

Change manager

Project director Wendy Jones manages a diverse workload ranging from residential renovations to design, build and strategic planning projects for corporate organisations

TEXT HELEN FRANCES

Among the different multi-disciplinary hats Wendy Jones wears, a hard hat may be the only one she actually puts on. Jones is as much in her element on site talking about building, as she is in the boardroom of any company discussing strategic planning with senior management.

As a project director for design, build and change management projects, Jones says she crosses all the disciplines from frontline customer service to human resources, finance, marketing and communications, IT, and relationships with external stakeholders. She covers every aspect of any change including the physical design and build, whether a company recentralises and co-locates staff in an existing, refurbished building, or moves staff and operations into new, bespoke premises. Physical construction or refurbishment is not always required but improving client performance and keeping abreast of changes in technology are typical goals. That could involve upgrading specific systems and business processes to broader transitional change planning for which she assesses impacts and future requirements for every part of the business.

Her clients include BNZ, Fonterra, Suncorp, Manukau Institute of Technology, Aecom, Christchurch City Council, and currently Vodafone and Fletcher Construction in Penrose, Auckland.

"When you see outdated design and know what is possible; when you remove walls and introduce natural light and spaces where people can meet and work collaboratively, the difference in the teams can't be underestimated," Jones says. "It's never just a property project; it's always a people project. What you are wrapping around people is the best environment and the best business enablement tools that allow their culture and all their deliverables to be supported."

She says she loves taking the initial strategic concept in its "rawest" form.

"The company knows they need to do something and they have an idea of what that might be. You work with that with them to produce a physical end result and exceed expectations."

When a new building is part of the brief she looks for the right site based on the corporate staff requirements and enters the company culture to assess what will suit their needs in a physical sense to help the business achieve its



goals. She works on behalf of her clients with the base build developers and designers.

"I help clients get really clear on their brief then integrate the build and design elements to make sure they get the final outcome they want."

Most of the projects she leads include a strong sustainability element. She has seen this become more part of the mainstream since she led the BNZ project, which saw two sites in Auckland and one in Wellington gain five and six Green Star ratings – one of the first for New Zealand.

"It's not always about clients being rated under the Green Star system but they are

definitely looking at holistic ways of improving their office space and their carbon footprint, and how this ties into their corporate social responsibility."

And she finds most clients are usually committed to more than a superficial green washing or marketing spin.

Jones says it is now easier to build or refurbish in an environmentally friendly way and many suppliers stock materials that are low on chemicals, fairly maintenance-free and made in New Zealand.

"If you just take the holistic principles of energy, water and waste reductions and savings, the pay-back is a lot quicker

now so that gets the attention of the chief financial officers."

People also appreciate it when employers provide a healthier workplace.

In 2013, she says everyone understands the rationale for building sustainably, however: "Before it was, 'well prove it to me'."

In 2006, when she started as project director for three BNZ buildings, she says the Green Building Council was in the early stages of forming, however the bank already understood what they required. The five-storey Harbour Quays Building in Wellington was the first in New Zealand to be rated with six

Green Stars for the office interior.

Jones has a diverse background. She has a degree in business management and has worked many years in the corporate sector. She lives organically and has a strong interest in design and building both inside and out, which she also puts into practice building new sustainable homes and renovations for residential clients.

"My work is my passion is my play," is a tag line that encapsulates her values, whether she is renovating a house or planning a client's business strategy 10 years into the future.