

## Labour attraction strategy

### New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Incorporated



#### The brief

The New Zealand kiwifruit industry experienced a 1200-worker shortage at the start of the 2018 harvest. On the back of media attention garnered by the Government's announcement of special visa conditions for visitors with holiday visas to work in the Bay of Plenty's kiwifruit industry, many kiwis stepped up to pick and pack kiwifruit and a labour crisis was averted. However, the industry was keen to avoid similar issues for the 2019 season, particularly given the projected major increase in fruit needing to be picked over 2018 levels.

The NZ Kiwifruit Growers Inc. appointed Wright Communications, following a written two-page pitch, to develop and implement a PR and marketing communications programme to raise awareness of the roles available within the sector, address any misconceptions about kiwifruit work, attract workers to the industry and assist them in registering, finding accommodation and enjoying the attractions of the kiwifruit regions.

#### The Wright approach

The Strategy, proposed by Wright Communications, and adopted and implemented for the 2019 season, comprised several initiatives to raise awareness of the availability and nature of casual work in the kiwifruit industry and assist potential workers in applying for roles. Those initiatives included development and implementation of:

- a social media programme including creation of a Kiwifruit Jobs NZ Facebook page, expanded NZKGI website and ongoing monitoring and management of social media discussions re the industry and seasonal work opportunities
- outreach initiatives to potential workers including retirees, students, unemployed kiwis, and backpackers
- a promotional video featuring German and Czech backpackers working at a kiwifruit orchard
- a comprehensive guide to jobs in the industry – the Little Green and Gold Book
- a regular programme of media announcements around the initiatives and media monitoring and response to any potentially negative issues.

Planning for the 2019 season and preparation of key materials including the video and workers' guide were largely completed at the end of 2018 and the main strategic initiatives were launched in February 2019 prior to the start of the 2019 harvest.

### **The outcome**

Feedback and data on worker numbers indicate the industry did not experience the same worker shortage issues of the previous year; a predicted shortage of around 3,500 workers did not eventuate – only 900-odd workers were required (and they were principally recruited via government action). This must in part be attributed to the recruitment strategy, though other factors such as independent packhouse initiatives also played a role.

The various strategic initiatives achieved solid results in terms of social media reach:

- the Kiwifruit Jobs NZ (KJNZ) Facebook page currently has over 3,000 followers and this continues to grow steadily
- throughout the campaign the KJNZ page achieved over quarter of a million views, 22,000 engagements and 800 queries through private message
- a seasonal work survey done at the end of the season found that 92% of first-time workers saw the KJNZ page
- the same seasonal work survey also showed the 96% of job seekers found the KJNZ page informative
- the backpackers video (in English and German versions) reached around 54,000 people
- the workers' guide (Little Green and Gold Book) was issued to people electronically, while 2,000 hard copies were also distributed.

The sector also gained significant mainstream (traditional) media coverage for its efforts to develop and implement a recruitment strategy, along with the various proactive initiatives that formed part of the strategy, reflecting positively on the industry. Very little negative media arose during the season.

**Client testimonial**

*"Very much the best PR agency that I have ever worked with. Ron and Anita were consistently proactive and service-driven. Projects within the attraction strategy were completed efficiently and stress-free and I'm looking forward to work with Wright Communications on future projects."*

Mike Murphy – Communications Manager, New Zealand Kiwifruit Growers Incorporated