



Head of BusinessNZ urges CEOs to support sustainability leaders

Kirk Hope, CEO of BusinessNZ, completed the Sustainability Leadership Programme in 2020. He thinks now is the optimal time for more business leaders to sign up.

“Sustainability is becoming more important for CEOs and Directors to understand – and not just on a surface level. You can’t truly advocate for sustainability initiatives without having a really solid understanding of the principles behind them,” says Kirk. “The SLP can also help leaders understand why their customers’ preferences might be changing, and how to figure out mechanisms to respond to both supply and demand factors.”

Kirk says he signed up to the SLP course to ensure sustainability was more broadly thought about in policy terms, at government and industry level.

“At BusinessNZ, we play a large policy-making role, both on behalf of the business community and as an advocate to government,” says Kirk. “People think policy is costless, but it’s not. If you get a poor policy that is not well thought through, it won’t be sustainable. It will cost people’s time, money, or government revenue.”

Kirk has been applying the skills and tools of the SLP to two major policy projects – the first to help make the process of dealing with government departments, especially the IRD, more simple and aligned, so businesses don’t have to input the same information repeatedly when dealing with different government departments.

“From a sustainability perspective, that repetition is a huge waste of time and therefore money,” says Kirk. “I’m part of a group that is thinking about how we can deploy technology to help people access services in a much better way than they have done in the past.”

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Kirk Hope - SLP graduate

CEO, BusinessNZ

Secondly, Kirk is involved in developing a potential new fund to help people who have lost their jobs. Research shows that when people stay out of work, even for as little as three months, it can cause long-term negative impacts.

“You could call what we are working on a social insurance scheme, and the concept is currently an important part of the Government’s future of work forum,” says Kirk. “That is really about sustainability of people when they’re not in employment – sustainability of people and community.”

Kirk says the SLP course made a significant difference to how he approaches issues.

“For me, the course resulted in a mindset shift,” he said. “I’m now thinking more multidimensionally and long-term, in terms of work that we do and how we do it.”

Kirk recommends other managers and CEOs attend and recommend the programme to others in their organisations. He says to think beyond only sustainability managers.

“I’d recommend CEOs and managers send people to the SLP who might be cynical about it. Or, send strategy people who can understand how to rollout changes culturally through an organisation,” he says. “The course isn’t only for sustainability managers. SLP is also about broadening the horizons of people who wouldn’t have engaged with sustainability very much.”



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The Sustainability Leadership Programme is Australasia’s most comprehensive sustainability leadership course. Run in partnership by the [Sustainable Business Council](#) and [Catapult](#) this short course gives you the tools and confidence needed to make a measurable impact. **[Find out more.](#)**