

Training & Assessment – What is in it for me?

Craig Moss

Craig is the Principal Manager (Training & Development) for the Department of Main Roads Queensland. Craig is a surveyor by profession, beginning work in 1985. After spending 19 years working in various areas of Southern Queensland, he was tasked with meeting the training and development needs of the department's surveyors and survey assistants. In 2006, Craig was appointed to his current role.

In this role, he is responsible for the development and delivery of technical training for workers involved in the construction and maintenance of the roads infrastructure. This role also involves managing Technical Training Solutions, a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Technical Training Solutions delivers competency based training and assessment in 21 qualifications in the Civil Construction training package. One of these qualifications is the Certificate III in Civil Construction (Roadmarking).

Craig holds a Masters in Training and Development and a Degree in Surveying.

Synopsis

The benefits of having a highly skilled, trained workforce cannot be disputed. But what are the skills we require of our workers? Is it purely a matter of being technically proficient, or does it go further than that?

The purpose of this paper is to explore these questions. It will also look at other outcomes such as using training as an attraction and retention strategy. The discussion will investigate what has been happening in Queensland around the Certificate III in Civil Construction (Roadmarking) and investigate the possible future benefits of competency based training and assessment for individuals, organisations and the Roadmarking industry as a whole.

Paper

Why do we train?

In a perfect world we would have a ready-made workforce available for us to tap into as the need arises. If demand increases or a staff member leaves, it would be ideal to be able to pick up the phone and have a new worker with all the requisite knowledge and skills turn up on the jobsite and begin working in such a way that productivity continues unhindered.

Unfortunately reality is a far different place, especially in the roadmarking industry. In comparison to the broader disciplines within the civil infrastructure industry, roadmarking makes up a reasonably small percentage of the overall numbers. This results in a limited pool of experienced staff for the whole of industry and has a flow on effect for individual organisations trying to retain existing workers. These realities require the roadmarking industry to "grow their own".

The underlying principle behind training is success in business. Success in business means providing a high quality of work and good customer service at a competitive price. It means having a succession strategy that will enable the organisation to cope with the departure of key staff. It also means using innovation and technology to keep ahead of the competition. To achieve this, we need skilled staff who are looking for ways to improve efficiencies and quality, staff who not only understand the technical aspects of their job but also have a good understanding of business priorities, good communications skills and be able to understand group dynamics. To achieve this, they require robust, relevant quality training.

A skilled, knowledgeable workforce can dramatically improve bottom line performance, adding value to products and services and making it easier to compete in a commercial environment. Studies have proved that a satisfied and motivated workforce results in higher levels of staff retention, lowering the costs of recruitment and training new workers.

But it is not only the new entrants to the industry who require training. Staff at all levels need to improve their skills. There is a common belief within the roadmarking industry that the average age of the workforce is at the upper end of the scale. This makes the recruitment and up-skilling of young employees essential to lead our industry into the future.

While it is acknowledged that individual organisations within the roadmarking industry are proactive in training their staff, the question of the quality of training outcomes must be raised. As the demand on our time becomes more of an issue, maximising any learning opportunity is critical. It can be argued that on-the-job training has worked well in the past so why change now? What is the benefit of moving to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system?

Vocational Education and Training is not a substitute for on-the-job training. In fact learning outcomes are reliant on robust, relevant workplace training. The collaboration between training providers and the employer support the development

of skills required by the worker in line with the needs of the organisation. The VET system is supported by nationally recognised competencies which make up the qualifications that can be offered. These competencies include the knowledge and skills required by a worker if they are to be recognised as competent in a particular task. For the Certificate III in Civil Construction (Roadmarking), the roadmarking industry was central to the process of setting the standards which determine competence.

A quick scan of a position description for an experienced roadmarker will reinforce the fact that the desired skills go beyond being able to operate equipment. Good communication skills; the ability to read, interpret and apply standards and specifications; the ability to lead a team; problem solving skills; and the ability to design and develop traffic management plans are just a few of the requisite skills required of a proficient roadmarker. The Certificate III in Civil Construction (Roadmarking) provide a framework for the development of skills in not only the technical skills, but also in the knowledge and skills required to support roadmarking operations.

If we are to achieve the goal of growing a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce, employers, training providers and the individual workers must work together. This will ensure that the formal training will provide the underpinning knowledge and skills required to enable the worker to become more proficient through practising these learnings in the workplace. If we only go through the motions, we will do more harm to the industry than good.

What has been happening?

The Department of Main Roads in Queensland has a training unit which is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) trading under the name Technical Training Solutions (TTS). TTS offers qualifications across the Civil Construction training package and in the 2007/2008 business year issued 148 qualifications and 2672 individual units of competency. One of the qualifications offered is the Certificate III in Civil Construction (Roadmarking). As of 30 June 2008, TTS has issued 42 roadmarking qualifications and has a further 68 active candidates.

One of the major challenges facing effective training in the Roadmarking industry is the lack of training resources. As roadmarking is considered a relatively thin market for training, RTO's have been hesitant in investing time, effort and finances into developing training resources. In an effort to address this issue, Technical Training Solutions has made available to industry all of their training resources. These resources have been distributed through the RIAA at no cost. The only caveat on this gesture was that feedback was given on the suitability and quality of these products to ensure any improvements could be implemented to the benefit of industry. To date this aspect has been disappointing.

Technical Training Solutions has also participated in the "Reframing the Future" initiative convened by Peter Thurston and facilitated by Ross Heazlewood. This project accessed funding to help develop assessor networks on a national basis in order to deliver against a consistent assessment model which met the needs of

industry. TTS became involved in this initiative to share with industry the strategies used to successfully deliver training and assessment services in Queensland. This also included discussing some of the issues identified and how any problems were overcome. This process has seen The Certificate III in Civil Construction (Roadmarking) rolled out in other states.

The way forward!

While these strategies have had some measure of success, we need to ask the question "where to from here"? The process up to now has only seen limited take up. To use a good old aussie colloquialism, if we are serious about improving the skills base in this industry, we need to get "fair dinkum". If we are to expect positive outcomes from training, we all must become involved. We cannot leave it all up to someone else.

When it comes to training and assessment activities, all parties have obligations. The RTO must ensure they have the capacity and the capability to deliver what they have promised. They need develop strategies that will benefit both the student and the organisation and they must deliver training in the context of the work being done. The employer must ensure that the student is receiving the work experience that will build upon the underpinning knowledge and skills provided by the trainer. They must also become involved at an industry level to ensure outcomes are meeting their requirements. The student must also be proactive in the process. They need to be diligent in the learning process and actively participate in the learning of new skills and applying these skills in the work environment.

An extremely important part of this strategy is the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process. RPL is essential as it caters for the existing workers by acknowledging the skills and knowledge they have developed over their time in the industry. It also identifies any skills gaps which can be addressed through training and work experience. While this is beneficial to both the candidate and the organisation, this process must be handled in a professional manner.

There is a tendency in some sectors to turn the RPL process into a "feel good" exercise. Existing workers can often express the opinion that they already know that they have the skills, so why should they have to prove that they are competent. In an effort to placate these workers, all parties can lean towards going through the motions. The result of this is that the qualification becomes devalued. It is essential that the employer and the RTO work together to ensure robust outcomes are achieved.

As mentioned previously, we need to get "fair dinkum" about the training and assessment process. We need to have a full understanding of the VET process and we need to be aware of the packaging rules for the qualification and the contents of each unit of competency. By working together and sharing experiences and learning's, the outcome will prove beneficial to the whole of industry.

Training & Assessment – What is in it for me?

Craig Moss
Principal Manager
(Training & Development)

Why Train?

- Recruitment of skilled workers
- Options
 - Applicant pool
 - Competitors staff
 - Grow our own





Why Train?


- Success in business
 - Skilled and knowledgeable workforce
 - Technical skills
 - Understanding of business priorities
 - HR
 - WH&S
 - Use of Innovation and technology
 - Succession planning

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Road Safety in the 21st Century

- A skilled and knowledgeable workforce contributes to road safety
 - Standards and specifications are met
 - Intent of design is achieved
- Properly trained staff equates to fewer workplace accidents
 - Less down time equates to better efficiencies

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Why Train?

- On-the-job training
 - Has work in the past, why change?
- Maximising the learning opportunities
- Vocational Education and Training (VET)
 - VET does not replace traditional training
 - Provides a framework
 - Adds Value (eg.LLN)
 - Competencies developed in consultation with industry

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What Makes a good Roadmarker?

Position Description

Knowledge	Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards • Guidelines • Specifications • WH&S • Operational Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Work in team environment • Problem Solving • Record keeping • Traffic Management • Machine operations

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What has been Happening?


- Technical Training Solutions
 - 42 Roadmarking qualifications
 - 68 active candidates
- Thin Market???
- Lack of Training Resources
- Limited suitable trainers

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Reframing the Future

- RIAA led Initiative
- Project goal:-
 - “existing networks will be enhanced and expanded to facilitate take up of a successful high quality assessment model suitable for the national needs of our industry”***
- How successful has this initiative been?

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The Way Forward

- It is time to get Fair Dinkum
- Who is responsible for training?
 - Trainers?
 - Employers?
 - Individual Workers?
- Success requires all to be involved

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The Way Forward


- New entrants into the workforce
 - Training Plans
 - Relevant competencies
 - Work experience must match training
 - Training must be contextualised
 - RTO and employer must work together
 - Work release for formal training
 - Funding opportunities

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The Way Forward

- Existing Workers
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
 - Key to the success of the initiative
 - Identifies skills gaps
 - Can be controversial
 - Process must be robust
 - LLN
 - Funding opportunities

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The Way Forward

- Proactive involvement
 - With the RTO
 - With the workers
 - At an industry level
 - At a national Skills Council Level (SkillsDMC)
- RIAA is a key player at the national level...
make the most of this position!

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So, what is in it for me?

- Highly skilled and motivated workforce
- Promotes innovation
- Helps Recruitment
- Succession planning
- Success in business
- Stronger Industry