



Konnections Magazine

2022

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Welcome to the 2022 edition of Konnections

It was 2006 when someone first said: “Data is the new oil.” (And Forbes magazine recently added a 2022 twist, with: “Insights are the new money”).

There’s no doubt the power of data has been building for decades — impacting our lives in a thousand small ways, making our businesses more responsive, and our communities safer.

At KPMG, it’s one of the fastest-growing areas of our business, and our Data & Analytics team has doubled in the past two years. (Interesting side-fact, it’s also our youngest team by demographic).

Every day, we’re helping our corporate clients harness their data to improve all aspects of their operations — from streamlining their logistics and back-end processes, to creating a wow-factor customer experience.

We’ve also been involved with a number of important data-driven public sector projects — including New Zealand’s gun buy-back scheme, and our national road policing strategy (which you can read about on [page 12](#)).

We’re currently compiling our 2022 KPMG Data and Digital Leaders Survey. It’s one of the few New Zealand-specific pieces of research into the data maturity of organisations — and we’d love your input. The link to the Survey is on [page 11](#).

Our alumni articles in this issue also have a data theme. Tania O’Brien, now CFO at Westpac, reflects on how advancements in data have radically changed the finance role. Marianna Pekar, Chief Data Scientist with MartinJenkins, shares her passion for using the power of data to create social good.

As we head to the end of 2022, our ‘Life in Lockdown’ article on [page 14](#) reflects back on those turbulent pandemic times. What did we learn, as leadership? We were grateful and humbled to see the way everyone drew together as a firm, and truly walked our values. It’s the tough times that test us, and we couldn’t be more proud.

Opened borders have also meant the welcome return of KPMG friends and colleagues, including alumni Mel Bagge and Wayne Gibson. On [page 17](#), they share how they’ve balanced their globe-trotting careers while raising a young family.

Finally, we welcome our new Partners and Directors on [page 23](#).

If you can make it, we’d love to catch up with you in person at our alumni event in Auckland on October 20th.

Until next time, take care.

Ngā whakamānawa o te wā



Matt Prichard
Executive Chair



Godfrey Boyce
Chief Executive



Aaron Woolsey
Alumni Partner

Marianna Pekar: Using “data for humanity”



Marianna Pekar
KPMG Alumni

Then: KPMG Wellington,
Lighthouse, 2019

Now: Chief Data Scientist, MartinJenkins

When studying in her native Hungary, KPMG alumni Marianna Pekar found herself drawn to two seemingly disparate subjects — mathematics and sociology.

As it turned out, it was the perfect combination for a career as a data scientist — a new field that was only just emerging. For the past decade, Marianna has continued to follow her twin passions, using the power of data to help tackle society’s important issues.

When Marianna was presenting at the Women in Data Science (WiDS) conference earlier this year, the title of her speech was: “Is data scientist still the sexiest job of the 21st century?”

That’s what Harvard Business Review named it back in 2012 — and the title, apparently, still holds. According to GlassDoor, data scientist ranks third of the 50 best occupations in the US. It has a satisfaction rating of 4.1 out of 5, a median base salary of US\$120k, and offers juicy opportunities within tech giants and start-ups alike.

Marianna says there was a huge surge in the profession around six years ago, with people studying and retraining to data science in their droves. That saw the supply-demand gap starting to close — then Covid hit, and demand roared off again.

“The pandemic increased demand for data scientists worldwide, including New Zealand,” she says.

“You know it’s a good profession when it doesn’t crumble during a crisis, but actually creates more value.” And it’s just the kind of mission-critical work — getting to the beating heart of society’s most pressing problems — that Marianna loves about data science.

“Every government has limited resources, and when it comes to addressing chronic problems such as child poverty or social inequality, they have to know what to prioritise. Providing policymakers with the right evidence can help with that...and make a real difference in people’s lives.”

Social data is a complex beast

While implementing the results of social data can be ground-breaking, Marianna says the path to achieving them is uniquely complex.

“Human data has so many contextual layers to consider when you’re conducting research. It’s not as simple as data generated by, for instance, the stock market. And if your results are biased, or you haven’t applied a method properly, there’s actually a risk you could impact policymaking in a negative way.”

Handling the messy and nuanced character of human data demands the highest ethical and technical standards. Most data scientists in the social space will specialize in a particular domain — such as healthcare, or education — in order to build the required depth of knowledge. ➔

Best-practice data science also requires sensitivity to lived experiences and other world views. In New Zealand, for instance, there’s a growing focus on Māori data sovereignty and decolonising methodologies.

Marianna’s own path to data science

Growing up in a small farming town in Hungary, Marianna’s engineer parents were an inspiration. Her mother passed on her love of mathematics, while her father changed paths mid-career to become an award-winning documentary maker following the collapse of the communist regime.

“He taught me that it’s never too late to change your career trajectory — you should follow your passion and figure out how to serve others with your talents. When I wanted to leave finance and take a new direction, I asked my father what he would do. He told me: ‘life’s too short not to open your wings’.

“I’m proud of him for that, and also for the hard years, when my parents were punished for being critical of the communist regime. He taught me that principles should come before comfort.”

As an accomplished student, Marianna won a study scholarship which brought her to New Zealand aged 21. She completed an Master of Business in finance and quantitative studies at University of Otago in Dunedin, adding to her Master of Science from Corvinus University Budapest.

“That meant I was able to start a career in either of these countries, but in the end, love decided for me. I met my husband while studying and we chose to stay here to raise our family.” ➔

Staying current in a fast-evolving field

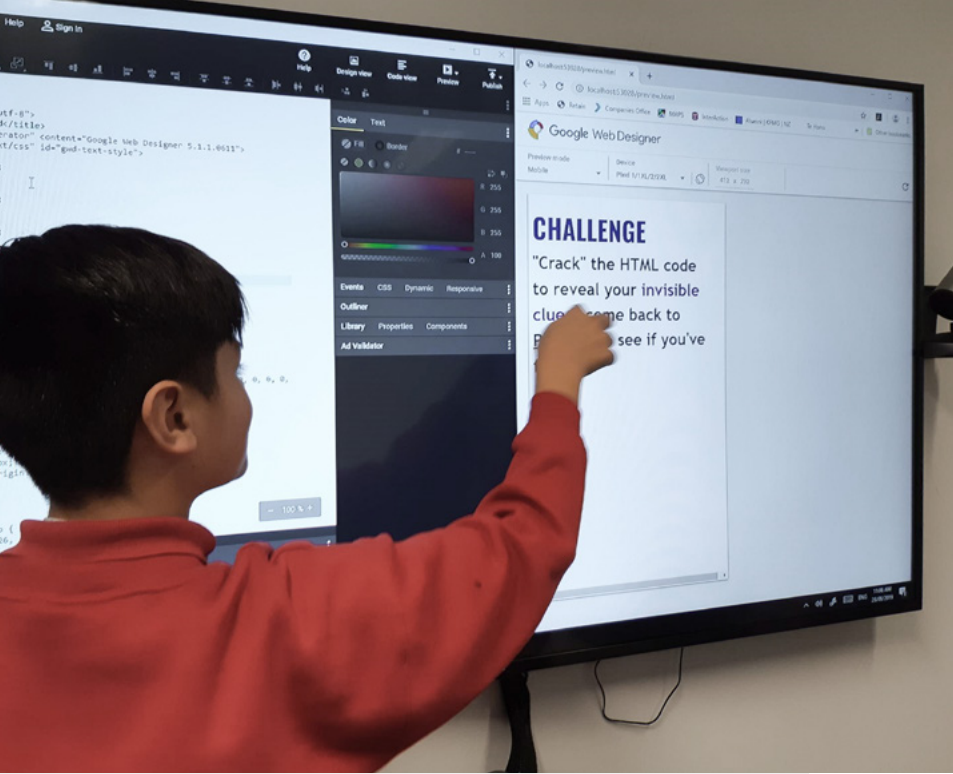
Marianna began her career as a statistical and financial modeler, working for the Commerce Commission and within the gas industry sector. Back in 2010, there was no such thing as a data science degree — so Marianna effectively created her own path.

“I enrolled in every course I could find. Stanford had a six-week course on big data, it gave me an in-depth understanding of what skills I’d need. I never stopped planning what to do next... I did multiple online courses, classroom learning in Cloud computing and SAS coding, and attended conferences in social science research. And I’m still learning — this year I started a postgraduate diploma in AI through Victoria University of Wellington.”

Marianna’s first ‘official’ data scientist role was with KPMG, from 2015 to 2019. In addition to client work, she helped build the new KPMG Lighthouse team and capability.

“KPMG attracts many talented individuals, and I’m grateful for the time I spent there learning from them. It’s also an inclusive and multilingual environment...it was the only time in New Zealand I’ve found myself working with other Hungarians!”

This was followed by two years at the Social Wellbeing Agency, working with government agencies, Māori organisations and NGOs.



There was one piece of research she’s particularly proud of.

“We explored what successful student transitions look like for Māori youth in the Ngāi Tahu takiwā (iwi area of interest). We found that full immersion schools, where they are taught te reo exclusively, helped youth to stay in school longer, obtain University Entrance and complete university at a higher rate. It was a great piece of research that later got used by Ngāi Tahu’s education arm to inform young people about the decisions they make when in high school.”

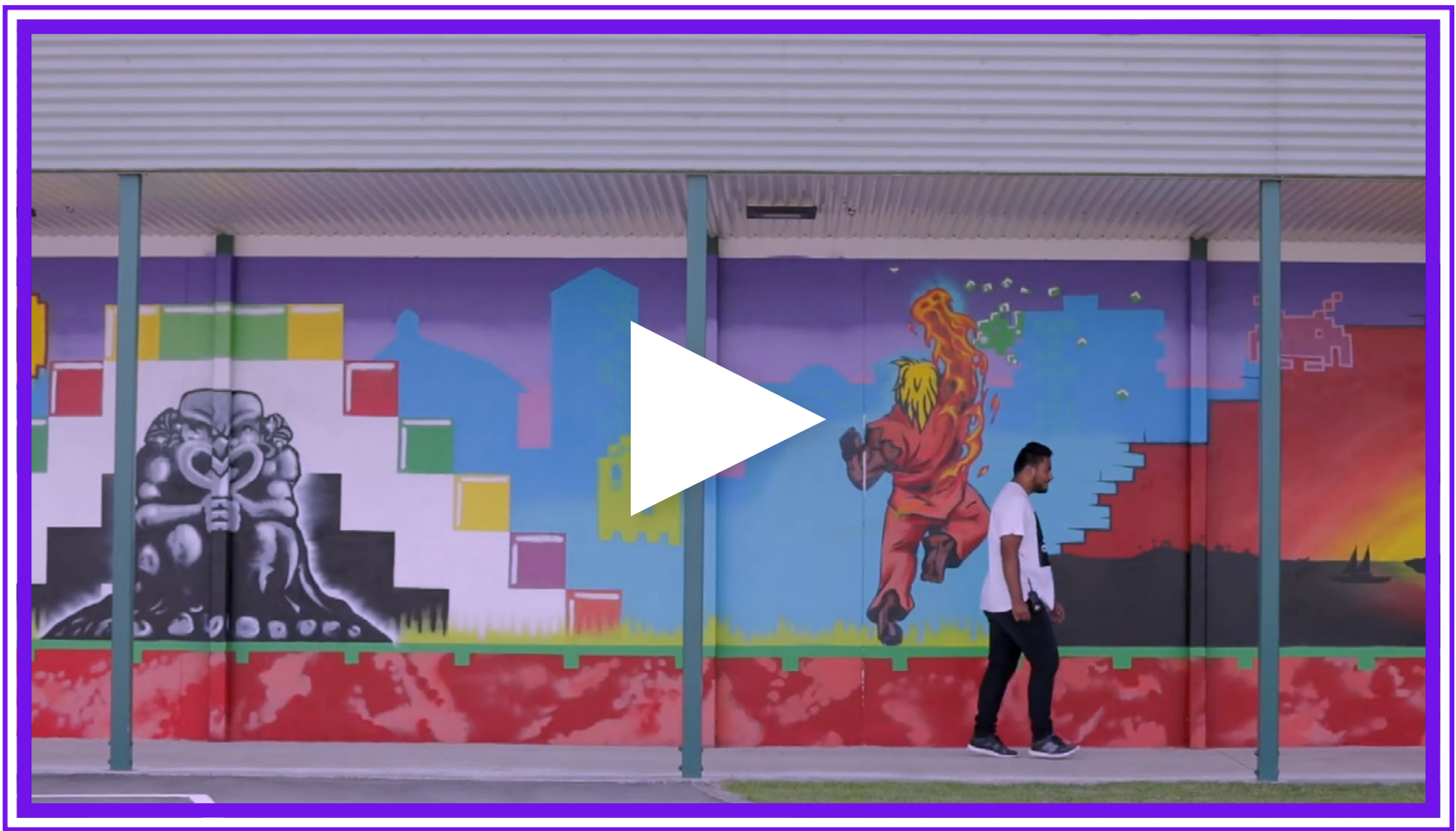
In her current role as Chief Data Scientist with Martin Jenkins, Marianna is helping the firm build its data science capability as it undertakes a range of public policy work.

¹ The Social Wellbeing Agency publication
² Tokona Te Raki publication

New Zealand is a world-leader in public policy data

A recurring message Marianna hears from her offshore peers is that they’re envious of New Zealand’s Integrated Data Infrastructure. Launched in 2010/11, it’s a world first, and provides an anonymised data picture on individuals at granular level.

“At the recent WiDS conference in Europe, everybody was asking me about this. They thought I was very lucky to be working in this environment, and wanted to know how other countries could do the same.”



Coordinated by Statistics New Zealand, it combines data from key government agencies and other large services such as Census and the Household Economic Survey.

“Integrated data gives us a really powerful and realistic view into the world that we haven’t previously had, and allows us to conduct research that was previously almost unattainable without the use of very expensive longitudinal studies,” says Marianna.

“We can access individual-level data on any dimension of a person’s social life, from their educational records to their financial behaviours. So we can say with a much higher degree of confidence ‘here’s what’s happening in that person’s life, and here’s how we would look to work with them’.” ■

For a quick primer,
see the [YouTube video](#)

What are two emerging trends in the data science space?

XAI (or Explainable AI)

is a hot topic right now — and is one of the biggest challenges in the technology sector.

Black-box machine learning models are increasingly being used for high-stakes decision-making — whether it’s deciding on a loan application, a patient’s treatment, a criminal justice sentence, or how a driverless car operates. So what happens when the machine makes an ‘error of judgement’ — but it can’t tell us why?

“It’s a big problem that’s hindering the advancement of AI at the moment,” says Marianna.

“Obviously society can really suffer if you keep using methods that you can’t explain why they do what they do.”

New Zealand has responded quickly to these concerns — and was among the first countries in the world to introduce an Algorithm Charter in 2020.

“To comply with the charter, it goes two ways. You can either keep using simple algorithms that don’t perform as well, or you can develop methods that can explain complex algorithms.”

Synthetic data

is another exciting development for data scientists.

Although we live in the era of big data, explains Marianna, sometimes it’s not quite big enough.

“Sometimes you can’t use real data, because its highly sensitive or there are privacy concerns, or because you don’t have enough volume of data for certain data-hungry algorithms.”

Synthetic data fills this gap. While it’ll never be quite as good as models built on the real thing, it’s still opening up a lot of doors in social research. Marianna is part of a Victoria University research cohort that’s examining how to use generative adversarial network (GAN) to create high fidelity synthetic data sets for social research.

Although we live in the era of big data, sometimes it’s not quite big enough.

Tania O’Brien on:

data & the modern CFO



Tania O’Brien
KPMG Alumni

Then: KPMG Wellington,
Audit, 1992 — 1996

Now: CFO, Westpac New Zealand

After many years in senior banking roles in Australia and Singapore, KPMG alumni Tania O’Brien returned to New Zealand this year, to take up the reins as CFO for Westpac.

We caught up with Tania to talk about some of her career highlights — and her views on how data is revolutionising the finance role.

How would you describe your career strategy?

“I’ve never had a 5-year plan or anything like that. But right from my first job at KPMG, there’s been a pattern. If you work hard and do a good job, you’ll get offered more opportunities. If you take those on, and do them well, you’ll get offered more opportunities — and over time, you’ll reach where you want to be. It’s simple, but that’s how it’s worked for me.

“Early on, I did aspire to be a Partner at KPMG. But ANZ was an audit client of mine the whole time I was at the firm, and after four years I started with them as a financial reporting manager. There’s so much diversity and depth within banking, I knew it was a sector I wanted to be part of.

“There’s also the contribution banking makes to our customers and communities... I take a lot of pride in that. Especially now I’ve come home, seeing that focus on helping New Zealanders succeed has really resonated with me.

What’s the best piece of career advice you’ve ever received?

“About halfway through my career, I’d applied for a CFO role and wasn’t successful. I talked to some career development people and one of the things they said to me was, ‘why are you only focused on a CFO role... your skill base is actually much broader. You know governance, you understand risk, you can lead people, and you’ve managed change’. Their advice was: think about what you like doing, and what you’re good at, instead of being fixated on the job title.

“And that was quite a turning point for me. I started thinking about other kinds of roles — from COO, CEO, Chief Risk Officer or Head of Product — which really widened my horizon. Of course, I did end up in a CFO role, but I’ve never forgotten that advice and have passed it on to others.”

Who’s been your greatest mentor in your career?

“My first boss at ANZ was a man called Rob Hayward — he was a fantastic people manager, who supported his staff but also challenged them. You’d turn up in the morning and he’d say: ‘oh, by the way, you’re presenting to the Board today’. He’d throw you in the deep end to see if you’d swim, but you always knew he’d save you if you needed it. Which is a great way to develop people, and it’s helped me get to where I am today.

“Another influential person in my early career was Andrew Dinsdale, a Partner at KPMG Wellington. He was a great boss, he had lots of energy and I really enjoyed working with him.” →



In your finance roles, how have you seen the use of data evolve over time?

“It was a totally different world when I first started my career. A month-end would take 10 days to do, and then you’d do your reporting for the month prior. It was very static; you were essentially reporting the history and we got our data out of the general ledger.

“Then in the 90s we started to see shorter timeframes, the information came quicker, and the data pools expanded. Excel was being used a lot more. We started to do more analysis of product and customer profitability.

“That was the period when finance started generating real-time, insightful, inter-related data... the power of that was acknowledged and everybody just wanted more of it.”

What are some of the more recent developments?

“Data is so inter-related now. We’ve got the tools to integrate many different systems, and people across the organisation can do all kinds of self-service reporting and scenario planning.

“Something we’re also starting to see now is the integration of external information. Whether it’s GDP or Reserve Bank information, we can take that external data to then run analysis on our internal information.

“The other thing that’s changed in recent years is the regulator’s expectations. They’ve moved from ‘fill out this return at a level that matches your general ledger or maybe a level down’, to requiring quite in-depth information. And they often want access to certain data pools within the organisation, so they can directly select the data they need.

How data-literate does the CFO of today need to be?

“There are probably several parts to that. Finance must be able to provide a clear line of sight to achieving strategic goals through effective capital usage — so they need to understand the type of data that will drive returns and the right outcomes. This means finance needs to engage right at the beginning when decisions about investment prioritisations are being made, know what the best available tools are, and have a very close relationship with the CIO.

How do you see the future of data in finance?

“What I find most exciting is how we can use data and analytics to drive the strategic goals of the organisation. When you have a solid foundation of facts and overlay it with technology and new insights, it lights the path for the steps we need to take. And finance is very much part of that — we get to see it happen.” ■

Data maturity: Where does your organisation sit?

In 2020, KPMG Digital Lighthouse surveyed nearly 100 New Zealand-based organisations across 16 different industries — to help them identify and benchmark their level of maturity around data and analytics.

The survey was a first for New Zealand organisations, as most data benchmarking content is global. The questions were centered around data adoption, data management, analytics capability, tools and technologies.

“This survey showed that when it comes to data adoption, New Zealand had come a long way from where we started,” says Stephen Hastings, founding partner of KPMG Digital Lighthouse.

“As a nation, we’re starting to get the right expertise in place, and all the necessary tools are generally available.”

For instance, 76% of respondents use the tools available for data and insights to inform their overall corporate strategy, which is a good indicator of the data and analytics maturity of an organisation.

However, some clear themes emerged from the survey — and in particular, it revealed 4 factors that are key to improving maturity and adoption.

Do you have an enterprise-wide data strategy?

“Having an enterprise-wide data strategy is extremely important, as it sets the tone from the top and enables greater commitment, coordination and alignment with respect to data and analytics,” says Stephen Hastings.

“It also helps to ensure data-driven initiatives are effectively prioritised and executed.”

By having a strategy in place, organisations are open to using a range of operating models for data and analytics. The survey showed that organisations with an enterprise-wide data strategy are 5 times more likely to apply advanced analytical techniques.

Another marker of success was when an organisation has a ‘data champion’ at an executive level — whether it be the CEO or other C-suite roles like Chief Data Officer (CDO), CTO or CIO.

84% of respondents who have an executive-level data champion told us they use data and insights to inform the overall corporate strategy

84%

How well does your organisation trust its data?

Trust in data has been a topic of keen interest for many organisations in recent years.

In our survey, 78% of respondents said they had trust in their data and analytics, but only 20% strongly agreed.

Our survey found that 78% of respondents agreed that they had trust in their data and analytics, but only 20% strongly agreed

78%

“We found an interesting correlation between trust in data, and access to it,” says Stephen Hastings.

“More people using the data in an organisation can go one of two ways. Greater access can drive recognition of the value of data, which in turn drives investment to improve it. Conversely, greater access might lead to more people coming up with different calculations or interpretations of the data, which then dissipates trust.”

Overall, organisations that trust their data were twice as likely to use insights from it to inform their corporate strategy. They were also twice as likely to have processes for maintaining or improving data quality. →

Are you continually improving data quality?

This requires having the right tools and technologies in place, as well as empowering teams with the responsibility to maintain and improve data quality.

Only 28% of respondents in the survey had processes in place for maintaining and improving data quality.

“Some leaders were facing the issue of pressure on immediate revenue-generating work, rather than focussing on maintaining good data quality, which would lead to greater pay-offs in the longer term. This issue is not COVID-19 related and has been the case for some time.”

Only 28% of respondents had
processes in place for
maintaining and improving
data quality

28%

But there were also some positive examples of New Zealand businesses that had come a long way in their data transformation journey — with a solid foundation of data and the right governance in place — and were reaping the benefits. One organisation was able to apply machine learning to their marketing, and as a result, saw a 120% uptake on their campaigns.

Is implementation of your data strategy a challenge?

Implementation of a data strategy still represents a challenge for most organisations in New Zealand. 44% of respondents reported partial implementation of their data strategy, but only 15% had strong implementation.

The way of working can also affect whether the strategy is successful. Those who operate a federated model (where analytical specialists are both embedded in divisions and within a centralised team) appears to lead to more successful execution (with 77% of that subset indicating they had partially or fully implemented their strategy).

The implementation of data strategy was regularly noted in the survey as both a key challenge and opportunity in using data and analytics for improved decision-making.

“This represents the next phase for New Zealand organisations, as improved data strategy implementation will help them achieve more value from their data assets,” says Stephen Hastings.

“Improved data strategy implementation is the key to unlocking more value from their data assets.” ■

Want to know the latest? We invite you to participate in our 2022 survey

The KPMG Digital Lighthouse team is currently collating the **2022 KPMG Data and Digital Leaders Survey**.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic in the intervening period from the previous survey, it will be interesting to see how New Zealand organisations have changed and adapted their use of data and digital technologies.

Says Stephen Hastings: “In our work over the last few years, we’ve witnessed the acceleration of digital transformations and data-driven projects across all sectors — and we’re intrigued to see how this plays out in the 2022 survey results.”

- The Survey has 27 questions and takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. Results are anonymised and no organisational data will be shared. **Responses are required before 21st October.** [Click here to participate.](#)
- You do not need to be a data specialist to take part - all roles are welcome. We are interested in your views and impressions on how data is being utilized within your organisation.
- All participants will automatically receive a copy of the Survey report. If you do not wish to take part, but would still like to receive a copy of the 2022 Survey results, please email [Stephen Hastings](#).

“Where the rubber hits the road”: KPMG & New Zealand Police

The intelligent use of data can achieve big things — from making businesses more responsive and profitable, to saving lives.

We explain how KPMG’s work with New Zealand police is helping to reduce our national road toll.

The challenge:

In 2019, New Zealand ranked 29 out of the 36 OECD countries for road deaths per capita — not an enviable statistic. In response, the Government’s “Road to Zero” strategy targets a 40% reduction in death and serious injury over the next 10 years; with an ultimate aim that no-one is killed or seriously injured on our roads.

New Zealand’s Road Safety Partnership Program (RSPP) is a joint initiative between New Zealand Police (NZP), Waka Kotahi (New Zealand Transport Agency/NZTA), and Te Manatū Waka (Ministry of Transport/MOT).

As part of this strategy, New Zealand Police want a more targeted approach to deploying their road policing units — to know where and when officers should be located to provide the greatest deterrence.

KPMG’s role:

We were engaged by New Zealand Police to enable the integration and visualisation of data around road policing deployment.

Essentially, the task was to bring together key data from multiple sources within Police and their road safety partners, NZTA. These included officer-issued infringements, mobile speed cameras, breath test data,

charges for drink/drug driving, vehicle stops and complaints, deaths and serious injuries, road shape files, one network road classifications, road collective risk estimations and crash data.

Bringing all this data together would give NZ Police fresh insights, because they hadn’t seen the full picture before. →

Deployment Dashboard – Recent Deployment Analysis

A practical view for unearthing localities with recently lower levels of activity and alignment to risk areas

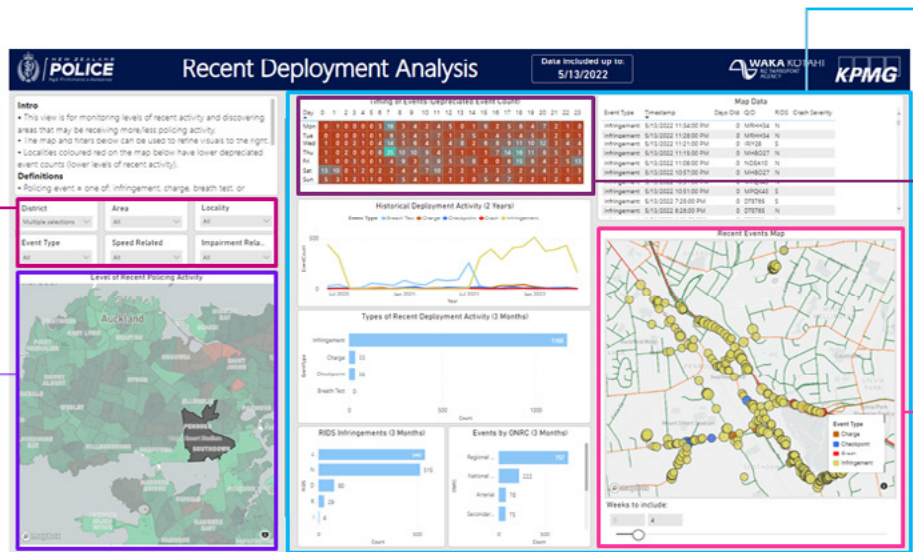
Event Selection

Filters allow the user to choose what type of events they are interested in e.g. speed related infringements

Recency Map

Localities appear red when they have lower levels of activity (for the selected events). This uses a depreciated event count where policing events are discounted based on how old they are

Event Age	Event Contribution
Just gone	100%
1 month old	50%
2 months old	25%
3 months old	12.5%
4 months old	6.25%



Focussed Analysis

Charts on the right update based on selections made with filters or on the recency map

Timing Matrix

This table divides recent events by time to highlight patterns in timing of policing events

Event Mapping

This map plots events in the past number of weeks specified by the user. Roads are coloured by Waka Kotahi’s collective risk rating to analyse alignment to locations of policing events

What we did:

A series of Power BI dashboards were developed and hosted on a Microsoft Azure cloud environment, with specific focuses for different user groups “the road policing application”. The deployment dashboard, for example, was designed for road deployment managers to gain insight into historical trends and patterns that help inform future deployment planning.

The tools we used:

KPMG used a suite of Microsoft technologies such as Microsoft Azure Cloud (including Data Factory, Synapse and other Azure components) and PowerBI.

This combination of technology allowed KPMG to securely integrate data from several sources, achieve scalable performance, and allow for high usability and interactivity without loss of performance.

The result:

Post the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) creation, the road policing application was piloted in Tāmaki Makaurau’s (Auckland’s) police district. This pilot was thoroughly evaluated and deemed to be successful. The next step is for the application to be rolled out nationally to all other Police districts.

Feedback from New Zealand Police senior leadership described the use of Microsoft’s technologies within the application as “game-changing”. They have already started to examine how this type of solution could be applied to other forms of policing deployment and workforce planning.

The combination of New Zealand Police’ data and road safety subject matter expertise and experience, KPMG’s data and analytics expertise with Microsoft’s trusted and scalable services, has helped create a road policing application that will make a material difference to every New Zealander — by helping to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on our roads. ■



Life in lockdown: What we learned as a firm

26 March, 2020

That was the morning we woke to an eerie new world of deserted streets, empty office buildings, and an unknown future. As the days of lockdown stretched into weeks, we adjusted to the strange new rhythm of lockdown life. It was a time filled with uncertainty and for some, true struggle and sadness. But it was also a time that brought many good things.

At KPMG, it showed us two things. Firstly, we were digitally-ready for this massive curve ball, because we’d already started down the path of mobile working. And secondly, it showed how our people rose to the challenge to support each other, and the firm, in ways that humbled us.

KPMG’s head of tech, Cowan Pettigrew, and senior HR manager, Britt Richards, reflect back on those weird and often wonderful days.

Here’s what they learned.



Cowan Pettigrew
Head of Tech

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Have a mobility strategy — it helps to solve problems like this

When Cowan joined the firm as CTO in 2016, one of his goals was to ensure half of the firm could be mobile at any one time.

“Even back then it made sense. As a consulting firm we had people on client sites, and remote working in pockets. While I had no idea the pandemic was coming, we’d had the Christchurch quakes, and the genesis of my thinking was ‘how do I make sure half the firm can go mobile on any given day?’

This thinking drove a lot of critical preparation work in the next few years — so the right infrastructure was in place when COVID-19 struck.

Says Cowan: “Any good CTO will be thinking about business continuity in terms of mobility. Because if you’ve nailed mobility, then by definition, you’ve also got BCP built in.”

Big projects can get done overnight (when you have to)

From a technology perspective, COVID-19 threw a grenade into millions of workplaces around the world — testing the strength of their internal networks.

While KPMG had completed some of the key milestones of its mobility strategy, the entire program was yet to be completed.

Six weeks before lockdown, when the seriousness of the pandemic became obvious overseas, a number of rapid actions took place. KPMG’s network bandwidth was triple-augmented, the VPN capability was split-tunneled*, and 1-to-1 VPN licensing was secured for all staff.

Skype was quickly replaced with Teams — getting deployed firm-wide in just two days. Data-usage policies were updated, hardware was sourced, and anyone with less-than-ideal WFH facilities was given targeted support.

“Because of all those the steps we’d taken prior, we moved the whole firm of 1,400 people over to remote working pretty much seamlessly in 48 hours. It showed that when everybody is on board, even a large ship like KPMG can move quickly.” →

Take action — no matter what

Cowan’s background includes stints in the army and police, working in crisis management squads. He says there were some similarities when responding to the pandemic — dealing with incomplete information, applying limited resources, and shifting chains of command.

“Usually BCP is ring-fenced to one region or an isolated event, such as the Christchurch quakes. But the pandemic was unique in its sheer scale and longevity, and because of the supply chain disruptions, you have to rethink your whole asset management plan.”

The key was to simply keep moving, and responding, hour-by-hour.

“The on-the-ground reality is always different from your standard PowerPoint deck on crisis management. It requires real agility and fleet-of-foot thinking.”

The backing of leadership is crucial

When a business is in crisis management mode, says Cowan, it reveals how much the leadership trust their people in critical roles.

“Godfrey and the national exec team backed me 100%, and our CMT (Crisis Management Team) was ultra-responsive. I felt empowered to go and get the job done.”

The whole IT team stepped up to their mission-critical role — and found themselves viewed in a new light by many.

“Without a doubt, we went through a period of glowing hero status. We were moving around and delivering kit to people’s homes when it was seen as dangerous, because no-one really understood the virus. There’s also now a lot more appreciation for some of the IT challenges we deal with.”

A sense of humour is essential

Cowan also remembers lots of light-hearted moments. People would wander down the driveway in their pyjamas to collect their IT hardware deliveries. There was the online meeting where a flatmate wandered past butt naked (before Teams had the background-blur function). And then there was the time Cowan got apprehended by police.

“I was out delivering kit to people across Auckland. My beard was overgrown, my head was shaved, and I’m fully tattooed. At the time there were hardly any cars on the road, and here was this skinhead guy with a van full of laptops and expensive kit. I got pulled over by two cop cars, I didn’t have my KPMG ID on me, and there was a bit of a situation to sort out...”



Britt Richards
HR Senior Manager

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The first role of leadership is reassurance

When the pandemic first broke, recalls Britt, the mood was one of huge uncertainty.

“Everyone was thinking, what’s going to happen in the world, am I going to get sick, is my job going to be there? People were really worried about their relatives overseas, and everyone was dealing with their own stuff, on top of work. It was all these layers of uncertainty and worry.”

So right at the outset, CEO Godfrey Boyce provided reassurance on those important things — via videos filmed on his mobile phone.

“People were hearing it straight from the top as events unfolded. The key messages were: ‘You’re going to have a job. You’re going to stay connected with people. We know this is hard, but we’re there for you and we’re doing this together.’”

Living your values (when the rubber hits the road)

Like businesses everywhere, the firm itself was facing into an unknown future — so it turned to its values as a north star.

Recalls Britt: “The partnership decided early on that the first priority was to look after people before anything else. And once you do that, and put people at the heart of everything...it actually becomes easier to make big decisions.” The start of the pandemic in March coincided with two major financial outlays — salary reviews and promotions.

“We decided to go ahead with the promotions, because people needed to keep growing and developing. The salary reviews were postponed but we made the commitment we’d deal with that as soon as we understood the landscape.”

It’s notable that KPMG did not claim the government’s COVID-19 wage subsidy, while reassuring everyone their jobs were safe.

“The partners took money out of their own funds to make sure we did all those things at the beginning.”

People are willing to make sacrifices for the greater good

As part of its strategy to retain all jobs, KPMG surveyed staff about their willingness to take a 15% salary sacrifice (in return for 12 days of special leave over four months). The response was immediate, says Britt. →

*split-tunnelling is a way to conserve web traffic speed by dictating which apps and services use your secure VPN connection versus your standard internet connection

“99% of people just went ‘yep’. Even many of those who weren’t eligible because their salary was below the threshold we’d set, they still wanted to offer their 15%! It was just amazing to us how much everyone wanted to be part of it, for the good of their colleagues and the wider firm.”

As soon as it became clear the firm would be okay financially, the salary sacrifice was quickly unwound.

“Everyone was paid what was due as soon as possible, and the partners were the last to get the wind-back. That built even more trust among staff...when they saw we meant what we’d said.”

[The more you give, the more you get back](#)

A similar thing played out in March this year, when everyone was given 4 weeks of COVID-19 Sick Leave to access whenever they needed, no questions asked.

“We wanted to reassure people they could take time out for recovery and rest, or to look after their dependents, without affecting their sick days. Funnily enough, the average amount people have actually used is only about 3 days.”

As the pandemic wore on (and on), the firm continued to find ways to keep the team’s spirits up.

During the long lockdown at the end of 2021, for instance, Kia Kaha care packages of gourmet treats were delivered to all families in Auckland and Hamilton. And when each new 10% double-vaccination milestone was reached, the whole firm was rewarded with an early-finish Friday.

[Being able to bring our real selves to work](#)

Another positive legacy of Covid has been the chance to strengthen work relationships. Disruption has been a great leveler — whether it’s seeing colleagues on Zoom in their gym clothes, or bonding over the trials of home-schooling.

“Our work relationships are much stronger because we’ve basically stepped into each other’s lives. We really are bringing our true selves to work — it’s more than just words now.”

It gave managers and leaders the opportunity to really get to know their people on a personal level, which has in turn lead to new levels of loyalty and engagement.

“The firm has had really good results over the past two years — and that couldn’t be done if people weren’t feeling engaged. I think people feel they want to give that extra part of themselves.”

[The future has been changed forever](#)

There’s no denying that COVID-19 has changed our work practices — forever. Employees have re-set their expectations about how, when and where they’d like to work.

“Even though we’re all coming back into the office, it’s different from how it was in the past. Now we have smaller policies, less rules, more guidelines, we’re treating people like adults...all that good stuff.”

It’s also provided a rich testing ground for future workplace innovations.

“It puts the onus on us as employers to consider everything we do. Just look at the outcome — the firm’s doing great, you can’t argue with that. What else would be possible if we turned some other things on their head? Our HR team is very excited about that...” ■



Flexi-family: Mel & Wayne’s story



Melanie (Mel) Bagge and Wayne Gibson
KPMG Alumni

Finding the balance between career and family is something that every professional couple with children grapples with.

But for KPMG Tauranga alumni **Melanie Bagge and Wayne Gibson**, who have recently returned home after 20 years in London and New York, it’s been a fairly seamless give-and-take.

During that time, Wayne has mostly been the main caregiver to their two kids, while Mel climbed the career ladder with JP Morgan. Now they’ve swapped roles again.

Here are some of the things they learned along the way....

Romance can blossom anywhere

even at a less-than-exciting CAANZ training course, which was where the couple met in London. They’d been colleagues at KPMG Tauranga — where Wayne was an Audit grad and Mel was an Advisory manager — but didn’t know each other well.

“It was a pretty boring course, so we bonded over that and ended up having quite a few laughs,” recalls Wayne.

Although he was planning to leave London, “I thought I’d stick around to see how this turns out.” Fast-forward a few years, and the couple had two London-born children, Connor and Lexi.

They returned home briefly in 2014 to get married in Mount Maunganui, with a bunch of KPMG mates on the guest list.

Do whatever works at the time

Mel took six months maternity leave from JP Morgan after their first child was born.

“When I was ready to go back to work, Wayne took over at home so I could really throw myself back into it.”

Although there have been stints where they’ve both worked full-time, they both prefer the dynamic of one parent at home.

Says Wayne: “We never had any arguments over it, or had to write a list of pros and cons, it just worked out. Either because I was contracting, or Mel was getting paid more, or whatever. We’re both pretty flexible.” →

Know when it’s time to change

During her time with JP Morgan, Mel worked her way up from business analyst to getting on the radar for a Managing Director promotion, the bank’s highest grade.

“Eighteen years at the same firm sounds like a long time, but JP Morgan is huge, there are over 250,000 employees, and you could do so many different roles.”

And while it was bittersweet to leave the firm, says Mel, the decision to come home was a family one.

“Everything we’d done so far was about me and my job — it was time for the family and the kids. Our stake in the ground was always about where the kids would start high school.”

Seize the travel opportunities

The family relocated from London to New York from 2014 to 2017, when Mel took a transfer. Wayne looked after the kids for the first half, before a stint working with Moody’s in downtown New York.

“We loved the whole cultural experience of being in America,” says Mel.

“We had our first proper New York winter, the kids got into skiing, and we did some amazing campervan trips around the Grand Canyon and Canada, as well as holidays to Florida, Mexico and the Caribbean.”

Take time to adjust

For other couples considering a great family-career adventure, Mel cautions it’s not all smooth sailing.

Don’t expect to move countries and have everything seamlessly fall into place.

“There will definitely be some frustrating moments trying to figure out the new system of a country. I think it took six months to really feel like we were living in New York... by the time we sorted out social security, phones, driver licenses and got a car. So just know that it will be challenging, but it’s all so worth it.”

Leverage your accounting quals

Having New Zealand’s internationally-recognised CA qualification has been a real asset for the globe-trotting couple.

“When it comes to travelling, it’s the ideal profession really,” says Wayne.

“We could get jobs in London or New York without having to retrain or requalify, unlike some of our friends who are lawyers or dentists.”

Don’t sweat the CV gaps

Wayne’s LinkedIn profile lists his role as: “Being a Dad career break”. Though he was a little worried about having gaps in his CV, it was a non-issue when interviewing for his current role (as a management accountant with PowerCo).

“My new boss didn’t see it as an issue at all. I think it’s more widely accepted now for either parent to take time out to be the main caregiver. At the end of the day, it’s all about the couple doing what works best for their individual careers and their family.” ■

About Whanau@KPMG

KPMG New Zealand’s parental leave programme is gender-neutral, and supports all new parents through this exciting and significant time in their lives.

Launched in September 2021, the Whānau@KPMG policy includes:

1. Equal access to 18 weeks of fully paid parental leave for all new parents. For primary carers this means topping-up the difference between the Government Paid Parental Leave payments and their normal salary for up to 18 weeks; and for secondary carers it means 18 weeks of fully paid leave that can be taken within two years of the arrival of their child.
2. Holiday pay accrued whilst on parental leave is topped up to full value.
3. Continued eligibility for annual performance, salary reviews and bonus payments while on parental leave.
4. A nominated KPMG Aunt or Uncle to provide informal support and a point of contact with the business throughout parental leave.
5. Access to one-on-one coaching and resources to support transitions through the parental journey and successfully managing the juggle that is work and life.
6. A personal gift from the firm.
7. Flexible work practises and leave policies that provide options to support time away from work for family reasons.

Building digital citizens of tomorrow

Living and learning in a digital world is something most of us take for granted — but for many children and their families, it’s not that simple.

The team at Manaiakalani Education Trust are working to turn that around. By supporting schools in disadvantaged communities, their ultimate goal is to see all New Zealanders become fully enfranchised digital citizens.

Manaiakalani takes a three-pronged approach — upskilling teachers to teach in the digital space; researching the most effective teaching methods; and providing affordable ways for students to get their own digital device. (As well as offering micro-loans, they also help ensure household connectivity).

As Trust CEO Jenny Oxley explains, it’s grown from a local community initiative to a nationwide success.

“The Trust was formed 12 years ago to support schools in the heart of Tāmaki Makaurau — in the suburbs of Glen Innes, Panmure and Pt England. Then a whole bunch of other school communities wanted to do it, and we now have 120 schools right across New Zealand implementing our programmes.”

Students that engage with the Manaiakalani programme — which covers reading, writing and maths — accelerate their learning at 1.5 times the New Zealand average.

“Due to circumstances, these students are starting from a lower baseline, so learning in this way helps them catch up faster.”

Learning in a digital world also engages kids in a way that wasn’t possible in an analog environment, says Jenny.

“When a child has a learning device, they can learn anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace.

“Children are actively encouraged to blog, and when their families and wider audience provide feedback on that, it drives a real excitement in learning. Kids see they have people interested in what they’re doing at a school, in a way that didn’t always happen with the old exercise book coming home.”

When families and whanau connect with their children’s learning, it helps to “demystify the whole education process”, especially for parents who may have had a less positive experience at school themselves.

“Everything we do is about helping to drive quality and pride and achievement in learning.” →

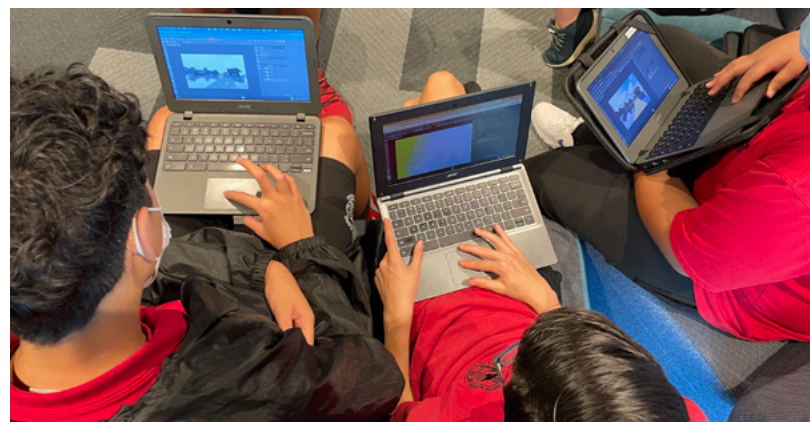
When a child has a learning device, they can learn anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace.

Jenny Oxley

KPMG’s partnership

As part of its kaupapa to help fuel the prosperity of all New Zealanders, KPMG has partnered with Manaiakalani Education Trust for several years.

As well as championing the programme across the corporate sector — and providing strategic advice to the Trust pro bono — KPMG hosts students and teachers on a regular basis throughout the year. ■



KPMG Auckland host “class for a day” sessions, where intermediate-age students take their classes inside KPMG’s Viaduct offices. The idea is to give them an experience of a corporate environment, opening up career options for the future.



Cohorts of teachers are also hosted at KPMG offices during the year-long Manaiakalani Innovative Teacher programme, where they focus on projects that enhance teaching practice.



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Senior Manager

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David King
Deal Advisory Partner
& Head of Citizenship

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How can you help?

Read a student’s blog

Blogging is a key part of the programme — and the students love to share their work.

Head to the Twitter feed @clusternz, take a moment to read a blog or two, and post an encouraging comment. It’ll make someone’s day.

Donate

You can learn more about the Manaiakalani story on their [website](#).

As a registered charity, the Trust has a [website](#).

Or if you’d like to help subsidise a laptop for a student, [email Jenny Oxley](#) for details.

Congratulations

Souella Cumming

I would like to offer my congratulations to Souella on her Queen’s Birthday and Platinum Jubilee Honour — Souella has been made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit (ONZM) for her services to governance.

This honour reflects Souella’s many career achievements, her work with St John and her commitment to supporting other women to achieve in the business world and more generally. This honour follows her investiture as a Dame of Grace of the Order of St John in 2019.

Souella served on the national board of St John from 2008 until recently — including a considerable number of years as the Deputy Chancellor and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. She continues to be a member of the NZ Audit and Risk Committee and the St John International Audit and Risk Committee. In 2019 Souella said of her experience “I feel very humbled to be recognised for my contribution to St John, it’s an honour to be involved with an organisation which provides emergency ambulance, first aid and charitable services throughout New Zealand and globally”.

Souella established the KPMG chapter of Women in Business in Wellington which has thrived for many years and is very well supported. She has had a term as the President of Zonta in New Zealand (a not-for-profit organisation involved in advancing the status of women), chaired the International Finance Committee and continues to be at the forefront of Zonta’s activities in New Zealand.

And of course Souella is a leader of our Firm as Head of Consulting and National Industry Leader for Government. Souella has been the one ever-present in our Consulting practice since the 1990s and been at the centre of the significant growth of Consulting over the last 13 years. She has respect right across the public sector from her work with such important clients and relationships as ACC, DPMC, EQC, MBIE, MFAT, MfE, MSD, Southern Response, TEC and Victoria University.

Please join me in congratulating Souella on her achievement and the wonderful work that she does with St John and Zonta.



Godfrey Boyce
Chief Executive





Congratulations Ann Tod

I would like to congratulate Ann Tod who has been made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to netball.

This achievement recognises Ann’s 20 year contribution to, and passion for, netball through her involvement from grassroots through to the international stage, including significant roles in governance and finance.

With the formation of the ANZ Championship in 2008, Ann audited the joint venture company that ran the event as well as two of the franchises involved.

In 2010, she began her involvement as the auditor of Netball New Zealand and since 2011 has been the Finance Director on the World Netball Board. She is also the honorary auditor for the Oceania Federation, where, since 2012, she has worked in a voluntary role.

Ann played netball at a community level and at university, when her daughters became involved in the sport she took on coaching and umpiring roles. She went on to attain her New Zealand C level umpire qualification and now coaches North Harbour netball umpires.

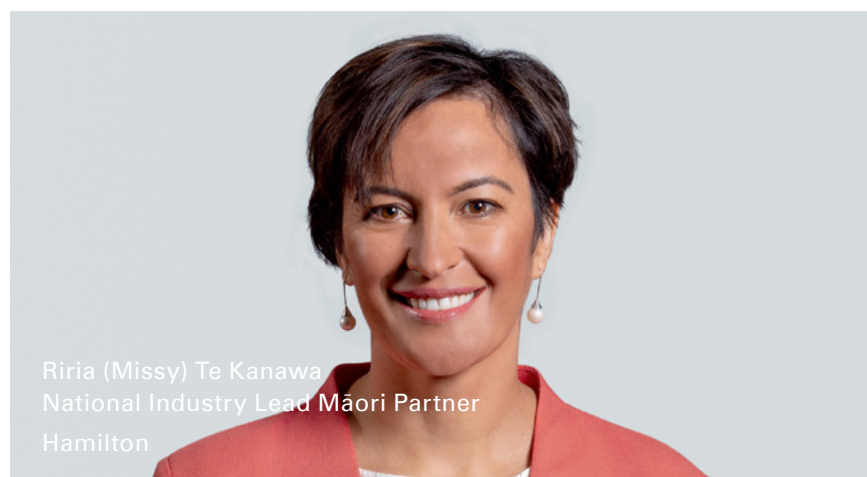
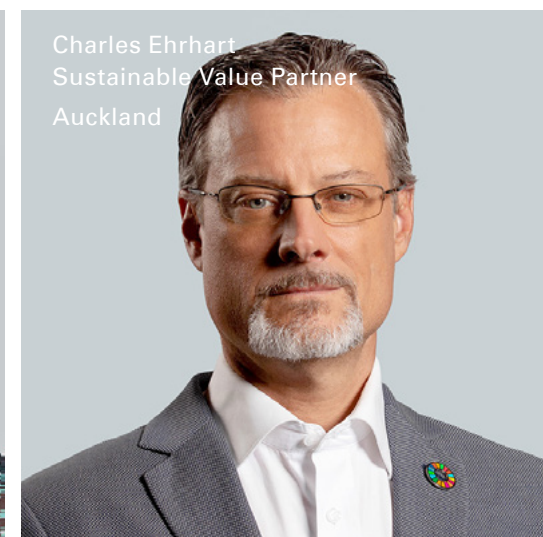
She has been a passionate advocate for our people and a moral compass for our organisation. Ann has held various board roles for a number of not-for-profit organisations including Rotary, Make-A-Wish NZ and is chair of Harbour Hospice.

Please join me in congratulating Ann on this amazing achievement and the exceptional contribution she has made to Netball, KPMG and the wider community.



Godfrey Boyce
Chief Executive

Our New Leaders Partners



Our New Leaders

Directors



Work Smarter Play Smarter



A tribute to “Corkie”: James Corke

Former KPMG Partner James Corke, who passed away earlier this year, has been fondly remembered by his friends and colleagues at the firm.

Alan Isaac, former KMPG Chairman, spoke at a memorial service and remembered “Corkie” as a “a great friend, and a lot of fun”.

With an Honours degree in Economics from London’s Brunel University, James qualified as a chartered accountant in England (ICAEW) before moving to Wellington. He joined KPMG in 1981 as a manager in the Business Advisory Division, as it was known then.

Tom Greally, who worked for James at the time, remembered: “He had a way of making juniors feel at ease...he clearly enjoyed accounting as a profession and was always able to provide an answer or direction to any problem.”

Eight years later, in 1989, James was appointed a Partner. He worked with several notable clients, including Sir Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh.

“He had a sixth sense for understanding what Peter and Fran wanted to achieve with Park Road Post,” says Alan.

“James really enjoyed his involvement with the movie world. Many of us remember the James Bond evening he hosted at the theatre in Miramar. And when Lord of the Rings was going to be produced in New Zealand, he famously announced at a Partners Meetings that he was going to take leave of absence to play the Hobbit...”

His other notable clients included the founding members of the Kohanga Reo Maori language pre-school movement, in the early 1980s. James was also involved with the New Zealand Korea Business Council for several years.

James retired from KPMG in 2001, investing in a number of businesses and running his own Wellington-based practice, Corke Chartered Accountants.

Tom Greally, who was a co-investor with James in Auckland’s Butterfly Creek, says James enjoyed taking the company from concept stage to what is now a successful and well-known local tourism enterprise.



Thursday, 20 October 2022

Alumni Event 2022

KPMG is excited to host you at our upcoming Alumni event in Auckland.

Please join us for drinks and nibbles on our terrace overlooking the Viaduct. This is always a great opportunity to connect with your fellow Alumni and with the interruptions we have faced over the past few years we are looking forward to seeing you there!

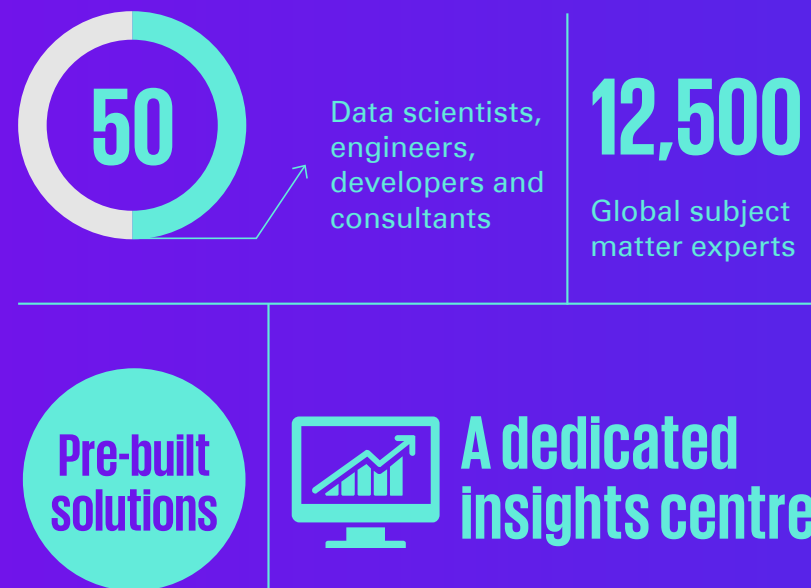
**Details: Thursday, 20 October 2022
5:30pm onwards
KPMG Centre, 18 Viaduct Harbour Avenue, Auckland**

Please RSVP by emailing [Joanne Shennan](#) by Monday, 17 October 2022 and include any special dietary requirements (if applicable).



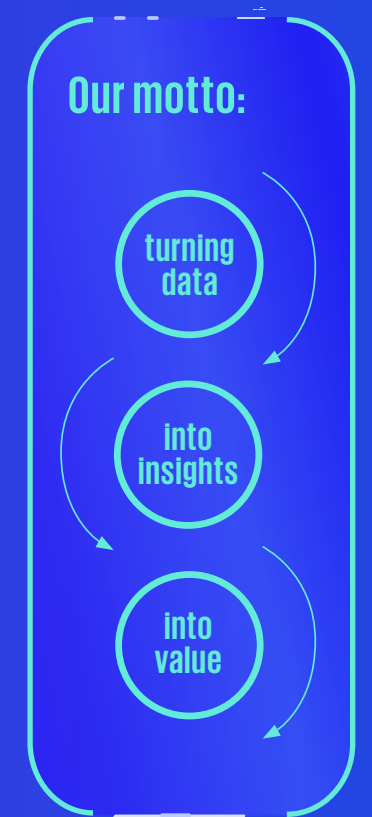
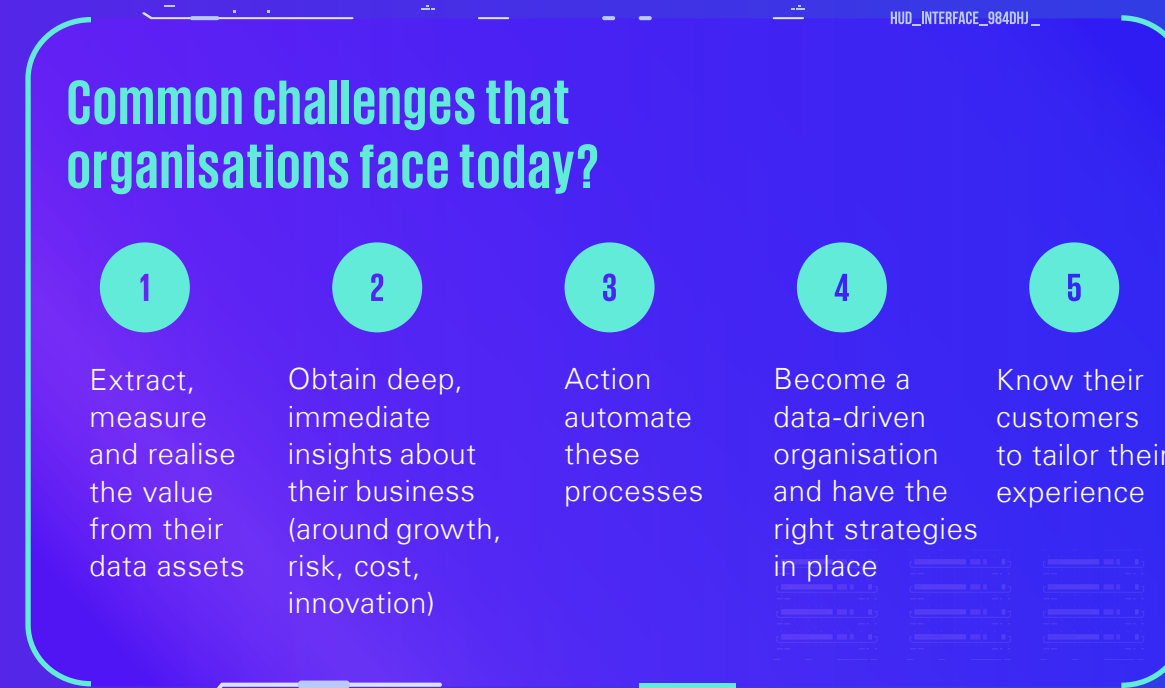
Introducing KPMG’s Lighthouse

KPMG's Lighthouse is our centre of excellence for information and insights. Our expert team provides organisations with a holistic view of their data — enabling them to learn from it, and make faster, more accurate business decisions.



Our approach demystifies topics such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Robotics, Big Data, and other emerging technologies. We apply technology in a practical way to tackle industry-specific challenges and address a range of important business issues.

Common business issues we help with include: improving customer experience, managing cost and risk, improving operational efficiency, and increasing growth/profitability.



Like to know more? Talk to us



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