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IN OTHER NEWS



Dear Editor

I laughed last week when I saw your article on MBIE with its payroll issues.

I seem to remember someone stating that the Government was cracking a walnut with a sledge hammer and it would come back to bite them in the arse.

Do you remember this?

Ed:

Yes writer we do remember that and yes it will continue to bite the Government in the arse.

This is just one of the many issues that haven't been dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainants who will continue to remind the Government and the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board at every opportunity.

We are sure Paul Gee will back us on that comment.

The Federation is a big believer in finishing issues off so there are no loose ends to bring up

Performance Requirements



Not only do we need to have SMART Performance Measures (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely), we also need to be smart about the decisions we make with regard to qualifications and apprenticeships.

Last week we gave you food

for thought which was:

Performance requirements need to be thought about carefully, taking into account the future needs of the industry - don't let the fear of what could happen make nothing happen.

What a profound statement, because last week a meeting was held at the Skills Organisation in Wellington. The Federation, Master Plumbers, the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and Skills all had two representatives attend, and two out of four additional representatives from the wider industry were also there. Some of the industry representatives have affiliation to membership organisations but are not there representing them.

The subject of NZQA qualifications and the Board's Classes of Registration came up and a lively debate ensued. The Federation's stance on apprenticeship training has not changed, and that is that the training must be appropriate and actually exist (not just assessments as is the case now), and that it must be consistent throughout New Zealand.

The Federation's biggest push was that the apprentice should complete their apprenticeship FULLY competent - that is able to perform the functions of the trade competently and without supervision. This would bring us in line with our colleagues in the other regulated trades i.e. building and electrical. At the completion of their apprentices builders and electricians can perform their work unsupervised.

Two employers at the meeting, both members of an employer organisation, were firm in their stance that apprentices should qualify after four years, partially competent, which would require them to be supervised until they obtained certifying status, or if they don't continue on the Certifying status then they would remain under supervision for ever and a day.

The logic behind this was that they didn't want to pay a lot of fully competent tradespeople as the market rates wouldn't sustain the

later.

Dear Editor

We see the letter you sent to the Minister of Building and Housing about apprenticeships.

Do you not think you are wasting your time?

What has he done for our industry since he has been in and in saying that what did his predecessor, old flip flop do?

We feel you will be lucky to even get a response from him, but good on you for trying.

Keep up the fight.

Ed:

Thanks for your thoughts and support. In answer to your question about wasting time - what are our options if we don't try to engage with the Minister?

It's one of those escalation issues where we start off trying to engage with him and if that doesn't work it escalates to the next stage and so on.

Remember we went through the same with the previous CE of the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Board and look where that got them. Then look at how things changed – never say never – if something is worth fighting for, then keep believing and plugging away, eventually you will get there.

You see leadership is not about position or a title, it's about action and example.

The Government has the task of providing leadership whether they like it or not so we believe it is up to the Minister to make the effort to help assist change. If he doesn't then it's his failure and we can add him to the list of

amount that would need to be charged to cover the extra wages. Interestingly enough both had done 10,000 apprenticeships to become Certifiers but now expected apprentices to do 8,000 hours to become partially competent and another 4,000 hours to be deemed fully competent after sitting and passing the certifiers exam. We think this is short sighted and more about how they run their businesses than about what is good for the wider industry, and also for the health and safety of the public.

So in this case it appears performance requirements aren't being thought about carefully, taking into account the future needs of the industry but are concentrating on the power of the almighty dollar - the fear of what could happen making nothing happen!

The Federation sincerely hopes that the power of the dollar doesn't start to rule over the good on the industry and common sense as it did with Continuing Professional Development (CPD), prior to the recent changes. In that case everyone jumped on the CPD band wagon in the hope of making money and look where it ended up.

We don't want to create followers, we want to create leaders for our industry!

Perhaps due to the financial pressures put on employers of apprentices, they should be subsidised by the Government. Businesses after all can get Research and Development tax credits and help through Government Agencies for their research and development. They invest in ideas so why not invest in people.? We would ask how much of the money paid at the moment by the Government for apprentices actually goes to effective training? Is it money being paid for bureaucracy?

Some form of funding reform would help play a role in driving up the quality of training and ensure apprenticeships meet employers' needs.

Small businesses are crucial to our economy and employ a large number of apprentices so any performance requirements need to meet their needs as well as large employers. Professional bodies need to work with small and large employers to ensure the standards and performance requirements are widely applicable.

Performance requirements need to be specific in that they must meet the requirements of plumbing, gasfitting or drainlaying as defined in the Plumbers Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 2006. In saying that they need to also take into account the whole training of apprentices so they do not need to be that stringent that they stifle the overall development of the apprentice for the future.

The performance requirements need to be measurable so we know when competence is being achieved, and they also need to be achievable so competence is reached at an appropriate level - for example does an apprentice need skills and knowledge of a relevant subject or is it an analytical subject?

Going hand in hand with being achievable the performance requirements need to be realistic so the apprentice can reach competence in a credible manner and in a timely fashion.

failures before him.

The amazing thing is there is so much scope for improvement in our industry you would think Ministers would be falling over each other to give it a go and make the changes needed.

What could be more satisfying than being known as the Minister that actually made effective change to an industry that has been plagued with trouble for decades.

A change in the apprenticeship system for plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers would be a watershed moment in our industries.

We can set things up so that we are in line with our other colleagues in regulated industries, so that apprentices are trained to do the job they started, so that the PGDB have a smaller workload in regards to overseeing supervision and complaints – and so that the public of New Zealand have access to a wider pool of tradespeople who are legally able to carry out their work without needing direct or indirect supervision, and can have confidence and trust that the training these people had is adequate to do the job they have engaged them to do.

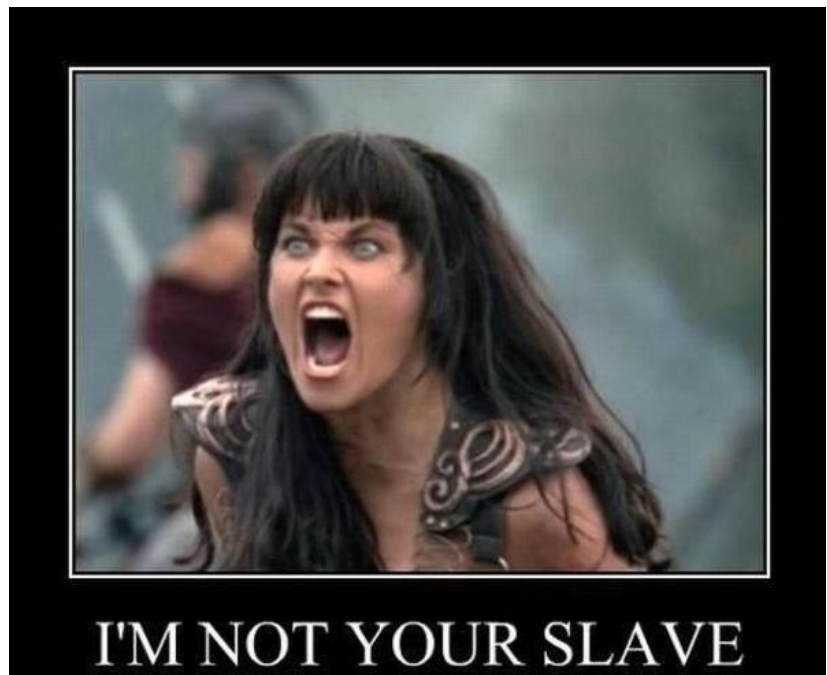
It would mean a longer apprenticeship – but in the scheme of things to get the equivalency of certifying status would be shorter than it is now.

On-the-job and off-the-job training needs to be balanced to allow for skills and knowledge taught to match up with practice and application of those skills and knowledge.

In simple terms performance requirements are the ability to perform tasks and produce outputs to industry requirements and standards COMPETENCE.

We call on you to make your feelings known by participating in consultation and telling anyone that will listen what you want as an employee, as an apprentice or as an employer. We know a good balance can be met.

Food for thought



Apprentices should be looked at as a resource to be developed not as slaves.

Aristotle once said:

"If every tool, when ordered, or even of its own accord, could do the work that befits it ... then there would be no need either of apprentices for the master workers or of slaves for the lords".

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