

Engineering apprenticeships support career success according to new forklift industry survey

45% of senior managers in UK forklift truck companies started their careers as an engineering apprentice, according to a survey of British Industrial Truck Association (BITA) members.

The survey, carried out in late January and early February, to support National Apprenticeship Week, was based on a poll of the 25 companies making up BITA's Truck Suppliers Group (TSG).

At the same time BITA is unveiling a new suite of 'forklift apprentices at work videos' to help promote the image of forklift trucks and engineering as a career choice for young people (see: <http://www.youtube.com/bitacademybristol>).

"A proper apprenticeship is not merely a training course, but instead a true career path leading right to the top," comments BITA President Tim Waples, UK Director and General Manager of Doosan Industrial Vehicle UK, whose own career began with an apprenticeship. "It's vital that we engage with employers and colleges to promote the opportunities that are available to pursue satisfying and rewarding careers."

BITA acted decisively in favour of apprenticeships last November by opening the BITA Academy (www.bitacademy.org). This dedicated, branded apprenticeship training facility is operated in conjunction with City of Bristol College, one of the country's leading automotive training centres.

"There is a tangible need for fresh blood in the forklift industry," notes James Clark, Secretary-General of BITA. "The existing engineer workforce is ageing and retiring faster than new recruits are coming in. With an estimated 250,000 lift trucks currently operating in the UK, playing a vital role in the supply chains that maintain our modern world, we must be able to maintain safe and efficient operation."

Karl Baum, the Academy's Programme Training Manager, notes: "At a time when the numbers of young people not in education or employment are rising, the BITA Academy offers committed young people not only high-quality training in essential maintenance and repair techniques, but also the skills required to pursue a real career all the way to management level."

A key part of this is about providing valuable, transferable skills. For example, the BITA Academy offers both the three-year Higher Apprenticeship qualification including an exclusive quality assured certificate, and an Advanced Level Apprenticeship qualification, achieved during a fourth year of study, which leads to a Diploma in FLT Maintenance & Repair (both awards are accredited by IMI Awards). Additionally, graduates are also accredited as Engineering Technicians by the Society of Operations Engineers.

Since launch the Academy has already recruited 15 Level 2 apprentices, 23 Level 3 apprentices, and 15 Level 4 apprentices, sponsored by companies such as Jungheinrich and Barloworld. "We're delighted by this level of take-up from manufacturers," concludes Karl Baum. "We've worked hard to ensure that the course content reflects the wide range of forklift truck technologies and can be tailored to each company's precise requirements."

BITA has created a series of case studies to illustrate the potential career progression from apprenticeship to senior management. (See <http://www.bita.org.uk/apprenticeships.htm>.)

The BITA Academy is one in a series of initiatives from BITA and its UK counterpart, the FLTA, providing forklift truck engineering options to suit the full range of companies and students, accommodating every type of business that needs to maintain fork lift trucks.

##ENDS##

Issued on behalf of BITA

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Notes for Editors

- The British Industrial Truck Association, BITA, is a substantial and dynamic trade association representing a membership of 78 forklift truck manufacturers, suppliers, service providers and media operating in the UK.
- BITA is the voice of the industry in matters technical and legislative at the highest levels in Europe and internationally. It enjoys a close working relationship with bodies such as the UK Health and Safety Executive, the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) and the International Standards Organisation (ISO).
- As a member of the British Materials Handling Foundation (BMHF) BITA is allied with the Fédération Européenne de la Manutention (FEM), the European manufacturers' association of materials handling, lifting and storage equipment.
- BITA produces a wide range of specialist publications, encompassing best practice and health and safety assurance, as well as technical guidance notes and unique market insight. Its specialist committees include the Truck Suppliers Group (TSG), Technical Policy Committee (TPC), and the Component & Services Group (CSG) among many others.
- BITA members, including many international brands, manufacture and distribute over 90% of all new forklifts procured each year in the UK. They employ 7,000 people directly, and enjoy a combined annual turnover of £1.3bn. BITA members play an increasingly important role in the UK's overall economic health, supply chain effectiveness and environmental performance.