



Recruitment Dilemma

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One of the key gripes amongst the joinery industry is finding skilled CAD/CAM operators. You have made a substantial investment in automation software and without trained staff you are not reaping the productivity rewards and securing the best return on your investment.

Education System

In other parts of the world CAD/CAM software is a key part of training for the joinery industry. Unfortunately the education system in Australia is a little behind and CAD skills are rarely taught as an integral part of the shopfitting & cabinetmaking trade courses. And whilst some individual TAFEs are trying hard to remedy this, they are up against tight budgets and bureaucracy.

CAD courses abound and graduates of these courses certainly know the ins and outs of CAD design, but they often lack the construction knowledge required to be effective in a production environment.

Finding an experienced user of any woodworking CAD program with solid construction knowledge is tough. Competition is fierce for these rare individuals, with higher salaries reflecting this.

An industry that continues to view training as an expense will perpetuate this cycle. The more trained operators in the marketplace the more the balance swings in the favour of the employer, resulting in less competition and more realistic wages.

Staff retention

Many a frustrated business owner has taken the leap and invested in training only to only to see the staff member leave for another job, taking the investment in training with them. The natural tendency then becomes not to train new employees so that they do not "waste" their investment.

But instead of asking, "What if we train them and they leave?" a better question is, "What if you don't train them and they stay?" There will be a substantial ongoing cost to your business:

- Time taken for internal training that could be spent on income producing tasks
- Reduced productivity in the short term whilst undergoing training
- Reduced productivity in the long term if not trained by an expert in the software
- Bad habits perpetuated throughout team
- Lack of knowledge of short cuts and best practice use of software

Recruitment – cultural fit is vital

We know that some skills are job essentials. In most commercial setout roles, construction knowledge trumps CAD skills because if they don't know how to build it then they don't know how to draw it for production purposes. Incorrect or incomplete CAD files cost your business money in both time and wastage. Not to mention considerable frustration on the workshop floor.

But just as important is the right cultural fit. If you get this right then you will find someone who is worth investing in as they will stick around. It is worth taking the time to think about the following:

- What are the traits that are common amongst your long term employees
- What type of person would fit with your team
- If you are unsure of your culture ask your employees – they will be able to tell you what sort of person has the best chance of sticking around

If you can find a person who has construction skills and is a good cultural fit then CAD skills can be added and your investment has a better chance of paying dividends as you will have invested in someone who is a good fit to your business.



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Training – an investment perspective

It is a fact that many business owners underestimate the true cost of not training themselves or their employees. That's because training is not viewed as what it actually is - an investment. If you don't look at the potential returns that proper training gives, you'll only see it as an expense. So how much does **not** training cost?

It's been calculated that if you pay an employee \$50,000 a year and that employee is wasting on average 1 hour per day, it's costing you \$6,250. If you have 5 employees, that's over \$30,000! And then you need to take into account the reduced productivity that comes with self trained staff, which can add hours to each job, eating directly into your profit margin.

An investment in formal training stands to reap your business substantial rewards. You do not lose your experienced staff to training, allowing them to focus on current production. And you will see increased productivity from your new employee much more quickly. In fact the increased productivity will potentially recoup your training investment in a short time period.

Training staff – a competitive edge

We know that manufacturing in Australia is undergoing a tough time. Successful companies are those who have been able to increase productivity and bring operating costs down. Expertly trained CAD operators stand to work up to 50% more efficiently than untrained staff, allowing you to quote more competitively, win more business and increase profits.