

CASE STUDY:

FUTURE-PROOFING YOUR BUSINESS WITH APPRENTICES AND TRAINEES

COMPANY: SECA - Sewer Equipment Company Australia

HOTSPOT REGION: Western Sydney

TARGET: Growing future leaders using the apprenticeship program
The benefits of hiring adult apprentices
Encouraging businesses to hire females in male dominated trades
How government financial benefits can help retain apprentices

SECA is an Australian SME who currently employ 25 staff in Sales, Administration and Servicing across New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. A specialist in pipeline and sewerage systems, the organisations professional development requirements are so specific that an international Trainer comes to Australia, from Germany, to train staff in the latest technological developments in this field.

The industry provides opportunities for exciting and innovative careers, however one of the biggest challenges it faces is attracting new talent to an industry that is not well known. The strength of the company's reputation has helped SECA attract its current talent. Being so highly specialised, SECA has a very limited profile with the general public and has relied upon word-of-mouth to attract suitable job candidates from all over Sydney, Melbourne & Sydney.

To support the futureproofing of their organisation, they have adopted the following strategies:

- SECA employ apprentices in Robotics and Plant Mechanical Engineering. The Robotics qualification is exciting and offers a significant point of difference when competing against other organisations for entry level talent
- SECA also employ Adult Apprentices, attracting candidates who wish to change career paths. The business benefits by getting workers with a solid work history and strong work ethic. SECA currently employ a 30-year-old Robotics Apprentice, who has already completed an electrical trade.
- To entice the best talent, SECA utilises Government incentives to pay their Apprentices above the standard award wage. This, in turn, helps support a happy and productive workforce.

Mark Quealy, Managing Director of SECA, said SECA has a history of challenges recruiting staff "The equipment we service is pipeline robotics, so to find anyone with any previous knowledge or training on these products is almost impossible. Faced with that fact we decided to train our own and put our first apprentice on in 2012. He is now one of our valued tradesmen. We advertise on SEEK to try and find technicians with similar experience and we can train them on our specialist equipment. We end up with valued tradesman who has industry-specific skills and they become valued members of the team."

Apprentice: Angela Susainathan

Qualification: Certificate III in Electronics and Communications

Angela Susainathan is a 20-year-old Apprentice and employee at SECA. She is in her 2nd year of her apprenticeship studying Electronics and Communications at Granville TAFE. In 2018, after a gap year from studying, Angela decided that higher education was not an option for her and was keen to pursue a career in the Electrical trade. She stumbled across a “rare opportunity” with SECA and decided to “give it a crack”. Having taken this opportunity, Angela has not looked back and thoroughly enjoys her job.

Angela’s day commences at 8am and concludes at 4pm, five days a week. Tasks such as cable re-termination, which is a process of cutting and soldering, pique her interest in practical work. Angela also enjoys both the electrical and mechanical aspects of repairing the cutting-edge cameras used to explore sewerage pipelines, which can involve seal replacement, cable and circuit board repairs. The highlight of Angela’s day is successfully diagnosing and repairing faults with equipment, without seeking guidance or assistance from her on-hand Mentor.

Angela works as part of a team of three. She cites a close relationship and being treated as “one of the guys”. As well as enjoying the job generally, as the main reasons for her loyalty to SECA, Angela pinpoints equality as a “huge” factor in her enjoyment of coming to work daily. Angela said “Trades are male-dominated. I just wanted to be treated the same in my job...”

Angela’s advice to anyone thinking about an Apprenticeship “Apprenticeships are a great idea. Learning something new every day... you don’t need to go to University to be a success!”

