

# Musing

## HR manager driving to work

### 1. Onboarding and integration

We're at 47 people now, up from 32 at the start of the year. That's 15 new people in four months. And looking at the org chart the question I keep coming back to is: are we actually onboarding these people well? Are they feeling welcome? Do they understand what we're about?

I had a chat with one of our new engineers, Richard, on Monday. He's been with us six weeks, came from a bigger company. And he said something that stuck with me:

*"It's a bit like everyone knows everyone else already, so there's this club, and I'm outside the club."*

That's not what we want. We want people to feel integrated, like they're part of something. But we've been growing so fast, and everyone's heads are down on the product launch, the Asia-Pacific expansion, all of it. Nobody's really stopped to think about how the new people are landing. And that's on me.

So the question is: what does good onboarding look like when you're a 47-person company that's still acting like a 20-person startup? We can't just throw people in and hope. We need structure, but not so much formality that we lose what makes us us.

Part of it is about visibility. Do the founders know who these people are? Does Marcus know their names? That matters. Something simple could help, a regular lunch, or a weekly standup where people share what they're working on, where everyone actually hears

### 2. Succession planning and decision-making clarity

David Chen flagged this at the board meeting yesterday, and he's right. We don't have a plan. If Marcus left tomorrow, or if something happened to him, what would we do? We don't have a clear answer.

Marcus is the founder, the visionary, the person who holds the strategic direction. He also holds a lot else together: the relationships, the investor connections, the calls. That's a strength, but it's also a risk.

A few things we probably need:

- A Chief Operating Officer, someone who can run the day-to-day if Marcus is focused on strategy, fundraising, and board matters
- Clarity on whether that person exists internally or needs to be hired
- Better documentation of how decisions get made, because right now a lot of that lives in Marcus's head

David's asked me to think about what a succession plan looks like. Honestly, it's a bigger project than he probably realises. It's not just about Marcus. It's about key roles across the business, how we document processes, how we build bench strength, and what we want our culture to carry forward.

The real question underneath all of this: do we want to stay founder-led, or do we want to professionalise? Those aren't mutually exclusive, but they require different things. If we stay founder-led, we need strong systems around Marcus so he's not a single point of failure. If we professionalise, we need to be deliberate about it and not lose what makes us special.

### 3. Culture and values articulation

This is the one that's actually keeping me up at night.

Growth is happening everywhere: product launch, Asia-Pacific expansion, 15 new people in four months. But I'm worried we're not being intentional about culture. And culture is what determines whether we're a place where people want to stay and do their best work, or whether we're just another company growing fast and burning people out.

Do the new people know what we value? Do they know what our operating principles are? Do they know what it actually means to work at Kahurangi?

I'm not talking about a corporate mission statement nobody reads. I'm talking about the lived experience of working here:

- We care about quality
- Feedback is direct and honest, but kind
- People get space to try things and sometimes fail
- We say yes to interesting projects even when we're not sure we can pull them off

That's culture. But how do we make sure new people understand it? How do we make sure we don't dilute it as we grow?

This connects back to the succession planning question too. If Marcus isn't here, what are we? What do we stand for? The answer is in the culture, but we haven't articulated it in a way that's easy to pass on.

I've got a project forming in my head around documenting our culture. Not in a heavy-handed way, but: what are the stories that matter? What are the principles that guide how we work? How do we hire for culture fit without being strange about it?

It starts with listening. I need to talk to people. Ask the new people what they've observed. Ask the long-term people what they think we're about. Then synthesise that into something real and authentic that actually helps us stay intentional as we grow.

## Where to from here

Three things. Onboarding and integration. Succession planning and decision-making clarity. Culture and values articulation.

I have no idea where I'm going to find the time, given I'm already across hiring, salary reviews, the people work around the product launch, and everything else. But that's the job.

### The immediate next steps:

1. Coffee with Marcus, ask him about succession planning, see what he's thinking
2. Lunch with Richard and some of the other new people this week, just check in and see how they're landing
3. Next week, sketch out what a cultural documentation project could look like