



# Chorus New Zealand Ltd



Chorus is New Zealand's largest telecommunications infrastructure company. It looks after a network predominantly made up of local telephone exchanges, cabinets and copper and fibre cables. Around 1.8 million lines are connected to homes and businesses throughout the country.

This is Chorus New Zealand Ltd's fourth consecutive accreditation as an Aon Hewitt Best Employer, and first as Best of the Best.



## What you can learn from Chorus New Zealand

- An engaged workforce will get you through the toughest times
- You need to fully commit to transparency
- It's possible to maintain high engagement under pressure

## An engaged workforce will get you through the toughest times

Chorus has faced and begun to overcome enormous challenge over the past two years. In late 2013, New Zealand's regulatory body, the Commerce Commission, announced its intention to substantially reduce what the organisation could charge for two of its key services to the telecommunications industry. This created long-term uncertainty for Chorus' people during an already high pressure period.

Along with a series of other actions, the organisation reviewed its entire cost structure, which resulted in a small number of job losses (the first for Chorus). The environment of engagement that had been developed in the lead-up to this situation brought with it resilience and commitment. The organisation credits this strong foundation as the reason it has been able to sustain engagement, retain people, continue to operate its business, and address the situation.

The level of trust that exists in Chorus' highly engaged workforce has allowed employees to continue performing in their roles, delivering to customers and stakeholders. As a result of this the organisation has been able to recover its stock price to where it was prior to the regulatory ruling and is cautiously optimistic about the future.



**"When you have an engaged workforce, you can ask them to do things that unengaged employees won't do. A highly engaged workforce allows you to get through tough times together."**

Mark Ratcliffe  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Chorus New Zealand Ltd





## You need to fully commit to transparency

It is part of Chorus' DNA to be transparent, and this has been a major factor in its ability to overcome adversity.

When the 2013 changes were announced, everyone was made aware that the organisation was in trouble. Senior leaders made an effort to contextualise the change and understand the problem the organisation was facing from the perspective of its people. There have been constant, carefully crafted communications via multiple channels as the issue has progressed, which Chorus believes has built trust and in turn commitment from its people.

The organisation's focus on transparency extends beyond times of change and into the fabric of how the business operates on a day-to-day basis. Senior leaders engage in quality formal and informal discussion with employees regularly and a lot of what they know about the business comes from the 'feeling' behind these conversations.

Chorus also invites its Board members to attend its annual Chorus Day, to hear more about the strategy and gauge the energy of the people in the room. While this could be considered high risk, CEO Mark Ratcliffe believes that: "You can't half do transparency, though sometimes you get a lot more questions."



## It's possible to maintain high engagement under pressure

Currently, Chorus' engagement strategy is focussed firmly on maintaining engagement levels. The strategy is owned by people leaders and each functional area has its own plan that links directly with the organisation's broader strategy. This means that different parts of the business can deliver on this goal in a way that suits their work type and style. The organisation also asks each individual to make an engagement promise in their annual performance plan, to 'regularly do one thing that contributes to making Chorus the best place they've ever worked'.

Chorus believes that maintaining engagement is about keeping lots of little actions in play rather than introducing any major new initiatives. To do this, the organisation strives to have a clear understanding of what is working well and how it can continue doing those things in a changing environment.