



How to match **Australia**

By Grant Amos

Much has been made of Australia's superior economic performance and the ways New Zealand can catch up. In workplaces around New Zealand, managers can also do their bit. So, based on years of advising managers on both sides of the Tasman about achieving the perfect team performance, here are my 10 tips for improving your organisation's productivity – and helping your country.

1 FOCUS ON INVESTMENT, NOT COST Like many Kiwis, I grew up thinking I could buy something only if I'd saved up for it. This attitude encourages thrift, but it also leads to a focus on cost rather than return on investment. Many Kiwi managers focus on what salary job candidates want, rather than on the value they bring to the business. But it's the return on salary investment that matters, a philosophy that Australian managers are more likely to embrace.

2 DON'T HIRE A BUNCH OF CLONES Too often, managers hire people just like them. But people just like you have your weaknesses, and you want staff who can cover those weaknesses. When hiring, identify the strengths you are missing and then set out specifically to hire people who can fill them. Organisations should always reflect on what is working and what can be improved on. For example, if the team is extroverted, you may look at getting some more quieter staff just to tone down the atmosphere. Conversely, if your team is subdued, one live wire might pick up the tone, and spark others' ideas.

3 REALISE THE NUMBER-EIGHT WIRE MENTALITY ONLY GOES SO FAR Another common mistake is to hire anyone with the basic skills, assuming they'll learn on the job, just because that's what Kiwis do. Instead, typically larger Australian businesses are much more likely to have formal training and development plans, setting out what this person can do now, how we're going to train them and what they'll be able to achieve in three or six months. The number-eight-wire mentality is great for dealing with crises that must be solved now, but not for building high-performance teams.

4 CHOOSE THE RIGHT PEOPLE FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT Sixty percent of what makes people successful is the environment around them. So while the tasks might be the same, people will behave differently in different environments. For example, you may have a group bonus scheme while your competitor, from whom you just poached a "star performer", based bonuses on individual behaviour. Understand what shapes your business and hire people who will thrive in your environment.

5 DON'T EXPECT EVERYONE TO LEARN THE SAME WAY Some people don't learn through written or verbal instruction – they have to learn by doing it on the job. Others will understand the instruction, but then need to practise on the job. Still others will need to ask lots of questions. And finally, some will just get on with it. By making allowances for different learning styles you'll enjoy a lot more success in training your staff.

6 UNDERSTAND WHAT MOTIVATES YOUR STAFF Pay gets your staff to work, but mostly it doesn't drive extra effort or stand-out performance. Some people are motivated by team spirit, some by "making a difference". If you don't find out what motivates your staff you will face high staff turnover or a demotivated team full of people who never really perform.

7 GIVE YOUR STAFF THE FEEDBACK THEY NEED Most people need feedback and encouragement to do more than the minimum necessary. And even in mundane jobs, good leadership and management can help stave off boredom. Some people are happy just to get on with a job. But others will always need to come back to you and ask questions. If you don't meet that need, they won't get any better.

8 WORRY LESS ABOUT BEING LIKED Many Kiwi businesses have grown up from family firms, and everyone wants to be liked by their family. But for businesses to grow, it's much more important for managers to be effective. Staff won't respect managers they think are playing the popularity game. They will respect, and work harder for managers who are honest, straight up, and who aren't seen as having a hidden agenda.

9 USE YOUR GENERALIST'S SKILLS TO BE A GOOD MANAGER If you have grown up with the firm, you will have started as a generalist, having to do a bit of everything and make decisions about all sorts of things. That means you have learned to look at a situation from many different angles and make decisions in the interest of the business, not from a narrow perspective. Use that strength to balance the sometimes-competing preferences of your team.

10 PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS You are not the architect, accountant or receptionist. You hired these people because they are good at their jobs – so set their goals and reporting criteria, then let them get on with it. Far too often, people try to manage their staff, when what they're looking for, is leadership skills. **M**

Grant Amos is a registered psychologist at Selector. He has more than 25 years' experience in providing psychometric-based selection and evaluation advice to a wide range of clients in New Zealand and Australia.