

‘Making your industry exciting to youth’

Competition for top candidates is strong, so what can you do to highlight your business’ value to young people and their future careers?

Future proofing your business and industry

As kiwis, we pride ourselves on our innovative and ‘number 8 wire’ approach, which has successfully taken many of our companies, products and services onto the international stage. However, New Zealand’s ageing workforce will mean fewer quality candidates in the employment pool in a couple of decades to drive this exciting growth.

Therefore, having an experienced and engaged workforce is key to ensure sustainable future growth and innovation for any business. A major key to this is ensuring your company and industry are a viable employment choice for today’s youth.

Giving them better options

Recently a leading boat builder complained that he had approached a number of schools seeking a young person interested in starting a boat building apprenticeship. Sadly however, he couldn’t find anyone suitable, and was deeply concerned about the industry’s future.

For me this was a lost opportunity, not just for the young person who could have commenced an exciting new apprenticeship, but also for our world leading boat building industry to become an ‘industry of choice’ for today’s young people.

Engaging directly with youth

The benefit of direct engagement between youth and industry is well known to positively influence young people at a critical point in their lives. The old saying ‘*information is power*’ is especially important here. The more a young person is informed about your business and industry, the better choices they can make about their future career.

Therefore, how can you generate ‘youth friendly’ interest in your industry?

- **Opportunity** - Showcase the opportunities that exist both now and in the coming years within your industry sector. Highlight industry growth, latest local and international research and industry trends that excite and engage young people.

- **Share** – Share exciting stories of young people who started at your organisation, and then ‘moved through the ranks’ into management, travelled around the world, or owned their own franchises.
- **Experiential** – Despite what today’s modern world looks like, most people don’t want to sit behind a desk all day. Sharing the day to day ‘hands on’ and physical components of your industry will appeal to many young people.
- **International** – Highlight international career opportunities and earning potential once a young person gets a good employment start in New Zealand.
- **USP** – What are your industries Unique Selling Points? Government backing, research leading or especially innovative? Make sure these are communicated in a youth friendly way to ensure they are engaged and excited about what your industry can offer them over the long term.
- **High profile people** – What high profile people are, or have been involved in your business or industry? Ritchie McCaw’s career choice as a helicopter pilot ensures this career pathway is seen as ‘cool’.
- **Company culture** – Ensure you communicate how your business is ‘youth friendly’ and meets their age and stage needs. I used to consult to a life assurance company, (usually at the bottom of most young people’s ideas of a ‘cool employer’), however as they focused on promoting a vibrant and exciting corporate culture, it became a genuine employer of choice for youth.

Success into the future

The success for any business, and in a wider context, any industry, is their ability to successfully engage with the next generation of employees now, ensuring there is a ready workforce for the future. Given the retiring workforce and the changing needs of industry, connecting with young people is the key to future proofing your business and industry into the 22nd century.