

“To be an employer of choice these days you have to **communicate openly** and **honestly** with your staff, in both good times and bad.”

THELMA FRENCH is a human resources practitioner, Justice of the Peace, celebrant and associate member of the North Harbour Business Association.

Her 25 years professional experience includes 15 years as a generalist Human Resources Manager in a large corporate and 10 years as General Manager of two not-for-profit organisations. Recognised nationally as the Founder of Yellow Ribbon NZ, the educational arm of the Youth Suicide Awareness Trust, she recently established www.ThelmaFrench.com specialising in HR consulting and advocacy.



Thelma French

Grown men have gone into televised battle to support the cause championed by Thelma French – somewhat ironic given the compassionate woman fights for a win-win result in the workplace.

As Founder of Yellow Ribbon NZ, the educational arm of the Youth Suicide Awareness Trust, Thelma, in conjunction with one of her heroes, Dean Lonergan, raised millions through the Fight For Life boxing events featuring brave and battered trans-Tasman sporting and media celebrities and a powerful volunteer network.

The driving force was her late son Aaron, who in taking his own life, reshaped his mother’s forever.

Pale blue eyes and a warm smile mask a resilience and strength of character that is Thelma French, a fighter with a passion for people and a professional pedigree in HR that makes you want to have her on your side in any employment dispute.

Again ironic given she’s motivated to avoid spilling blood on the carpet, seeking outcomes that leave personal dignity and corporate reputations intact.

An associate Association member, she last year established www.thelmafrench.com and is currently building her North Harbour client base. She assists ICON Security [see page left] and is enjoying working with the dynamic business community north of the bridge.

“I’m attracted by the energy and enthusiasm of the people I meet, especially those running small- to medium-sized businesses.

“I’ve worked in large corporates and small businesses alike. It is those with values similar to my own that I enjoy the most,” she says.

“Given the amount of time we spend in the workplace, it’s important that it’s as pleasant and harmonious as possible. Apart from anything else, motivated employees are productive employees.

“For me, communication is paramount. To be an employer of choice these days you have to communicate openly and honestly with your staff, in both good times and bad.

“Of all life’s lessons – personal and professional – it is OK to ask for help. That was our message at Yellow Ribbon and it’s as true in the workplace. No-one, including management, has all the answers and solutions can best be found through open dialogue, mutual respect and no surprises.”

Thelma is a strong advocate of having support people involved in discussions that can impact on an employee’s future.

“I consider myself a practical, pragmatic person with experience on both sides of the table. A fair process that is followed properly can help both parties resolve issues and move ahead, even if that means termination of employment.

“Good HR is not only required by law, it’s also the right thing to do and makes good business sense,” she says.

● For more information please visit: www.thelmafrench.com

Can you WIN-WIN employment issues?

Not always, according to HR consultant Thelma French, but you can improve your chances by considering the following – and your employees’ points of view:

- Address issues as they arise; always keep the communication lines open.
- If you are not confident about addressing issues with your employees, it’s OK to ask for help from those who will support and advise you.
- In most instances, employment disputes are best resolved when support people for both parties are involved.
- Dispute resolutions and exit interviews can mark the start of a positive next chapter for both employer and employee.
- In times of economic downturn, employees often provide fresh insight and ideas to generate recovery if given the opportunity.