



ARQ
group

Arq Group

Be who you are and celebrate!

Inclusion and belonging are incredibly important to digital services company Arq Group. Samantha Trewick, Inclusion and Wellbeing Manager, says A Taste of Harmony is a great yearly opportunity to not only celebrate cultural diversity, but also to remind everyone that cultural differences are considered to be a company asset.

"A big part of being engaged at work is feeling like you are where you belong, and you can only really do this if you can bring your whole self to work, and feel truly accepted for who you are, culture included," Samantha said.

It is with great gusto that this very busy and growing business steps away from designing and developing Australia's leading mobile apps, data and analytics solutions, cloud services and digital marketing campaigns to share a meal where every employee has the chance to bring a dish to represent their culture.

We asked Samantha more about their involvement, the importance of cultural diversity in the tech industry and their unique 'Social Coffee' initiative.

How does Arq Group celebrate A Taste of Harmony?

We do a 'pot luck' lunch which is advertised via our internal communications channel, Slack. Everyone is invited to take part and has the opportunity to bring in a dish that represents their cultural background.

Sharing a meal is an intimate and bonding event and at these occasions, people are encouraged to share stories of their dishes as they eat lunch,

which happens in a lovely and natural way. It is a very popular and much anticipated day for our staff.

Why is it so important to your business?

The digital and tech industry is going through a massive growth phase and as such there is a shortage of talent. At Arq Group we need to ensure that we have an engaging environment so that the best people want to come and work with us. Investing in our people, including their culture, results in us creating an empowered workplace with highly engaged, high achieving teams, and as a result we end up with happier customers too.

Secondly, tech people can sometimes be introverted and quite shy. Whilst introversion can be a great superpower in many situations, sometimes our people can get so focused it can be easy to find a whole day slips by without enjoying any of those social interactions that enable you to get to know your colleagues. This event gets everyone involved in the nicest way. People bring in food and it is a really easy conversation starter, even for the most-shy person.

Can you share a memorable story from the event?

We love it when our people wear their cultural dress as part of our A Taste of Harmony celebration and encourage people to present to the group and share their stories. One of our business leaders took this opportunity to share her story, not only of her culture, but of the opportunity that living in Australia has afforded her, particularly as a woman. It was so insightful, we felt like we really understood her better. Her personal story was very touching and we felt so honoured to hear it.

How else do you celebrate cultural differences?

A Taste of Harmony is not our only celebration of cultural diversity in the workplace. We also celebrate many religious holidays. For example, we provide a feast of delicious savoury and sweet foods to celebrate the end of Ramadan, and during Rosh Hashanah, a significant Jewish celebration, we fill our kitchens with a traditional treat of apples and honey. We also do pot luck lunches throughout the year. We have a big kitchen space that enables us to get involved in these important celebrations for our people.

How do you measure the impact?

We undertake an anonymous engagement survey each year which includes a measurement on inclusion and belonging as this is a key value in our business. Activities like A Taste of Harmony are absolutely critical to this, and so far our people report very positively on our inclusion activities.

Tell us about your great 'social coffee' initiative.

This is where anyone in the business can sign-up on Slack to have a weekly coffee and will be randomly matched with another person using a bot. There is no hierarchy involved and our CEO takes part as well. It is an opportunity for a chat over a 30-minute coffee to get to know different people in the business, especially people with whom you wouldn't normally interact with at work.

I personally use it as an opportunity to get more feedback from our people, to find out what they think of our inclusion efforts, what is working and what isn't. A Taste of Harmony is always spoken about extremely positively!

What benefits did you see from your employees taking part?

A Taste of Harmony just naturally gets the conversation happening. Food is a great conversation starter and it's an easy place to start learning about different cultural backgrounds and break down barriers. I find our people are really into trying different foods. It is just a really good way to celebrate our differences.

What did you bring?

I baked flapjacks this year. They are a traditional British slice/snack made from oats and golden syrup. When I was very young, lots of British children took them to school in their lunch boxes so I love sharing that childhood nostalgia and with all the oats it is a healthier treat; my children didn't like them by the way, but they were very well received by everyone else!

