



Information Item	Not giving up on your MATES
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New Zealand is undergoing a bit of a cultural shift regarding mental health.

While it is still a massively complex problem, with far too many people still taking their own lives, the rhetoric is beginning to soften away from the Kiwi-ism that is “Harden up, mate”.

However, some workplaces – especially in those stereotypically rugged or ‘in-the-trenches’ industries – haven’t been quick to evolve their cultures to a more empathetic place.

Which is why Director of Emendas, Emma Jeffery, engages with [MATES in Construction](#).

She deals with clients predominantly in construction and manufacturing industries, and sees first-hand some of those industries’ prevalent challenges.

“They’re working long hours. The job is quite physically demanding and out in the elements.

“There’s a not a lot of fluff that comes with construction. It’s all very ‘harden up, mate’ ‘suck it up and get the work done’, Kiwi culture.

“So, from the human resources side, it’s common to be dealing with individuals in a disciplinarian or performance management sense.”

But what she has realised in some cases, is that these industries all have some excellent employees, that just may need a bit of help.

Often in HR, Emma says, people are so focused on the things they can see – like not turning up to work or lack of communication – that their practices in HR don’t always go to the level of identifying the root cause of the problem.

“Whereas what MATES in Construction has taught me is that we can’t ignore the benefits of looking below that level.

“Because at the end of the day, the benefits of retaining employees can far outweigh the alternative. It’s expensive to replace people in advertising, recruiting and training alone. Your support for the right people is returned in loyalty, productivity and workplace culture.

“But from an HR perspective I’m quite restricted in how much I can help people and give them the right support.”

MATES in Construction gives her an avenue, when working with clients and companies, to put those employees in need of help in contact with the right people, with the right support network in place.

It means she is able to return those – who would seem like a – “problematic employee” back to work with a more sustainable career and a more focused pathway ahead of them.

“It has shown me that it’s really important not to give up on people.

“We’re all about improving people’s mental health in New Zealand. But we don’t always reflect that in our employment practices.

“And people don’t always know what services to get in contact with. I mean, even from an HR perspective, I don’t always know what vast community or industry support networks are available.

“MATES work in with a whole lot of different organisations and specialists in different fields, which means I know that when I pass them an employee, they are in really safe hands, and will get the right support based on what their individual needs are.”

MATES in Construction works with any individuals who require support. For further information, please do not hesitate to contact the team direct on the 24-hour helpline: 0800 11 315.

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