

FORWARD THINKING

Kathryn Hayter, managing director of K Hayter Associates, updates us on construction industry careers prospects in 2019

We spoke to you this time last year – have there been major changes to the industry’s recruitment market over the past 12 months?

The skills shortage has definitely deepened – there is a real shortage of good, reputable individuals. In addition, the market is very top heavy due to people being promoted in order to keep them and partly as a result of the backlog from the last recession. There are also notably more ‘associate directors’ and ‘heads of...’ than ever before.

Are there roles that are particularly popular or difficult to fill?

Roles at a middle management level can be pretty challenging at times. Many companies are promoting managers quickly in order to retain them and we also have a lot of senior managers looking for their first director role.

In terms of disciplines/positions – quantity surveyors, buyers, engineers, good site managers, land managers and strategic land people in general – there’s just not enough of them, especially with the huge growth we have all experienced in the market.

Are housebuilders and construction companies generally easy to deal with?

There’s a loaded question! In all seriousness, the main reason that I have so much passion for the industry is the people – they are the ones who make the companies (generally) a real pleasure to deal with. I am not saying for a second it’s all hearts and rainbows, it’s definitely not, but as a director of a business I have personally discovered that if you align yourself with businesses/people that have similar values to you, you not only enjoy your job much more, but it is much easier too.

Is there a ‘perfect’ way for employers to interact with specialist recruitment companies like KHA?

I have to say I am not a believer in ‘perfect’; in fact I quite like messy and imperfect – it’s how we all learn. However, as I am sure many of my competitors would agree, trust and mutual respect are vital.

Is there something about your approach to clients/applicants that you are most proud of?

Without a doubt it’s that we uphold our values. We don’t just say that we are ethical and values-driven – every single day we actually are, or at least

we try as much as humanly possible.

I know many recruiters like to claim the same but we’ve discovered time and time again that they have headhunted out of their clients’ businesses or sent CVs without permission. It’s never been our style and never will be, my belief is that you can’t run a large recruitment business and uphold ethics, it becomes impossible in such a close-knit sector – that’s partly why I have kept KHA small and personal.

For potential employees, does showing an interest in jobs in this sector always require qualifications and experience of a particular kind?

For a graduate or trainee, a relevant degree is ideally sought; however, personality and enthusiasm

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Most of our clients would be looking for experience in housebuilding/resi development for manager roles upwards. However, this does vary depending on the discipline. In addition, more and more businesses are starting to look outside of the sector in order to tackle the skills shortage.

For young people applying for their first job, how much of an advantage does having internship/work placement on the CV give?

Work experience in the sector is definitely advantageous; however, if you are driven and hungry for it, that will carry you a long way.

What are your predictions for the next 12 months in the industry jobs market?

I am going to use the dreaded B-word... and I don’t mean baubles. I think the industry, as a whole, feels that the sooner Brexit is done and dusted the better. Uncertainty, as we all know, doesn’t do the industry or economy any good. It is very difficult to predict what the market is going to do, simply no-one knows.

That said, we still have a chronic shortage of good people, across disciplines and many companies are crying out for resources. In addition, Help to Buy has been extended to 2023, which will no doubt have a positive impact on the market and therefore growth and recruitment plans.