



## JANICE FEUTZ

*Janice Feutz is corporate manager for CORE Technology, a Wellington company that is revolutionising the software industry. She began her career as a teacher, and went on to establish an education business in Xiamen, China. Janice provides the perspective of a New Zealander whose career is always evolving.*

### 1. In the context of your professional background, what does 'talent' mean to you?

In terms of what talent means in the IT industry, it's about skills, it's about attitude and a willingness to learn, and it's certainly about an ability to think wider than the square.

When looking for potential employees, as well as looking for the degree in software design or IT infrastructure, we ask to hear what they've done in their spare time. We're looking for enthusiastic developers and that often carries over into their time outside of work.

### 2. Are you aware of any talent gaps that exist or might arise within the next ten years?

We'd like more women. In the US and Philippines there are more women in IT, but for some reason here and in some other countries there could be more.

### 3. How do successful organisations attract, keep and grow talent?

Businesses need to differentiate. Our company promotes the fact that we're by the water's edge, that there's real coffee, that we have health insurance, and that we have an environment where you can excel. Your pay package is commensurate with your abilities to improve and go forward and create but more importantly, if you want to help re-invent the way software works that's us. If you want to build a great accounting package, that's Xero.

The big thing for talent we attract is the experience of a new environment where excitement has been generated for where we're at and what we're doing.

At our company, fun is important, and also the fact that everyone's ideas are valued. Let us know what your dream place of work looks like. We're putting together a vision board which allows everyone in the company to add to it. We were all invited to put any pictures up on this wall or write anything that we thought was appropriate for our business going forward. We wanted people to be comfortable.

What came out of that was people putting up pictures of the things that they were really interested in. We had one person who was really interested in robots so he saw that that was going to be part of our future. We're trying to create an environment where employees work but they also enjoy the results and know they're a part of those results.

### 4. Think about talent hubs around the world, what is cool and why?

I haven't really done the research on overseas, but what I can tell you is that this area here [Cable Street, near the Wellington waterfront] is considered to be a little innovation technology hub. That's because we've got Xero, Trade Me and NZX who are making themselves known internationally and doing the same to the whole area here. We're all growing. We're all doing great things. We're all becoming known and this has allowed other New Zealand companies to associate themselves with its success.

## 5. Can you assess New Zealand's performance in attracting talent on a global scale?

Thinking of an example like the vision board, which enables employees to take part in where we are at and where we are planning to go, I suspect that teams of people at IBM and Google and Amazon are doing just that.

We're doing it on a much smaller scale, definitely. We can't help but do it on a smaller scale, but we've had people move to us from some large companies because they felt that their contribution wasn't easily recognised. So the advantage of a smaller IT company is that employees actually see the results of the project they're working on and that they can take pride in being a part of the achievement.

## 6. What does New Zealand need to do in order to attract, keep and grow talent?

I'm sure we don't do enough to promote what we have here and the advantages of being in New Zealand. We exhibited at a Wellington City Council-run function called BIG – Business Innovation and Growth. It resulted in a booklet showcasing business and innovation so that politicians who were traveling overseas would take this booklet with them. I thought this was great, but I haven't heard about the results. I think we have done some really good things like this, but we could do a lot more promoting of New Zealand and the industry hubs we have here.

I would suggest we start picking up on those things that are really important to people. Sustainability is a big topic and it's internationally of interest. Now, if our companies can work on projects that have international appeal, then we get recognition. People will ask, 'Where did this come from?' and

realise, 'Oh, from New Zealand.' We could have several companies doing things for a project that has long-term benefits to civilisation and that will get us international attention.

In the web sector we don't need big ships to transport our products. This is a huge opportunity. Unfortunately, we haven't got a mindset like Australia where they buy Australia made. Don't get your IT done by an American company or an outside company. The skills are here, so have it done here. Then, when there's any delegation going over-

*Our biggest problem is capital to accelerate growth. We're a small company in a city that is tiny by global standards and access to capital is a big issue.*

seas from New Zealand they should be promoting the fact that the system they're using were built in New Zealand by a New Zealand company. It's not asking too much especially when we know we can build exactly what you want, on time and on budget.

Could businesses use some outside help? Yes, we could. We're truly not meaning to sound ungrateful because we've had some government funding, but to really make an impact quickly, capital and marketing are the two things companies need.

Our biggest problem is capital to accelerate growth. We're a small company in a city that is tiny by global standards and access to capital is a big issue. So yes, capital and building a brand for a world leading product are two major concerns for a company like us.

## 7. Any final thoughts for young people?

Try to answer these questions first without thinking about the work you might be doing: do you want inside work or outside work or a combination of both? Do you prefer to work with a team of people or on your own? Do you want to work in a big organisation or a small one? Is city life preferable or small-town life? Do you prefer computer work or manual work? Once these answers are in your mind, look for trends for the future and your natural skills. The future is about being adaptable and willing to learn.

Interviewed by Charlotte Greenfield at the McGuinness Institute in Wellington, on 24 April 2013. Photograph provided by Janice Feutz.