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MĀORI MANAGEMENT: A HOME-GROWN APPROACH TO MANAGING ENTERPRISES SUSTAINABLY IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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Management is such a fundamental activity that getting it right matters greatly, and getting it wrong hurts more than just the managers; eventually, we are all deprived of the value organisations create. To get a sense of the scale of management in New Zealand consider these facts. On Census night back in March 2013, 356,076 of us (or 18 percent of all those employed) classed themselves as managers ([Statistics New Zealand, 2013](#)). In February 2013, there were 472,600 enterprises in New Zealand—presumably all (at least those actively in business) had managers at the helm ([MacPherson, 2013](#)). And bolstering the management occupational class were some 19,830 students working toward management and commerce degrees in 2013, not to mention those studying management at polytechnics, wānanga and other institutions ([Ministry of Education, 2014](#)).

The point is this: upon whom do we model our style of management, and to whom do we turn to understand what management is, how we are to manage, and how we might manage better? Invariably, it is to the United States and to a lesser degree, the United Kingdom, that we turn for answers ([O’Sullivan & Mika, 2012](#)). Yet, Aotearoa New Zealand is a long way from either. Moreover, given our history and location, we tend to identify these days more strongly with our Pacific and Australasian neighbours; although the Ausie's sure are making it hard for us to love them these days. Now, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with US and UK-style management; they have arguably been the foundation of the industrial revolution, garnering the world unprecedented wealth. Scratch a little below the surface mind, and one easily uncovers signs of decay; the global financial crisis and its ongoing aches, the '87 stock market crash, and the depletion of natural resources. The global s

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economics, business and environmental concerns – sustainability.

Together with John O'Sullivan, a colleague from Christchurch Polytechnic Technology, we wrote a paper that lays out a 'home-grown' approach to see it, focusing on Māori management (Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014). In the paper, we explore Māori management, Māori organisations, and Māori approaches to planning, organising and controlling—the basic functions of management. We further explore the theory of Māori management that offers managers an alternative set of principles and practices that we believe complement current methods.

The idea for the paper came from two main sources: an early job I had at Massey and a class I taught at Massey.

In 1993, the late Arapeta Tahana, then CEO at Waiāriki Polytechnic in Rotorua gave me a job as his research assistant. Arapeta said, "Jason I want you to study Māori management in forestry, on the marae, and in sport teams and help me to apply that learning to the bicultural management framework of the polytechnic. Can you do that?" Ever grateful to have a job, I boldly replied "sure." As a matter of fact, I had no clue about research, what research is, or how to do research, but I did do 'research.' Atop my shelf most likely sits the only surviving copy of that research report.

Fast forward to March 2012 as new PhD student, Dr Robyn Walker in the School of Management asked me if I would like to deliver a lecture for her first year business students on Māori management. Again I replied "sure." In truth, I was simply beside myself at the prospect of standing before 300 first year students, but I got through it. I discovered two things from that experience: first, there is very little contemporary research on Māori management; and second, there is interest from among students of all ethnicities, Māori and non-Māori, about Māori management. A few months after this, I met John O'Sullivan at the ICSB conference in Wellington, a researcher who had similar research interests to me. By December 2012, we were presenting our paper on Māori management at the annual conference of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management in Perth. We have since thrown everything we know about Māori management into the paper, yet it is still only a modest beginning.

Now to the question of what can we learn from Māori about managing and how can non-Māori managers and others learn these methods? This is a good question that has an equally good answer.

In 1981, American professor William Ouchi wrote a book called "Theory Z: How American business can meet the Japanese challenge." Ouchi's (1981) book provides a compelling account of his research into Japanese companies and how differently they seem to manage compared to their American counterparts. Ouchi describes the Japanese way of managing as a clan-based approach, what in New Zealand we might term a 'tribal' method. Features of Japanese organisations include: lifetime employment; non-specialised (generalist) careers; implicit control; collective decision making; collective responsibility; and holistic concern. The typical American firm of the time was cast in completely opposite terms. Professor Ouchi's point is not to say that one way is better than the other, but simply that there is something worth learning about managing from another culture, and th

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common with a Māori way of managing. Apart from vast differences in language, one of the other differences is that the body of research on Māori management is comparatively minute; more is needed.

Māori management we suggest is a mix of traditional Māori values and practices with modern management theory and practice. We defined Māori management as

the systematic action-oriented deployment of resources by Māori and non-Māori managers within a Māori world view (āronga Māori) for purposes which are meaningful and of benefit to whānau (family), iwi (tribe), Māori communities and others, in terms of both the means and ends, and which may be conducted within both Māori and non-Māori organisational contexts.

(Mika & O'Sullivan, 2014, p. 14)

Breaking down this rather extravagant definition, Māori management is about getting things done using a variety of resources—very much the orthodox view of management. From there, however, Māori management differentiates itself by reference to a Māori world view. A Māori world view brings into play aspects of Māori culture. These include: a commitment to intergenerational wealth and wellbeing; long-range planning horizons (e.g., 25-100 years); the practice of Māori values such as *rangatiratanga* (self-determination), *whānaungatanga* (relationships), *kaitiakitanga* (stewardship), *manaakitanga* (generosity) and *wairuatanga* (spirituality); and the pursuit of multiple objectives—social, cultural, economic and environmental—as indicators of progress and outcomes.

Māori management also sets out to benefit one's tribe and others, with flow on effects for the general community, society, and economy. Māori management is not only concerned about what gets done (the ends) but how (the means). This is because wider responsibilities to family, one's tribe and the environment impose a more complex set of obligations and measures upon Māori organisations. Finally, Māori management can be practised within Māori and non-Māori organisations as a subset of what the organisation does or as an integral part of its operations. Many exemplars of Māori management exist that incorporate all the elements of our definition. Two stand out: Tūaropaki Trust and Wakatū Incorporation. These organisations demonstrate that it is possible to make money, operate sustainably and to do this in a Māori way.

Tūaropaki is a whānau (family) trust comprising around 2,000 owners just north of Taupō with its base of operations the settlement of Mokai. There you will find an enterprise that is about as close to being totally sustainable as one can imagine. Moreover, it is one which is highly profitable, with growth prospects and dividends that astound. Yet, as their astute chairman Tūmanako Wereta explains in his laconic way, their success is due in equal part to aspiration, luck and divine intervention (Mika, 2009). Tūaropaki's assets include dairy farms, a geothermal power plant, an expansive green house, a communications satellite, and a stake in Miraka, a Māori owned dairy factory powered by Tūaropaki's energy well. Food, energy and communications are their strategic priorities because these are things they know the world will always need. Waste from the milk factory and green house is fed into a worm farm, which produces fertilizer for the farms. All of this was achieved by the trustees and their advisors with the support of their owners. Only recently has the tr

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Management theory we do often hear.

Wakatū Incorporation is another Māori land-based enterprise headquarter comprising over 3,000 owners. Wakatū started with an \$11 million asset base and now has assets valued over \$250 million (Kono NZ, 2014). The majority of its wealth is tied up in property (70 percent), with the rest invested in Kono, a vertically integrated food and beverage business employing over 300 people on 530 hectares of land and sea (Kono NZ, 2012). Kono products include wine, seafood and fruit exported to more than 25 countries. What sets Wakatū apart, however, is its focus on its people and its land and the values that underpin its management. Wakatū views itself as a *kaitiaki* (guardian) of the natural resources over which it has *mana* (authority). This fundamentally alters the way in which managers define their role, from entrepreneurs to custodians, and how assets are defined, from capital to legacies (*taonga tuku iho*).

Our paper suggests that Māori approaches to planning, organising, leading and controlling—the basic functions of management—offer managers in New Zealand a ‘home-grown’ alternative to managing their enterprises. We find that Māori managers integrate Māori and Pākehā (Western) values and methods to produce results that matter to them. As Ouchi points out, adopting different management methods requires an acceptance that there is something to learn from other cultures, followed by a commitment to understanding the philosophy before the practice.

Finally a question and a proposition. What distinguishes an MBA from any New Zealand university with an MBA from anywhere else in the world? If we stay true to the international accreditation bodies to which most New Zealand business schools subscribe, you might say not much. Imagine if we were able to offer the MBA with Māori management theory and practice built into lessons on accounting, finance, economics, leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship, the kind of knowledge that you might observe in Tūaropaki and Wakatū? Right now that is simply not possible, although it is a prospect being contemplated. This is because the research upon which such content depends does not exist. Few are doing it. Without such research we will never know the full extent of Māori management and its contribution to management theory and practice. This is not a solitary endeavour, it more a matter of ‘many hands make light work.’

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10 July 2009, Auckland, New Zealand. TAIHOI BUSINESS CHALLENGE

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John Gill

Community Volunteer at St Vincent de Paul Wellington

2y ...

Jason, those entity figures from Statistics NZ are inflated by companies registered but not operating and many that have no employees, just owner operated. But that aside you may be onto something and I suggest you write some more giving examples of how the people in those successful case studies behave in order to be so successful.

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Dr Jason Mika

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Good call John thanks for the suggestion

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Thaddeus McCarthy

Chief Conductor, Execution Education

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Safety, William Warren, you stick with Coffee

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