

Report of External Evaluation and Review

Bernard & Ya Holdings Limited
trading as Tree House

Highly Confident in educational performance

Highly Confident in capability in self-assessment

Date of report: 17 October 2012

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Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this external evaluation and review report is to provide a public statement about the Tertiary Education Organisation's (TEO) educational performance and capability in self-assessment. It forms part of the accountability process required by Government to inform investors, the public, students, prospective students, communities, employers, and other interested parties. It is also intended to be used by the TEO itself for quality improvement purposes.

Introduction

1. Tree House in context

Name of TEO:	Bernard & Ya Holdings Limited trading as Tree House
Type:	Private training establishment (PTE)
Location:	Head Office: 5 Nelson Street, Auckland
Delivery sites:	Seven sites at: Auckland (Head office), Christchurch, Dunedin, Hamilton, Lower Hutt, Palmerston North, and Wellington
First registered:	15 October 2007
Courses currently delivered	Training for Work, Straight to Work, Food Safety Certificate, Licence Controller Qualification, and a Barista Certificate.
Code of Practice signatory	Not a signatory
Number of students:	Domestic: 649 equivalent full-time students; 26 per cent Māori and 18 per cent Pasifika International: nil
Number of staff:	15 full-time equivalents
Scope of active accreditation:	Consents to assess in Cookery (to level 4), Food and Beverage Service (to level 4), Food Safety (to level 3), Hospitality - Foundation Skills (to level 1), Hospitality Management (to level 3), Hospitality Operations (to level 3), Interpersonal Communications (to level 2), Reading (to level 2), Sales Transactions (to level 2), Self-Management (to level 2), Service Sector - Core Skills (to level

3), Social and Cooperative Skills (to level 2), Stock Control (to level 2), Work and Study Skills (to level 2), and Writing (to level 2).

Distinctive characteristics:	Tree House is contracted by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) to deliver its Straight to Work and Training for Work programmes. These are short courses (11 and 13 weeks) designed to get people into employment.
Recent significant changes:	In 2011 there was a change from Tertiary Education Commission funding to funding through MSD.
Previous quality assurance history:	At its last NZQA quality review, in September 2009, Tree House did not meet three requirements of the NZQA quality standard in force at the time. These requirements have all been addressed.

2. Scope of external evaluation and review

The agreed scope of the external evaluation and review (EER) of Tree House included governance, management, and strategy, the mandatory focus area, and two programmes:

- Straight to Work
- Training for Work.

Straight to Work is a high-priority programme for Tree House at all its locations and Training for Work is a major programme with significant numbers of learners in Wellington. The majority of learners at Tree House are enrolled on one of these two programmes.

3. Conduct of external evaluation and review

All external evaluation and reviews are conducted in accordance with NZQA's published policies and procedures. The methodology used is described fully in the web document Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction>. The TEO has an opportunity to comment on the accuracy of this report, and any submissions received are fully considered by NZQA before finalising the report.

The evaluation team comprised two NZQA evaluators who visited the Nelson Street campus for two days. The team met with the three directors of Tree House, the

Auckland regional manager, the Wellington regional manager, the Auckland tutors, and groups of learners. Wellington students were interviewed by telephone as were a number of employers and managers from MSD and Work and Income. The team also reviewed a number of the organisation's documents and records, including the quality management system, meeting minutes, and student destination data.

Summary of Results

Statement of confidence on educational performance

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the educational performance of **Tree House**.

In the context of training to meet the requirements of MSD contracts, educational achievement refers to the learners gaining the competencies, attitudes, and confidence required to gain and sustain employment rather than gaining a qualification. Learners at Tree House gain sustainable employment and contribute positively to their industries and wider communities. Since taking up the MSD programmes, between 63 and 73 per cent of Tree House learners have been placed in employment and over 80 per cent of those employed complete the MSD criteria of at least 91 days with their employer. This is excellent achievement.

This achievement of sustainable employment is of great value to the learners and employers. There was evidence from staff and employers of Tree House learners being promoted in employment and often moving to more demanding roles in different departments of the companies in which they were originally placed. Enabling learners to develop their potential is of great value to them, their families, and society as well as their employers.

Tree House identifies the needs of MSD, employers, and learners systematically, and an analysis of these determines their programme design and delivery. The needs of these stakeholders are well understood and are the basis for the design, delivery, and improvement of programmes and activities to meet those needs. An example of this is introducing 'stand up days' to make the learners aware of the stamina and speed they need to develop in order to work effectively in the hospitality industry.

The programme process at Tree House is planned and structured for the benefit and needs of learners. The programme begins with an interview process comprising two structured interviews, where the capabilities and motivations of the prospective learners are identified before applications are completed. Tutors and learners relate effectively to one another and class numbers are 16 or fewer. Learners create a career plan and have regular formal one-to-one sessions with their tutor. As well as learning the interpersonal and life skills needed for employment, learners have the opportunity to study for unit standards in food safety and customer service skills. Assessment is valid, sufficient, fair, and transparent. These processes and positive relationships contribute to learners' engagement with learning.

Learner guidance and support is central to all that Tree House does, and everything the evaluation team saw and heard was evidence of this focus.

There is clear evidence that the management and leadership have a total organisational approach to supporting learners to achieve. Tree House's systems, processes, policies, and practices are aligned to their goal of gaining sustainable employment for their learners and preparing them for further learning opportunities.

Statement of confidence on capability in self-assessment

NZQA is **Highly Confident** in the capability in self-assessment of **Tree House**.

Tree House uses self-assessment information to understand its performance and bring about improvements. It has comprehensive systems and processes in place to:

- determine employer and learner needs
- monitor processes contributing to the achievement of sustainable employment for learners
- improve the effectiveness of teaching
- achieve outcomes for learners
- understand its own performance and use this understanding for improvement.

Recent improvements include:

- Completely changing the training paradigm to focus on employers' needs first and then training learners to meet those needs
- Introducing two interview templates
- Sharing a weekly performance scoreboard with staff
- Developing a skills matrix for staff performance review and staff development
- Developing trainer handbooks

These are examples of insightful and comprehensive changes resulting from all staff reflecting on high quality data and information.

Findings¹

1.1 How well do learners achieve?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is Excellent.

In the context of training to meet the requirements of MSD contracts, learner achievement refers to the learners gaining the competencies, attitudes, and confidence required to gain and sustain employment rather than gaining a qualification. Learners at Tree House gain sustainable employment and contribute positively to their industries and wider communities. The table below shows that 63 per cent of Tree House learners were placed in employment over 2011-2012 and 73 per cent over 2010-2011. Over 80 per cent of those employed complete the MSD criteria of at least 91 days with their employer. Tree House data shows that most learners continue in employment well beyond the first three months. The comparative performance of other PTEs is kept confidential by MSD, but the MSD account manager has told Tree House that it is achieving the best outcomes overall nationally in the retail and hospitality sectors. Learners achieve successful and sustainable employment and this benefits them, their families, the industry, and society economically and socially. This is excellent achievement.

Year	National total	Completed training	Placed in employment	Employed after 91 days	Withdrawn
2010-2011	362	355 (98%)	258 (73%)	215 (85%)	12 (3%)
2011-2012	482	478 (99%)	299 (63%)	160 (54%) ²	3 (1%)

Learners acquire useful skills and knowledge. As well as achieving unit standards in customer service and food safety, learners develop career plans, learn how to write appropriate curricula vitae, and develop interview skills. Learners interviewed by the evaluation team were articulate and grateful for the skills they had developed and for the support they had received to make improvements. The skills and knowledge gained at Tree House prepare learners for employment, and letters from employers provide plenty of evidence that Tree House learners are quick to learn on the job once they are employed.

¹ The findings in this report are derived using a standard process and are based on a targeted sample of the organisation's activities.

² The EER took place before many of the learners from 2012 had completed their 91 days employment. Learner tracking indicated that near 90 per cent of those employed would complete.

Learners improve their well-being and enhance their abilities and attributes. There was good evidence from staff and learners interviewed by the evaluation team that learners are supported to improve their physical health, and to develop confidence and motivation and self-management skills. This holistic support for learner well-being facilitates successful learning and the development of confidence in obtaining and progressing in employment.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Self-assessment of learner achievement is systematic and results in ongoing improvement. The evaluation team saw excellent data which is produced continuously on spreadsheets in-house. A 'scoreboard' is compiled weekly and all staff at each site can view the progress of learners at their own site, compared with other sites and national figures. The scoreboard was a staff suggestion and enables all to contribute to continuous improvement decision-making. There was evidence of staff reflecting on the data at staff meetings and at the annual Tree House staff conference. It is clear that Tree House management uses robust, data-driven self-reflection to make decisions leading to worthwhile improvements.

A very effective improvement resulting from self-assessment has been to establish the needs of the employers first. Tree House has moved from a process where it analysed the skills and aptitudes of learners before matching them to employers, to a system where employers' needs are continually identified first. Learners can then be given the specific skills that prospective employers need. This has resulted in improved employment and retention, even in an economy where unemployment is historically high. This is a significant improvement resulting from authentic self-assessment.

1.2 What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Learners from Tree House gain appropriate longer-term employment and many are promoted by their employers. There is good evidence of learners being mentored in their employment by Tree House so that they settle in successfully to sustainable full-time jobs. There was also evidence from staff and employers of Tree House learners being promoted and often moving to more demanding roles in different departments of the companies in which they were originally placed. Enabling learners to develop their potential is of great value to them, their families, and society.

Tree House engages effectively with MSD. Staff members attend Work and Income offices weekly and give seminars to prospective learners. This is part of the close involvement of staff with MSD. MSD staff told the evaluation team that they were extremely satisfied with Tree House, not only because of the excellent

employment outcomes but also because of the clear focus on the needs of the learners, willingness to put in extra time with trainees without extra funding, and willingness to cooperate and establish courses to meet MSD needs quickly and effectively. MSD's confidence in Tree House is further evidenced by:

- MSD's decision to extend a temporary six-month contract to provide an employment placement service for 12 months
- The Minister of Social Development selecting to visit the Auckland site to talk to staff and learners
- The Prime Minister and the Minister of Social Development selecting to visit the Tree House site in Wellington to talk to staff and learners and make an employment programme announcement.

This mutual engagement is evidence of the high confidence that MSD has in Tree House.

Tree House also engages effectively with employers. This engagement is continuous, with staff visiting employers and keeping in close contact. The evaluation team viewed a range of letters and emails from employers who were all impressed with the way Tree House staff engaged with them, listened to their needs, sent them appropriate learners, and mentored learners in the workplace. These letters were validated by the evaluation team in telephone conversations with employers. This engagement with employers is mutually beneficial.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Self-assessment of the value of the outcomes to stakeholders is also systematic and results in ongoing improvement. Tree House engages continuously with employers and MSD to ensure that its activities and outcomes are valued. The letters from employers and comments from MSD staff are evidence of effective and timely engagement. The organisation is continually assessing stakeholder needs through robust procedures, tracking outcomes, and using the results to bring about meaningful improvements. Tree House staff keep in touch with their graduates and many of the latter return to talk to current learners of their success. Talking with graduates gives an alternative perspective which is useful in keeping training relevant.

1.3 How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Tree House systems work to ensure that the programmes match the changing needs of the learners. For example, all learners on the Straight to Work programme now begin with general training even if they have a stated preference for retail or hospitality. They are now able, during the first few weeks, to change 'streams' without wasting time or having to catch up on subject matter. Facilitating opportunities to change without wasting time is very motivating for learners.

Tree House systems are very flexible and individual learner progress is monitored and well recorded to ensure needs are being met. For example, there is no set starting time for the Straight to Work class except for the first day. From there the tutor sets times to suit the needs of the learners, who are engaged in finding employment vacancies, attending interviews, and completing trial periods of employment. Their progress is recorded and their daily whereabouts displayed on a whiteboard, which motivates the learners to join those listed as at work. This positive approach to flexibility is motivating for staff and learners.

Tree House programmes match the needs of employers. Employers in the hospitality sector commented that learners often lack the speed and stamina their industry requires. Tree House designed some daily programmes that require learners to work standing for up to six hours. The learners discover just how demanding this is and what their own capabilities are. They can then work to improve their stamina and speed towards the required levels. This responsiveness to the needs of industry benefits learners and employers.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Tree House has excellent self-assessment processes in place to ensure its training continues to match the needs of stakeholders. The evaluation team saw good evidence of proactive involvement with the Retail Industry Training Organisation (RITO) and the Hospitality Standards Institute (HSI). Examples of matching the needs of MSD are given in sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this report.

Self-assessment showed that just circulating information from MSD and other stakeholders was not effective. Tree House now produces an up-to-date staff handbook for each programme so that staff are clear on processes, outputs required, and reporting requirements. The success of this initiative is reflected in the MSD staff comments that Tree House is very professional, communicates well, and is absolutely responsive to stakeholders.

1.4 How effective is the teaching?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is Excellent.

The programme process at Tree House is planned and structured for the benefit and needs of learners. This starts with having two interviews in the selection process to assess capabilities and motivation.³ Potential problems such as literacy and numeracy can be identified. Staff set out clear expectations for learners and those interviewed by the evaluation team were well aware of what they needed to do and seemed motivated by these demands. These expectations simulate the work environment in areas such as sick leave reporting and keeping management informed if learners are going to be late.

Tutors and learners relate effectively to one another. Tree House keeps class numbers below 16, which enables tutors to give individual attention. Learners create a career plan and have regular formal one-to-one sessions to agree progress and plan their next move. A strong feeling of mutual respect was clear from the comments of learners and tutors interviewed by the evaluation team. This positive relationship contributes to engagement with learning.

Learning activities and resources at Tree House are effective in engaging learners. The learners interviewed by the evaluation team were impressed by the tutors' strong industry backgrounds and their range of relevant 'war stories' to illustrate teaching points. Staff combine DVDs, PowerPoint, role-plays, and presentations from Tree House graduates and external specialists into a programme that engages the learners. The use of this range of activities and resources enhances learning by making it interesting and relevant.

Assessment at Tree House is valid, sufficient, fair, and transparent. The evaluation team sighted recent external moderation reports from HSI and RITO which showed they agreed with Tree House's assessments. Staff described robust internal moderation processes and the learners interviewed by the evaluation team agreed that the assessments were fair and provided them with useful feedback. Assessment at Tree House provides good evidence of achievement.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Again, Tree House uses data-driven self-reflection to ensure that teaching becomes even more effective. In addition to giving informal feedback, learners complete formal feedback questionnaires. These are collated and analysed and there is clear evidence of well-delivered learning. Improvements made as a result of feedback include increasing pre-course information, sharing resources across

³ Tree house interviews many candidates and takes only about 20 per cent of them on to courses. Staff provide feedback to MSD and unsuccessful candidates, suggesting other pathways they could take.

sites, and seeking to provide more unit standards. This is highly effective self-assessment.

1.5 How well are learners guided and supported?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is Excellent.

One of the five main results sought by Tree House is that learners gain ‘the key skills and attitudes they need to gain sustainable employment’. Learner guidance and support is central to all that Tree House does, and everything the evaluation team saw and heard was evidence of this focus. Examples include:

- An 0800 number manned by staff on roster after hours giving 24/7 coverage
- Making petty cash available for bus fares, clothing, interview preparation etc
- A clearly written, continuously updated student handbook
- Staff mentoring learners in their new jobs
- Three-day trial periods with paid travel for those who need this
- Successfully negotiating ‘pauses’ in training with MSD for learners whose personal circumstances suddenly change.

These and other actions provide a comprehensive environment of guidance and support which contributes to excellent employment outcomes.

Tree House provides comprehensive and timely study information and career advice to learners. This starts with the two interviews during selection and continues during the rapid course induction, assigning a senior class member to mentor newcomers, career planning, and timetabled one-to-one discussion with tutors. The learners interviewed by the evaluation team were glowing in their praise of the support they were receiving and were aware of the difference it was making to their learning and employment prospects. In particular, they spoke of staff assistance in ‘cold calling’ – ‘They push us through the door’ – as making a real difference in their confidence and employment results. This timely and comprehensive information and advice and action make it more likely that learners will make appropriate decisions and obtain sustainable employment.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Tree House collects a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data and all staff reflect on this to improve the guidance and support offered. The 0800 number, having petty cash available, the handbook, mentoring, funded trial periods, career planning, and one-to-one discussion are all worthwhile improvements resulting from self-assessment. Self-assessment is a powerful tool as used by Tree House to understand its processes and improve its performance.

1.6 How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

The rating for performance in relation to this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Tree House has clear purpose and direction. The mission, vision, values, and special character are clearly and comprehensively set out and supported by the board, staff, and learners. It was evident from employers' and MSD staff descriptions of Tree House that this clarity carried through to excellent results. This clear purpose and direction focuses decision-making and improves the organisation's effectiveness.

Tree House leadership is effective. Management has put in place a timetable of twice-weekly telephone calls and weekly meetings which enables all sites to communicate freely. The minutes of site and directors' meetings viewed by the evaluation team showed that these meetings have a strong self-assessment focus. Tree House has a clear and comprehensive quality management system available online for all staff, and the evaluation team was also impressed by the annual strategy and business plans viewed. The good communication and cooperation evident throughout Tree House shows effective shared leadership.

Staff are valued at Tree House and their recruitment and development is effective. Tree House has an inclusive culture and staff talked of 'the Tree House family'. All tutors are on permanent contracts and the tutor in Christchurch was retained even though no tutoring was possible for three months after the February 2011 earthquake. Tree House holds an annual two-day conference for all staff. Feedback forms show that this is valued by staff for face-to-face networking and sharing new ideas. Conference outcomes are included in the annual strategy and business plan. The staff interviewed by the evaluation team clearly gained job satisfaction from working at Tree House, were committed to the organisation, and effective in their work.

Tree House has an exemplary performance review system. Management and staff have collaborated to produce a skills matrix describing four levels of skill in the areas of customer orientation, industry and technical skills, analysis and judgement, communication, working style, results orientation, managing relationships, teamwork, marketing and promotion, and quality assurance. Staff assess themselves against the descriptors every six months and then have performance reviews to discuss their progress and devise development plans. Staff and management were enthusiastic about the opportunity this gave for meaningful and productive discussion and development. Staff are completing the National Certificate in Adult Education through the Southland Institute of Technology. This thorough review process and targeted staff development contribute to tutors staying up to date and effective in their roles.

Tree House has responded quickly to change. Although PTEs were given 18 months to transfer to the new MSD courses, Tree House took up the courses immediately. Staff were refocused to change their style from subject tutors to

trainer/managers with skills in customer orientation, communication, industry knowledge, and guidance.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this key evaluation question is Excellent.

Decision-making and operational practices at Tree House are informed by a comprehensive process of data-driven self-reflection directed towards coherent and clearly articulated goals. Improvements made to support learner achievement include:

- The trainers handbook
- Interview templates
- Career plans for all learners
- The weekly scoreboard
- Conference outcomes feeding into strategy and business plans.

The excellent learner achievement and the considerable value generated for learners, employers, ITOs, and MSD show that this self-assessment has been effective.

Focus Areas

This section reports significant findings in each focus area, not already covered in Part 1.

2.1 Focus area: Governance, management, and strategy

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

2.2 Focus area: Straight to Work

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

2.3 Focus area: Training for Work

The rating in this focus area for educational performance is **Excellent**.

The rating for capability in self-assessment for this focus area is **Excellent**.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations arising from the external evaluation and review, other than those expressed or implied within the report.

Appendix

Regulatory basis for external evaluation and review

Self-assessment and external evaluation and review are requirements of programme approval and accreditation (under sections 249 and 250 of the Education Act 1989) for all TEOs that are entitled to apply. The requirements are set through the Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Programmes established by NZQA under section 253(1)(d) and (e) of the Act and published in the Gazette of 28 July 2011 at page 3207. These policies and criteria are deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under the new section 253.

In addition, for registered private training establishments, the criteria and policies for their registration require self-assessment and external evaluation and review at an organisational level in addition to the individual programmes they own or provide. These criteria and policies are also deemed, by section 44 of the Education Amendment Act 2011, to be rules made under section 253. Section 233B(1) of the Act requires registered PTEs to comply with these rules.

NZQA is responsible for ensuring non-university TEOs continue to comply with the rules after the initial granting of approval and accreditation of programmes and/or registration. The New Zealand Vice-Chancellors' Committee (NZVCC) has statutory responsibility for compliance by universities.

This report reflects the findings and conclusions of the external evaluation and review process, conducted according to the EER process approved by the NZQA Board.

The report identifies strengths and areas for improvement in terms of the organisation's educational performance and capability in self-assessment.

External evaluation and review reports are one contributing piece of information in determining future funding decisions where the organisation is a funded TEO subject to an investment plan agreed with the Tertiary Education Commission.

External evaluation and review reports are public information and are available from the NZQA website (www.nzqa.govt.nz).

Information relevant to the external evaluation and review process, including the publication Policy and Guidelines for the Conduct of External Evaluation and Review, is available at: <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/registration-and-accreditation/external-evaluation-and-review/policy-and-guidelines-eer/introduction/>

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