to share the load with and someone who looks out for him on the job. His buddy shares tips for shift work.

At the end of the day, **Sam and his buddy** have a regular check-in. They talk about what they accomplished, plan for the next day, and make sure neither of them is feeling overwhelmed. If one of them is, they discuss ways to adjust the workload, prioritise jobs, or find additional support.

The owner of the farm temporarily decreased the workload for Sam's buddy so that he had enough time to support Sam. Having a go-to person to ask questions was helpful, and Sam didn't feel like a bother asking questions because his buddy made it clear that he had time, and was there to help Sam get settled into his daily tasks. He could shadow his buddy to learn how to do tasks.





Where do you sit in workplace wellbeing?

Examples of bringing together the elements of Workplace wellbeing

Below are examples of three different employers who are at different stages of creating positive workplace culture through the different aspects (mental, physical, cultural, social wellbeing).

Case Study 1 - Needs Addressing

Jake, an employer at a mid-sized orchard, makes no efforts to create a healthier and more supportive work environment. This leads to employees burning out, getting injured, and feeling unsatisfied at work, and eventually leaving the business.

A few of Jake's employees have been struggling with several issues outside of work that have impacted their overall wellbeing and productivity.

There are several areas that Jake is neglecting that could be quick, low-effort fixes.

Mental Wellbeing:

X Employees have been feeling increasingly stressed and anxious due to the demanding nature of their work. There is no support at work and people feel uncomfortable bringing up mental health support.

Cultural wellbeing:

X Employees from diverse backgrounds do not feel fully included or understood. They feel like they have to hide a part of their identity at work to fit in. Recognising and celebrating cultural events and traditions, such as Matariki, could foster a more inclusive environment.

Physical wellbeing:

X The team has not received proper training on safe working practices, resulting in frequent injuries and fatigue. Improving health and safety training is essential to protect employees' physical wellbeing.

Social wellbeing:

- X Employees feel isolated as they haven't formed strong connections with their colleagues. The rural orchard site doesn't help, as the social scene is limited.
- X There is a lack of social activities and team-building exercises that foster strong relationships among staff. Creating opportunities for social interaction and team bonding is necessary.
- X Jake doesn't encourage staff to get connected with their local communities in clubs or collectives.

Communications

- X Lack of team meetings: The orchard does not have regular team meetings or briefings to ensure everyone understands their tasks, so employees often receive unclear or incomplete instructions, leading to confusion and mistakes.
- X **Weak feedback culture:** Employees rarely receive feedback on their performance, making it hard for them to improve. Without regular check-ins or performance reviews, employees don't know if they're meeting expectations or how they can develop their skills. Implementing a feedback system is essential for employee growth and morale.
- X **No Open-Door Policy:** Employees don't feel comfortable approaching Jake with concerns he is always perceived as too busy, and not very friendly or easy to start a conversation with.

The lack of an open-door policy means employees' ideas and issues often go unheard, adding to their stress and frustration. Creating a more open and approachable environment where employees feel comfortable sharing their concerns is important.



Case Study 1 - Needs Addressing

Buddy system

- X Lack of Guidance or process: New hires do not have a designated person to guide them through the initial days. Without a buddy, new hires feel lost and overwhelmed, struggling to learn the ropes on their own. A buddy system would provide much-needed support and guidance.
- X **No Hands-On Training:** New employees do not receive practical training during their induction. The absence of something like a buddy system means new hires miss out on hands-on learning from experienced colleagues, leading to slower skill development and more mistakes. Hands-on training is vital for new hires to learn effectively.
- X **Poor Social Integration:** New hires find it hard to integrate socially with the team. New joiners are somewhat left to figure out the ropes themselves. This means new joiners may feel disconnected for a longer period of time.

Case Study 2 - Doing Well

Maisie, the owner and manager of a mid-sized pork farm, has made significant strides in noticing issues in the workplace culture, and making changes to support employee wellbeing.

Her efforts have resulted in a more supportive and productive work environment. There is still room for improvement, using tools like communications and buddy systems to get the most out of the culture-building initiatives that are in place. This makes the team more productive and increases job satisfaction.

Mental Wellbeing:

- ✓ Maisie understands that rural based farmers are at increased risks of mental health issues due to the geographic isolation, small work teams, and the social stigma amongst farmers about mental health challenges.
- ✓ She puts mental health resources in the breakroom and encourages open conversations about mental health.

Cultural wellbeing:

✓ Maisie talks to her team about their cultural backgrounds, and makes an effort to acknowledge and sometimes celebrate relevant cultural events, such as Matariki or Diwali. This helps create an environment where employees feel respected and valued, albeit on a somewhat limited scale.

Physical wellbeing:

✓ Regular health and safety training is conducted to keep everyone safe while conducting day to day tasks, and comply with Worksafe requirements.

Social wellbeing:

- Maisie organises a weekly morning tea where all employees chat and connect.
- ✓ Maisie encourages all staff to connect in with the local catchment group.

Communications

- ✓ **Morning check in:** The farm has a start of shift team huddle to talk through what needs to get done each day, and everyone shares a high and a low from the day before.
- ✓ Two way radios: The station uses two-way radios for real-time communication. Every worker has a radio, and they can talk to each other quickly for both routine work and emergencies. This makes the farm safer and more efficient.
- ✓ Open-Door Policy: Maisie encourages team members to share their thoughts and concerns anytime. Employees feel comfortable talking to Maisie, and are not scared to ask questions, knowing they will be heard and respected. This builds trust and a positive work culture.



Case Study 2 - Doing Well

Buddy system

- ✓ **Warm Welcome:** New hires are paired with experienced buddies who greet them on their first day. The buddy meets the new joiner at the farm gate, introduces them to the team, and shows them around the station, including key areas like the barn, paddocks, and emergency exits.
- ✓ **Hands-On Training:** The buddy provides practical training to the new employee. New hires shadow their buddies for the first few weeks, learning essential tasks such as animal care, machinery operation, and maintenance. This hands-on approach helps them gain confidence and skills quickly.
- ✓ **Social Inclusion:** The buddy invites the new employee to join any social events, which happen occasionally.

Case Study 3 - Excelling

Liam is owner and station manager of a rural sheep station.

Liam's workplace is a great example of how good communication, a supportive buddy system, and a focus on wellbeing can create a positive and productive work environment.

By going the extra mile, Liam has built a culture where employees feel valued, safe, and motivated, leading to improved productivity and reduced staff turnover.

Mental Wellbeing:

- ✓ Liam provides access to counselling services and mental health resources. He also organises mindfulness workshops and encourages the team to discuss mental health openly.
- Liam regularly acknowledges hard work and celebrates team successes. He also encourages a healthy work-life balance, making sure everyone takes breaks and has time off.

Cultural wellbeing:

✓ Liam encourages the team to celebrate cultural events and traditions. He ensures that everyone feels included and respected, regardless of their background.

Physical wellbeing:

- ✓ Regular health and safety training is conducted to keep everyone safe.
- Liam arranges for experts to run workshops on topics like first aid, handling livestock safely, and using machinery. This proactive approach reduces accidents and ensures a safe working environment.

Social wellbeing:

- ✓ Liam set up a monthly mountain bike club employees that are interested ride together on Friday evenings.
- ✓ Liam encourages staff to always be learning and improving, including asking for feedback regularly. He encourages managers to also create spaces where team members can come to them with feedback, or asking for feedback.



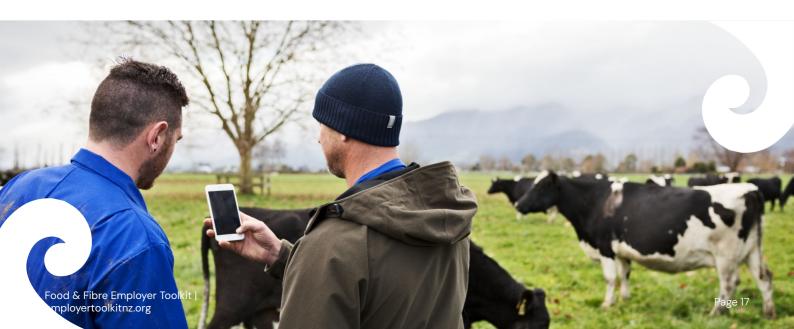
Case Study 3 - Excelling

Communications

- ✓ Morning check in: Liam starts the day with a brief ten minute team huddle at the main shed. Everyone talks about the day's tasks, any concerns, and shares positive news. This helps everyone know what's happening and where they can pitch in.
- ✓ Two way radios: The station uses two-way radios for real-time communication. Every worker has a radio, and they can talk to each other quickly for both routine work and emergencies. This makes the farm safer and more efficient.
- ✓ Open-Door Policy: Liam encourages team members to share their thoughts and concerns anytime. Employees feel comfortable talking to Liam, and are not scared to ask questions, knowing they will be heard and respected. This builds trust and a positive work culture.
- ✓ Monthly Newsletters: Liam sends out a monthly email newsletter to all employees. The newsletter includes updates on farm activities, employee achievements and celebrations (like birthdays), upcoming events in the local community, and safety reminders. It's a simple way to keep everyone informed and engaged.

Buddy system

- ✓ Intentional buddy selection: Buddies are selected based on Liam's assessment of if they have similar hobbies, similar stage of their working career, and might get on well. Employees are happy to take up a buddy role because they know from experience how it helps you feel part of the team really quickly.
- ✓ **Warm Welcome:** New hires are paired with experienced buddies who greet them on their first day. The buddy meets the new joiner at the farm gate, introduces them to the team, and shows them around the station, including key areas like the barn, paddocks, and emergency exits.
- ✓ **Hands-On Training:** The buddy provides practical training to the new employee. New hires shadow their buddies for the first few weeks, learning essential tasks such as animal care, machinery operation, and maintenance. This hands-on approach helps them gain confidence and skills quickly.
- ✓ Regular Check-Ins: Buddies and new hires have regular check-ins to discuss progress and address any concerns. These check-ins happen during breaks or at the end of the day, fostering open communication and continuous support.
- ✓ **Social Inclusion:** As an employer, Liam fosters a sense of community on the station. Liam organises social events like BBQs and after-work gatherings, helping everyone bond. The buddy invites the new employee to join any social events, letting them know when and where they are happening.







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