

## **CASE STUDY:**

# ENGAGING WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS AND TAFES TO SOURCE THAT TALENT OF TOMORROW

**COMPANY:** Sailfish

**HOTSPOT REGION:** North Coast

**TARGET:**

- 1) the benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships for entry level workers
- 2) the benefits to the local community
- 3) the benefits to the local economy


The challenges have always been trying to source quality tradesmen to work in an award-winning marine manufacturing business, who are able to have a high attention to detail and finish. SailFish are located on the Northern Rivers and are very rural to most towns and cities. Due to this there is a skills shortage in the qualified staff they would like to employ. Should suitably qualified staff be sourced they often attract a premium wage. This can have a detrimental effect upon budgets and pricing.

As a solution to the skills-shortage problem the solution has been to look at “building our own”. All recruitment starts with School placed work experience. We look at all placements to see if they have qualities that we can utilise in the business. We also contact TAFE Teachers/Program Managers to see if they have students that they may recommend for a workplace trial. If we forecast that we need extra staff for the next year we will shortlist the candidates and get them back for a final trial and interview selection process.

Our process shortlists applicants who we have seen in a work environment and how they fit into our workplace culture. It speeds up the process of sourcing quality staff. It also allows future staff to see what our business is about and the work ethic & culture we are trying to promote.

Apprenticeships allow us to train our staff without any previous bad work habits. They are trained in a manner that best suits our business, ethics, culture and safety. It allows us to “build” our own pool of qualified tradesmen. We have a number of apprentices who are now qualified tradesmen that are still employed in the business. Currently our factory foreman was an apprentice who has been with the company for 20 years.

We have been supported only with the standard apprentice start & completion funding. We haven't received any special grants or funding to employ any extra apprentices or equipment for those apprentices to use in the business.



Engaging with local Schools, TAFE Colleges and by employing apprentices has allowed a number of talented school leavers to gain employment and stay in the local area. This helps the local economy, keeps school leavers from having to travel to the city or move away to find employment, builds local talent pool of tradesmen.

These strategies have allowed for continued growth in the business. We have been able to continue building award winning boats throughout all economic outlooks. We continue to grow & train staff our way that offers great outcomes for both the apprentices & Sailfish. We use a buddy system where we will designate a tradesman to work with the apprentice within various areas of the business. Once they have learnt that required skillset, we will then buddy them with another tradesman for the next skill set. This allows for a harmonious workplace where we have a great retention rate of keeping apprentices. Currently we have 8 apprentices employed and have 7 tradesmen who did their apprenticeship at Sailfish.