

AWARD-WINNING BAKER

TAKING EVERY OPPORTUNITY writer PETER WHITE // photo LOGAN WEST

“Never give up. If you want something, it’s on you to go and get it. Strive for excellence in everything you do,” says RICHARD MEHANA.

He joined Goodman Fielder after leaving Edgewater College 18 years ago and has worked through the ranks to his current position as manufacturing manager for Quality Bakers.

“I hadn’t set any goals and aspirations while I was in school. My biggest driver back then was taking care of my grandmother who raised me. In my final year, she couldn’t afford to send me to school so I made the decision to leave school early,” says Richard.

“At the end of Year 12, I came to Goodman Fielder and started working as a temporary worker, just doing school holiday work, like cleaning. I went back to school for a couple of months and Goodman Fielder offered me a fulltime opportunity as a trainee baker.

“That was when I had that discussion with my grandmother and my career pretty much kicked-off.”

What has been most important to Richard during his career, and something he advises school leavers to take on board, is to always have a can-do attitude.

“That always goes a long way. Being able to listen and learn and develop, plus being able to take on-board feedback and use that feedback to strengthen your weaknesses,” he says.

“Continuing to learn and grow in whatever career path you decide to take on in the future is huge. I applied that early on when I came to Goodman Fielder, so as soon as an apprenticeship opportunity came up, I applied for it.

“That was my chance over three years to keep myself immersed in learning and to develop further. It builds up your confidence and self-esteem and really changes you.”

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RICHARD MEHANA

Richard qualified with a New Zealand Certificate in Trade Baking (Plant) (Level 4) and not long after won the nationwide Young Baker of the Year title.

He is now in charge of 112 employees and five manufacturing plants at Quality Bakers in Auckland. The main brands they make are Nature’s Fresh, Molenberg, Freyas, Vogel’s, as well as small goods and buns for fast food outlets like KFC, Burger King and Wendy’s, plus muffins and garlic bread.

When it comes to employing school leavers, Richard says he does not look for any particular skillset. What is more important is to have a good level of confidence and to be outspoken, happy and present with a great attitude.

“I believe a great attitude can take you a long way in an interview. That can-do attitude is what I really look for at the start.

“Everything else I tend to develop when they come on board. It is so important that you believe in yourself and do not let other people tell you that you can’t do something or you are not capable of doing something.”



KEY FACTS



- **RICHARD MEHANA** IS MANUFACTURING MANAGER FOR **QUALITY BAKERS** AT **GOODMAN FIELDER**. HE IS IN CHARGE OF 112 EMPLOYEES AND FIVE MANUFACTURING PLANTS.
- HE STARTED AT THE COMPANY **PART-TIME** WHILE AT HIGH SCHOOL, BEFORE TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO **FULLTIME** AS A **TRAINEE BAKER**.
- **RICHARD** HAS A **NEW ZEALAND CERTIFICATE IN TRADE BAKING (PLANT) (LEVEL 4)** AND PREVIOUSLY WON THE **NATIONWIDE YOUNG BAKER OF THE YEAR** TITLE.



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