



# New Zealand Inc needs mentors



John Wragg, a volunteer mentor for OMEGA says meeting new immigrants is 'a reality check'

**N**ew Zealand goes out of its way to attract highly skilled, highly qualified new immigrants. But when they get here, many struggle to find a decent job. OMEGA mentors provide a vital link.

Put yourself in these shoes: after completing your tertiary education, you spend the following years gaining excellent experience in your chosen career. You develop valuable skills and your specialist knowledge advances.

And then you make a life-changing decision.

You relocate to New Zealand in the hope of a better life for you and your family. Everything hinges on you finding work, and based on your track record, this should be straightforward.

But the reality is harsh. New immigrants face many impediments in securing work. According to OMEGA (Opportunities for Migrant Employment in Greater Auckland) these include a lack of New Zealand work experience, a lack of professional networks and contacts, and a lack of recognition for their qualifications. Combine these with a sluggish economy, and the plight of a new immigrant is even more challenging.

Which is why OMEGA is seeking help. This not-for-profit organisation aims to match highly-qualified immigrants with mentors to help them achieve employment matching of their skill set.

Established in 2007 with the financial backing of the Tindall Foundation, the organisation recently became independent and is now asking North Shore business professionals to offer their services as mentors. Justin Treagus, OMEGA's Programme Director, says: "As well as a making

a difference to a new immigrant's life, a mentor is also helping to make a positive difference to New Zealand Inc."

A mentor commits to having one-on-one meetings with a skilled immigrant mentee over a four-month period (16 hours over 16 weeks). During this time, the mentor helps him/her to navigate the job search process by sharing their knowledge and experience of their industry and the kiwi work culture. OMEGA provides orientation and ongoing coaching support for all mentors.

Justin says, "We currently have nearly 240 volunteer members, which is great, but we need more on the Shore."

Current mentors say the OMEGA Mentoring Programme offers a unique chance to gain a hands-on understanding of multicultural New Zealand.

Albany-based John Wragg cites several reasons why he's happy to be a volunteer mentor for OMEGA: "I'm fortunate to work for ANZ which has a strong sense of community – it actively encourages staff to get involved with our communities."

## Explaining kiwi-isms

John, who is ANZ's Regional Manager of Commercial Banking (Auckland North), says, "In my view, there's a level of duty for people who are in a position to help. Various mentors have helped me as I've progressed throughout my career, adding a lot value and giving me great direction. Here's an opportunity for me to return the favour.

"It's very enlightening to learn about the hurdles different people face – which most kiwis jump over. It's a reality-check and a reminder not to take things for granted."

For the new immigrant, access to a well-informed, connected and neutral individual can help immeasurably with the settling in and getting started process. John recalls explaining the term 'tall poppy syndrome' to an Indian immigrant. "She was completely unfamiliar with the concept, as it simply doesn't exist in her homeland."

OMEGA says that 80 per cent of mentees who complete the programme find relevant employment. This was the case for Filipino-born Toni Pasay. A solo mother of three, Toni moved to Albany in April 2009 in search of a better life.

Despite her skills and experience – Toni held a senior HR management position at a manufacturing company in Cebu city – she struggled to find similar work. Determined not to give up, she accepted a part-time job offer as an electronics assembler while enrolling with OMEGA. She was matched with mentor Mark Carley.

"Mark offered tips on how to present my CV and apply for jobs. We ran through a mock interview together and helped me overcome my lack of confidence due to being in a new environment.

"He suggested I should volunteer my services in the HR field, which I did. I'm pleased to say this has led to my current position as HR Officer at QuickCircuit in Albany."



Toni Pasay, HR Officer at Albany-based QuickCircuit

- OMEGA stands for Opportunities for Migrant Employment in Greater Auckland. Its aim is to equip skilled, highly qualified immigrants with the 'know how' to find appropriate jobs.
- It is currently seeking North Shore business professionals who are willing to mentor new immigrants, and provide them with an insight into New Zealand's work ethic and job application process.
- If you'd like to find out more about becoming a mentor for OMEGA please contact Ian Scott on (09) 300-5594 or visit [www.omega.org.nz](http://www.omega.org.nz)