

# Scion

Scion, formerly Forest Research Institute, was founded in 1947 and is a world leader in plantation forestry and fibre processing research, offering technology solutions and research services to the forest and wood products sectors in New Zealand and internationally.

Scion has extended its focus beyond wood to meet the growing consumer demand for renewable materials and products from plants. Three fundamental science platforms focus on science discovery and solutions for future markets. Six research and development units service the short-to medium-term needs of the forest industry.

In 2004, Scion and Australian-based CSIRO Forestry and Forest Products joined forces to deliver a full range of science and technology services for public and private sector clients. The joint venture, called "ensis", enhances the ability of both nations' forestry industries to develop world-class products and services. Scion employs 332 people.

## Development of work-life initiatives

The development of work-life initiatives has occurred over a number of years in response to consultation with staff and feedback from staff surveys.

Scion's work-life balance initiatives aim to meet the needs of a multi-generational, diverse workforce. A wide range of age groups work at Scion, with 19 people aged from 20–29 years and 39 aged 60-plus. Scion has tried to

understand and address the different expectations, work styles and values of its diverse workforce.

Scion believes that while many of the intrinsic rewards of work stem from personal attitudes, values, and expectations, employers can do very concrete and specific things to enhance the organisational culture and work environment. The work-life balance component of Scion's reward package is critical to attracting and retaining workers.

Scion emphasises the opportunities it provides for professional growth saying the most cited reason professionals give for turning down a new job offer is the "excitement and learning" of their present job. Professional growth for staff can come from Scion's "Good to Great" programme, job enhancement such as mentoring, peer training, serving in a project or team leader role, or meaningful committee assignments. Attendance at conferences in a scientist's subject field is also a coveted opportunity and is well provided for at Scion.

## Work-life initiatives

- Flexible working arrangements: staff can arrange flexible working arrangements; working from home is

common; mothers returning to work after the birth or adoption of a baby arrange work around the needs of their new family member.

- Leave: unlimited sick and domestic leave; long-term sick leave is 13 weeks on full pay and 13 weeks on half pay; paid leave for team members participating in high-level sports.
- Parental leave: a lump sum payment of one month's salary after being back at work for six months.
- Insurance and super: life and disability insurance; medical insurance; subsidised superannuation.
- Subsidised school holiday programme: for employees' children in conjunction with the Rotorua District Council.
- Health and wellbeing: discount on gym fees; yoga at lunchtime; a beautiful campus next to the Redwood Forest ideally suited to recreational activities; tennis courts on campus; annual health checks provided by the company; flu vaccinations available on-site; staff showers.
- Development: paid sabbaticals; study fees paid; study leave; attendance at relevant local and overseas conferences encouraged; mentoring; individual development plans for all staff.

- Workplace support: individual, confidential counselling available to staff when required.
- Staff recognition: long service awards; chairman's award for science excellence; Scion Awards; one-off recognition award for special achievements.
- Social: staff leaving functions; end-of-year and mid-year staff social functions.
- Community sponsorship: Suffrage Scholarship; local team-based sports events.
- Team members are able to bring their dogs to work.
- On-site cafeteria.

### Organisational and management commitment

Scion's *Statement of Corporate Intent 1 July 2005 – 30 June 2008* says:

"The organisation's policies and procedure aim to ensure equal opportunity, that people are developed to their full potential within an appropriate 'work-life' balance, and that there is compliance with employment, health and safety and associated legislation."

Senior management approves and recommends all work-life balance policies to the remuneration and organisation committee. They are involved in the management and administration of work-life balance initiatives on a daily basis, approving special leave applications and regularly meeting with workplace support counsellors.

The Chief Executive and the senior management team approve budget for work-life balance initiatives and the General Manager Human Resources liaises with the School Holiday

Programme Committee and the Rotorua District Council to ensure standards are maintained.

### Business benefits

The key benefits to Scion are:

- Wellness and health initiatives: a low level of sick leave
- Flexible working arrangements: reduces the rate of absenteeism and sick leave and allows team members to focus on what is important.
- Flexible working arrangements and parental leave return-to-work payment: Scion is a knowledge organisation and its primary aim is to retain scientists as the skills and capabilities it needs are a rare commodity on the recruitment market. In the last three years a number of scientists have taken parental leave and they have all returned to work.
- School Holiday Programme and flexible working hours: keeps absenteeism down as parents know their children are well cared for and that they can also take the time to be with them during the school holidays.

### Meeting employee needs

Scion believes the best test of whether work-life balance initiatives meet team member needs is the uptake of initiatives:

- All principal caregivers take advantage of the initiatives offered
- Staff bring their dogs to work
- Good uptake of the wellness and health initiatives
- The school holiday programme is fully booked each school holiday
- Staff participation in local community sponsorship programmes e.g. Suffrage Scholarship programme.

### Future developments

Scion plans to continue to gain feedback from staff surveys and involve staff in focus groups to develop further initiatives.

It is currently developing a career development seminar for people who have worked at Scion for 10 years or more.

### Contact

Sylvia Hunt  
 General Manager Human Resources  
 Scion  
 PO Box 3020  
 Rotorua  
 Phone: 07 343 5702  
 Fax: 07 348 0952  
[sylvia.hunt@scionresearch.com](mailto:sylvia.hunt@scionresearch.com)

