

OMEGA SELECTION SERVICES

SUPPLY CHAIN EUROPE: THE ROAD TO WISE RECRUITMENT

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With the logistics and transport industry currently facing severe skills shortages at all levels, recruitment is at the forefront of many people's minds. Here William Foster, Technical Recruiter in Logistics at national recruitment specialists Omega Selection Services examines the problems the industry faces and how solutions can be found if employers remain flexible.

The transport and logistics sector makes up over 14 per cent of all employment within the UK. This equates to approximately four million people, making it the country's fifth largest industry.

These four million people work in a sector that demands efficiency at all levels - from LGV through to Director level. The movement of goods and services is, after all, what underpins both local and national economies. Ensuring that the right people are in place to execute smoothly run operations is therefore of fundamental importance.

While every business requires motivated employees to ensure it remains profitable, supply chain managers are required to have a specific skills set which enables them to understand and remain on top of a fast-moving, constantly evolving environment.

Currently, the industry is suffering greatly due to a shortage of managers with both the essential skills and the relevant sector experience. Collectively, the industry must question where this skills shortage has come from and what can be done in order to overcome it?

Supply chain managers need to rally together in order to raise the profile of the industry and ensure that it is a viable career option for entry-level candidates. At this time, whilst we are facing a skills crisis that threatens the industry, it is of paramount importance that companies invest in training and career development and recruit wisely.

Skills Shortage? What Skills Shortage?

In a recent survey that Omega Selection Services undertook of recruitment managers in the industry, 70 per cent stated that lack of experience in candidates when starting a new job was a major problem. Taking into account the pace of the industry, employers justifiably want people who will hit the ground running and are sometimes hesitant to invest time and money into training schemes.

Added to this, is the industry-wide problem of a limited candidate pool which has created a knock-on effect with certain roles such as first level managers, middle managers (shift manager level) and transport planners, all suffering from the growing skills shortage.

Logistics and transport does not currently have the pulling power that it should and as a result high calibre candidates are not being attracted to entry level managerial positions.

This is juxtaposed by the reality that logistics and transport will always be a strong sector to work in. With talk of recession in the air, it is worth remembering that while many businesses look to downsize and cut costs, demand for able and experienced supply chain managers remains high. Logistics is one of the last industry's to feel the crunch of an economic downturn because goods and services still need to be transported.

Indeed, according to the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT), surveys have shown that when other areas of industry have recruited less over the years, recruitment into logistics has not declined. In these uncertain times, supply chain management is an attractive proposition for those seeking stability in their profession.

Attracting Entry Level Candidates

Most industry professionals would agree that much more needs to be done in order to encourage more graduates and entry-level employees to the logistics sector.

The basic perception many people have of the industry being both dull and monotonous needs to be challenged. Candidates need to gain a better understanding of the benefits of working within this industry. We need to generate enthusiasm for an industry that, after all, has excellent financial benefits, stability, is fast-paced and requires the highest caliber of candidates to control global supply chains.

There is also a general misunderstanding that logistics and transport management is only for technical graduates with engineering degrees. As this is a sector that has its own growing skills gap, it is little wonder the logistics industry is suffering given the knock-on effect.

One possible solution is to cast the recruitment net wider and speak to a much wider pool of candidates from various degree backgrounds in order to get the highest quality of employees who will be articulate, work within teams and have the people management and leadership skills which are so highly sought after.

The logistics industry also needs to present what it can offer in terms of career development. Companies need to continue investing in entry-level training and candidates should seek out relevant qualifications where relevant. The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (UK) offers a range of programmes for junior, middle and senior management which will attract most employers.

Industry Heads therefore have a responsibility to discuss the relevance of logistics in today's changing world and bring the issues that we all face to the forefront of people's minds. Environmental concerns, the impact of logistics upon national and local economies and the globalisation of supply chains all need to be discussed in arenas which will engage people. In this way, we can speak directly to forward-thinking individuals who have the necessary skills to propel supply chain management into the next phase of development.

It's only by courting the right people with the right messages, that the industry will become further imbued with exceptional candidates.

Smart Cross Sector Recruitment?

The logistics industry as a whole needs to broaden its approach to the recruitment process. Employers hiring supply chain managers will often operate like to like recruitment. In other words, a food distribution company will only look at candidates with the relevant experience in food distribution. This alienates those skilled candidates outside of this particular sector and exacerbates an ever widening skills gap.

Of course companies will argue, understandably, that they do not have the time or available resource to induct new managers. However, this is where innovative and smart recruiting needs to be adopted. Candidates with the relevant skills and experience are available to employers if they are willing to look further a field for them.

For example, a good first level production manager, skilled at using key performance indicators and adept at motivation and team building, will have similar skills to a good first line logistics manager.

While recruitment professionals extol the benefits of transferable skills within individual candidates, nowhere is this more important at this current time than within the logistics and transport industry.

A specialist recruiter will be in a position to save companies both time and money when it comes to matching relevant candidate skill sets to vacancy briefs, ensuring that minimal training is required and individuals get off to a brisk and successful start.

“Resource within the logistics sector requires specialist solutions. Going to a recruitment specialist such as Omega Selection Services ensures we receive the highest quality of candidate in the shortest time frame allowing us to get on with business. It is the resource professionals with profound up to date industry knowledge that makes all the difference. An objective recruiter can keep both parties (the Employer and the Candidate) fully informed on the important fine detail during the interview and follow-up process”

Client Comment

Driving Recruitment Forward

Companies need to get pro-active recruitment advice and begin viewing the recruitment process as an area that will create an advantage over their competitors - not as an additional cost!

Good recruitment businesses will secure long term relationships with their clients, getting under the skin of their organisation in order to fully understand their requirements. In this way, companies benefit from recruitment solutions finely tuned to their individual needs and specialist recruiters will invariably have a pool of skilled and experienced candidates at their fingertips.

Ultimately, people are a businesses' most valuable asset and the logistics industry is no exception. More needs to be done to encourage talented future supply chain managers to join the industry and the industry itself needs to adjust its view of recruitment. By doing so, we will all benefit from improved processes managed by exceptional candidates.

Omega Selection Services manage the expert provision of recruitment solutions for companies in the engineering, technical, manufacturing and physical logistics market sectors. Clients are supported through seven specialist teams across the core disciplines of Design, Electronics, Manufacturing, Procurement/Supply Chain & Logistics, Process, Technical Sales and Executive. These services cover the entire recruitment process including sourcing, assessment and placement of high calibre candidates, from skilled shop floor personnel to specialist engineers, senior managers and board level positions; to a single placement, project team or volume labour requirement.