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Higgins Takes Tip From Tourism

The Higgins Group has turned to service standards first developed for the tourism and hospitality industry to ensure that its "customer-focus" ethic is not diluted as the group expands.

Staff from the group have been attending training courses run by KiwiHost, the organisation initially created by the New Zealand Tourism Board to ensure visitors met with excellent customer service standards from the tourism and hospitality industry.

Over the last ten years KiwiHost has gradually been transitioning to embrace customer service in every industry sector, including health, government, construction, professional services and fast-moving consumer goods.

Higgins chief executive David Geor said that with the group's acquisitions and expansion, it was important that new staff embraced the traditional customer focus.

"Historically, that has been a core strength of the Higgins brand. We have portrayed ourselves as being respectful of people, of staff, of the environment and particularly of the customer.

"Now, it is essential we retain that consistency of culture. We feel it is important to bring our new acquisitions and new staff into our values, and ensure they adopt those fully. That is why we have engaged KiwiHost to run a course tailored to our staff.

The Higgins course is called CARE training (customers, attitude, respect and excellence) and Jared Brixton, Managing Director of KiwiHost, said the company worked closely with Higgins to develop a programme that used the core concepts of service delivery and aligned them to the CARE philosophy.

"This was done by having our developers sit down with the Higgins management team and identify the outcomes they wanted to achieve. The structure and content of the course was then aligned to those training needs.

"The desire is to leave all attendees appreciating that customer service is extremely important for every organisation and that everyone plays a part in ensuring that the best service possible is delivered consistently across the organisation."

Mr Brixton said that the Higgins move is consistent with a trend in industry, where even "blue collar" sectors – an area where training hasn't always filtered right down to the front line workers – is seeing a surge of interest.

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For further information please contact:

*Angela Chubb Brand Champion, Higgins Group Holdings Limited
Tel: 06 350 2923 Mobile: 027 627 7688*

Jared Brixton, Managing Director of KiwiHost, Mobile 021 903 110