

## Gender wage gap:

# YOU'RE DOING BETTER, BUT STILL NOT GOOD ENOUGH

The latest salary information to come from within the engineering industry shows that Kiwi employers are doing better in terms of closing the gender salary gap, but we are still well behind the national average. Well behind.

In an industry that needs more good people and qualified feet on the ground – irrespective of sex – the targeting of the female employee needs to be of top priority. With women making up just 10% of the engineering workforce it just makes sense that, when wanting to grow the whole, we nurture the smallest plants. Because this small sapling has just as much potential to grow into a mighty oak. So yes, we are a testosterone-based industry and to turn that around we need to be an attractive proposition, and that definitely means pay scale equality.

Beyond everything else wages are the first thing that needs addressing. Why would women even bother looking at an industry that has such a massive inequality? I'll start with the hard-hitting facts: the median base salary of engineers working full time for men is \$95,000 while for women it's \$80,000.

That is, simply put, wrong and although I've started with a brickbat to the entire engineering industry, here's your bouquet; it's better than what it was last year.

Thanks to the Institute of Professional Engineers New Zealand's (IPENZ) Remuneration Survey 2016 we know that the gap has closed considerably. The job has been started. The 2015 survey showed the gender pay gap to be some 22%, while the 2016 industry snapshot of more than 3,200 engineers showed the gap had closed to 18.8%. Before you put those flowers in a vase, New Zealand's national gender pay gap is 12%. Job started, yes; job done, no.

And now to let you off the hook, almost entirely. There is a saving grace for many employing within the engineering industry as all of this falls back to the aforementioned word: qualified. You can't employ what just ain't there.

By the time tertiary training for careers hits it's too late for the majority – male or female – as their paths have been chosen, mapped out and in place for some time already.

So, the key is capturing the market early, and there are many out there already working hard to do just



*Katalin Csikasz is a perfect example of how the engineering industry will benefit through a greater female presence.*

that. Smart suppliers to the engineering industry will and are already on board in support such programmes.

The results of just such grassroot endeavours I will showcase by example. Katalin Csikasz of Auckland-based TechPro Plus is a woman within the engineering sector that is thriving and it is her grounding within the engineering industry – forged through strong association in childhood and a father who lived and breathed engineering – that now sees Kiwi companies benefitting from a unique female perspective.

Katalin is an expert at finding innovative and unique solutions to industry challenges, and aims to provide clients with market leading products, solutions, or applications.

That's the verbiage, here's the good oil. She has recently been working closely with Mark and Sue Bedford at Steel Rollformed Product – a family-owned business in Penrose that is going great guns.

Sue says on Katalin: "As a company we took the initiative to conduct an audit to check product compliance and update our technical documentation. We engaged TechPro Plus to manage this process and were very pleased with the excellent

outcomes. Katalin built a strong working relationship with us and was at all times thorough and professional in her approach. Her attention to detail was exemplary. We confidently recommend TechPro Plus to offer practical solutions backed by professional expertise to deliver excellent results." But then Sue boils down Katalin's innovation to a gender difference: "The real stand out difference between Katalin and the other engineers (men) we have engaged over the years is that Katalin really wanted to be a part of our story. "She wanted to be in it for the 'long haul'. Previously engineers did certain calculations for us, gave us those calcs and their invoice and said goodbye. They were not interested in engaging with us in any other holistic or strategic way. We think of Katalin as part of our team even though she is not directly employed by us. She is very much part of our decision making as we move to become market leaders. " Good reason to make more women part of your team too don't you think? And when you do, close that gap.

– Greg Robertson, publisher  
greg@hayleymedia.com



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