

CASE STUDY:

RAISING INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS VIA TRAINEESHIPS

COMPANY: Blinds, Awnings, Security Screens & Grilles Industry (BASSG)

National Security Screen Association (NSSA)

Elite SSD (EHI)

HOTSPOT REGION: All of NSW

TARGET:

- Promoting careers in the Blinds, Awnings, Security Screens & Grilles industry
- Encouraging NSSA members to utilise government funded traineeships
- Strategies to overcome recruitment challenges
- The journey from traineeship to franchise owner

The Blinds, Awnings, Security Screens & Grilles (BASSG) industry manufacture, install and supply products and services across domestic, commercial and construction customers. The National Security Screen Association (NSSA) is the peak national industry Association representing all security screen manufacturers, installers and their suppliers. Its aim is to provide services to its members that improve their businesses and help them deliver quality products to their customers.

Recruitment Challenges for the BASSG Industry

NSSA had been hearing feedback from its members about its challenges recruiting new talent to the industry. The lack of job candidates applying for entry-level roles has a negative impact on business growth. After consultation within the industry, it drew the conclusion that the industry lacked profile and as a result, was not promoted as a meaningful career path by parents and career advisors.

Upskilling the existing BASSG workforce

Another challenge which faces heavily regulated security industry is the increase in licencing requirements to ensure operators meet compliance and accreditation standards. The workforce largely is not formally qualified or trained. Industry operational requirements had shifted to a different business model, forcing the industry to explore training solutions to upskill its existing workforce. The training package needed to reflect new and changing technologies, as well as increasing consumer demand for energy-efficient solutions. The qualification also needed to reflect licensing and other compliance regulations across all states and territories.

Developing a Nationally Recognised Qualification for the industry

NSSA continues to actively work toward the betterment of the security screen industry. It saw these challenges as an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive overhaul of current training packages. It lobbied on behalf of its members to government bodies and key stakeholders to develop a nationally recognised training solution that is relevant, standardised and compliant and which would drive best practice strategies across the industry.

In June 2020, after 18 months of negotiations with industry and government, the Certificate 3 in Blinds, Awnings, Security Screens and Grilles was announced and is now live at training.gov.au.

The project was undertaken to meet workforce up-skilling demands and reflect current and emerging industry skills and technological changes. During this time, the course has been fully reviewed and amended to ensure it includes and is reflective of the current needs of the industry.

It now provides a much-needed and relevant pathway for its existing and future workforce to attain qualifications, and in time, raising the benchmark of the security screen industry.

Shane Hawkins is the Training Director at NSSA.

Unique Careers with Elite Home Improvements (EHI)

Elite Home Improvements (EHI) have been operating as a family owned business for over 35 years and are based in Baulkham Hills in Western Sydney. EHI offer careers in 3 areas of specialisation: (a) fabrication/assembly, (b) installation or (c) selling. In 2017, EHI joined the National Security Screens Association to help increase benchmarks across the industry.

The business has faced its fair share of hurdles when it comes to recruitment.

- The vacancies needed to be sold the right way, due to the stigma of working in a 'factory production' environment.
- Women often feel they are unsuitable for the industry without ever trying it. EHI believes in a balanced workforce, but only 7 of its 33 staff are women
- Using job platforms like Seek continued to attract unsuitable job candidates.
- The industry lacks good training systems for young people.
- The industry hired people with skills and experience rather than hiring attitude and aptitude

Ian Harkin, General Manager of EHI, has implemented several unique strategies to help tackle these challenges

- A customised organisation skills matrix was devised to identify strengths and weaknesses of the team to better identify what skills the business needs
- Staff are encouraged to refer friends, family and other people across their network, and rewarded with a \$1000 bonus when they are retained in the business for 6 months. This helps with identifying “hired guns” that share company values and promote the business.
- The business has implemented a policy that all vacancies are circulated internally first, to encourage the existing team to reach out to their networks. Positions are only advertised externally once this option has been exhausted
- EHI engage supply chain partners (Business Australia, Skillsroad, The Master Builders Association etc) to engage potential staff. Recruitment agents are a last option.
- Social media is used to sell the business and sell the career journey

Ian said that implementing a training culture within the business will only have a positive impact across all areas. “From apprentices to fully qualified staff everyone should be learning and CPD maintained. Being “Elite” means constantly learning about technological advances, which is keeping EHI at the forefront. Transitioning knowledge into practical work and being held accountable by a third-party RTO are vital for progressing the business and the industry.

Ian added that upskilling his team helps support long term careers within the business. “EHI follow an “ELITE” set of values, ELITE Standing for “Engage Learn Integrated Teams and Empowerment. EHI believe in a highly qualified workforce that are marketable to all business in the areas of Sales, Production and Installation. EHI staff can learn management skills or the skills to become EHI franchisee owners. Government endorsed and funded training allows EHI to achieve this.”

Ian continues to build the profile of the industry and remains committed to creating meaningful career pathways to his workforce. “Come to EHI to further your career in installation, production and sales. You may eventually become a franchised licensee.”