

PROJECT CONNECT MINIMISE THE IMPACT OF SKILLS SHORTAGES

A crucial step towards minimising the impact of future skills shortages can be taken by investing in the recruitment and training of entry-level candidates.

The recruitment and training of graduates and entry-level candidates fell sharply in 2009. During the GFC, employers were adverse to risk in any form so when recruiting they wanted proven performers. Many entry-level candidates struggled to find work, sometimes ending up in a role outside their industry.

The number of highly skilled candidates has since reduced in line with the market's steady recovery. While the GFC gave employers a breather from the skills shortage, this breather won't last. It's thought that if all projects currently on hold are recommenced, skills shortages will soon emerge.

To help overcome this and ease the pressure created by looming deadlines and understaffed operations, employers can invest in graduates and less experienced candidates to help meet future workloads.

Already some shortages are evident. Examples include Estimators, Forepeople, Project Managers, Engineers and Drafters (particularly civil, structural or environmental).

By training entry-level staff today, a business can help with the staffing challenges associated with such roles in the future.

It's also worth looking at a candidate's long-term potential. Consider what they could offer in the coming three to five years, rather than just the next two years. This will also have a positive effect on retention, with staff valuing the potential for future opportunities with their employer.

Overseas recruiting campaigns are also likely to gain momentum once more. This can offer a vital skills injection to the local candidate market, allowing an employer to secure the best overseas talent. From Project Managers to Forepeople for projects ranging from multi-million dollar developments to architecturally designed homes, overseas candidates are another tool in helping employers beat shortages.

The up-skilling of existing staff, recruiting of mature-aged people and temporary assignments for particular projects or workload peaks are other proven strategies. Finally, don't forget a solid retention plan. If you can retain existing staff the impact of a skills shortage on your business will be far less substantial.

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