Industry Spotlight: Manufacturing, Transport & Logistics

Are you looking to make your next move in the Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics industry? There were even more opportunities for you on SEEK in April and experts say talent is in demand.

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Manufacturing output contributes to approximately 11% of New Zealand's GDP and employs around 240,000 people. While the impact of automation has been a hot topic in the industry for some time, manufacturing remains one of the country's largest employers.

"There has been a lot of talk about automation, but I don't think plants are in a position to bring in a whole lot of robots," says Mike Davies, Managing Director of recruitment firm Adecco. "We certainly haven't seen a downturn in the requirement for people in the past five years."

More opportunities for candidates

The latest data from SEEK Employment Trends shows opportunities in key areas of manufacturing have increased year-on-year. Assembly and process work increased by 18% in April compared to the same time last year, while prospects for machine operators rose by 11% year-on-year and quality assurance and control grew by 5%.

If you're looking for your next role in transport and logistics, you'll be pleased to know that the construction boom is creating greater demand for talent. "The amount of infrastructure work in Auckland alone is huge, but there is construction activity right across the country," says Davies. "There are roads being built, more hotels to support growth in tourism, even the residential sector is growing. This all leads to high demand for trucks and for logistics services."

This is supported by the latest data from SEEK, which shows opportunities in road transport were up by 13% year-on-year, while couriers, drivers and postal services were up by 3% and fleet management increased by 9%.

Diverse talent in demand

The aging population is having an impact on the transport and logistics workforce. The average age of truck drivers in New Zealand is 53 years and Davies says the transport industry faces challenges in recruiting younger drivers. “You don’t see a lot of younger people driving trucks in New Zealand,” he says. “Over the past 10 or 15 years, there has been a focus on encouraging young people to go to university or to get a trade.”

Davies adds that candidates with suitable driving licenses are in high demand. “There are huge opportunities in the transport industry and the money can be good, but there is a shortage of talent. We struggle to find good drivers as Class 1, which is a standard, non-restricted motor vehicle license. It gets harder as we progress up the licensing chain to Class 5. It would also help if more companies looked at a more diverse pool of talent.”

Of the 23,000 heavy haul truck drivers in New Zealand, only 3% are women. “On the whole, there’s no reason why there shouldn’t be more women in the industry,” says Davies.

Rising to the challenge

Linfox is one company focused on attracting a diversity of talent – both in terms of age and gender. Linfox Logistics employs 6,500 people across New Zealand and Australia and has operations across 10 countries with a presence in industries such as retail, government and defence and fast-moving consumer goods.

Rob Volarich, Group Manager Recruitment and Workforce Planning at Linfox, says training opportunities are an important way of bringing younger drivers into the business. “The aging workforce presents a challenge for the entire industry,” he says. “Having our own internal recruitment and training functions allows Linfox to employ drivers who may have less experience but are willing to be trained and mentored. We invest in our people through training and

development and we have a strong employment brand.”

Volarich adds that increasing the company’s focus on workplace diversity is helping to address the challenge. “Diversity in general is important to Linfox, across both gender and cultures,” he says. “We have many women working in operational roles throughout the organisation and are also proud of the number women who occupy senior roles within the business. We are currently working on a strategy that will attract women into more traditional supply chain roles, such as driving and warehousing roles.”

In addition to advertising roles on SEEK, Volarich explains the company provides career progression opportunities by advertising roles internally. “Our latest round of senior leadership announcements all related to internal candidates who have come up through the company,” he says.

The Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics industry plays a vital role in the New Zealand economy. The drive for greater diversity of age and gender is shaping company’s recruitment strategies and your next opportunity may be just around the corner.