



FOCUS ON...

WAMITAB Skills Survey Challenges and Training Trends

December 2014

Introduction

This paper reports the findings of the WAMITAB Skills Survey 2014, which focused on identifying the challenges employers in the industry face and their training requirements for the future.

Context – Employment & Skills

There have been two recent surveys on skills and qualifications published recently.

The British Chamber of Commerce Workforce Survey 2014 concluded that 92% of businesses have identified a skills shortage among their workforce in at least one key area, while 80% of businesses surveyed have plans to invest in training.

According to a recent survey by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES, 2014), just over a quarter of UK employers (26%) arranged or funded training designed to lead to a recognised vocational qualification.

Nearly all employers agreed that their staff achieving vocational qualifications enabled them to do their job better (92%).

Levels 2 and 3 were most widely offered (44% and 48% respectively, but a considerable minority had arranged training at Level 5 (22%).

Context–Waste & Resource Management

With the number of middle-class consumers around the world set to increase by 3 billion in 2030, the economic case for embracing a more resource efficient society is clear.

The waste and resource management industry will therefore play a crucial role in ensuring that the waste generated can be treated, reused and recycled to produce a product that will contribute to further economic growth.

Despite concerns about growth in the wider economy, the waste and resource management industry is showing positive



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economic activity by generating £11 billion per year (Spelman, 2012), while experiencing a 60% increase in corporate finance and investment deals during the second half of 2012 (Read, 2013).

This economic activity is driven by three key trends:

- Minimising wastage
- Extracting greater value from waste through recycling
- Energy from Waste

This activity relates to the growing popularity of the circular economy, which aims to shift away from the buy-consume-dispose culture of today's society which generates 434 million tonnes of waste every year (Defra, 2011), towards an economy where material is reclaimed, reused or recycled as secondary raw materials for new products, while any residual waste that cannot be recycled is used to generate energy (ESA, 2013).

According to WRAP (2013), the circular economy has the potential to create new opportunities for economic growth by reducing the pressure on natural resources,

positioning the UK to address emerging resource issues in the future.

The Issue

As the role of the waste and recycling industry in the UK changes new challenges are emerging; created by increasing emphasis on developing sustainable working practices, embracing new technologies and ensuring that businesses remain compliant with legislative changes.

To achieve this goal, employers within the waste and recycling industry will need to ensure that their workforce have the skills, knowledge and understanding to maintain service standards, while supporting business growth during a period of financial constraints.

The Method

The WAMITAB Projects Team undertook a research project during September 2014 designed to identify the challenges employers in the industry face and their training requirements for the future and as a follow up to the Skills Survey carried out in 2013.



The feedback will help to ensure that the skills solutions we provide continue to meet the needs of our customers.

To achieve this, 43 waste and recycling industry professionals were surveyed by the Projects Team online, at events, including the RWM show in Birmingham.

The Findings

A wide range of challenges were cited by the WAMITAB Skills Survey respondents in 2014, which are captured in the diagrams below.



Waste & Recycling

- Circular economy
- Minimising waste/ increasing recycling
- Quantity and quality of waste



Finance & Funding

- Budget management
- Payment for services
- Cutting costs



Competition & New Business

- Attracting and keeping new business
- Remaining competitive
- Change management



Legislation & Compliance

- * Complying with legislation
- * Keeping up with changes
- * Recognition of technical competence



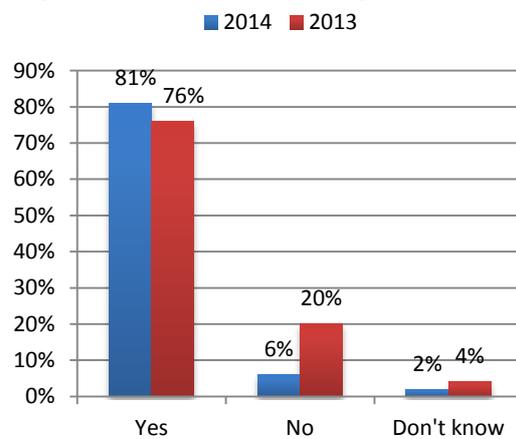
Training & Assessment

- * Finding businesses that want training
- * Learner numbers
- * Lack of trained assessors

The majority of the challenges highlighted by respondents focused on legislation and compliance related issues (60%) or financial and funding related issues (53%).

The majority of respondents (81%) reported investing in training during the last 12 months, compared to 76% of respondents in 2013 (Figure 1).

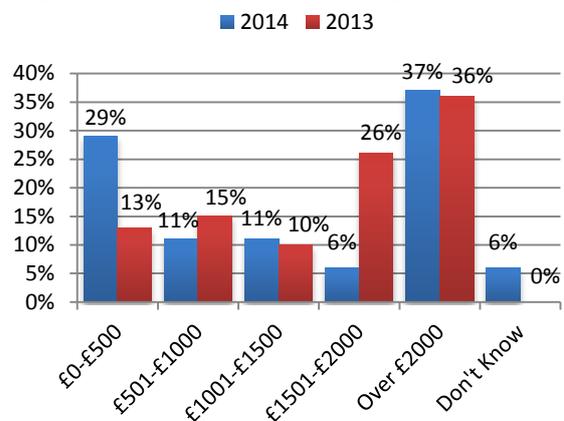
Figure 1: Invested in Training



Source: WAMITAB, 2014

Figure 2 shows that the majority of those respondents that stated they had invested in training (54%) were willing to spend over £1001 on developing their workforce.

Figure 2: Investment in Training



Source: WAMITAB, 2014

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Overall, 78% of respondents to the WAMITAB Skills Survey stated that they planned to invest in training during the next 6 months.

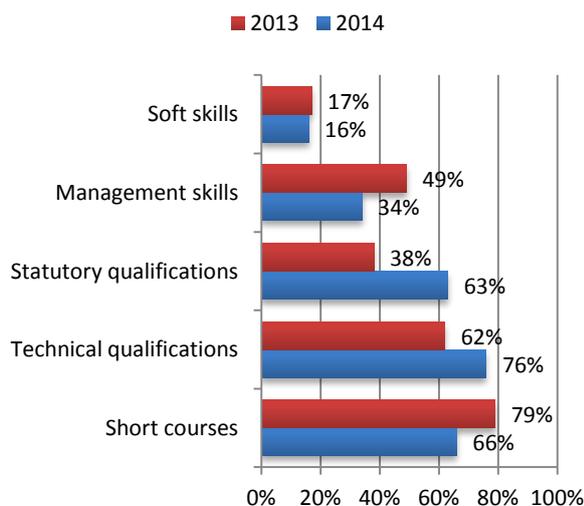
Respondents were asked what factors motivated them to invest in training.

Evidence suggests that the three key motivating factors for investment in training are:

- To develop staff (79%)
- To address skills gaps (65%)
- To meet the statutory requirement (63%)

The majority of respondents reported that they were interested in purchasing technical qualifications (76% compared to 62% in 2013) focused on improving specific skills that would benefit their business, while a further 66% of respondents stated that they were interested in short courses (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Type of Training

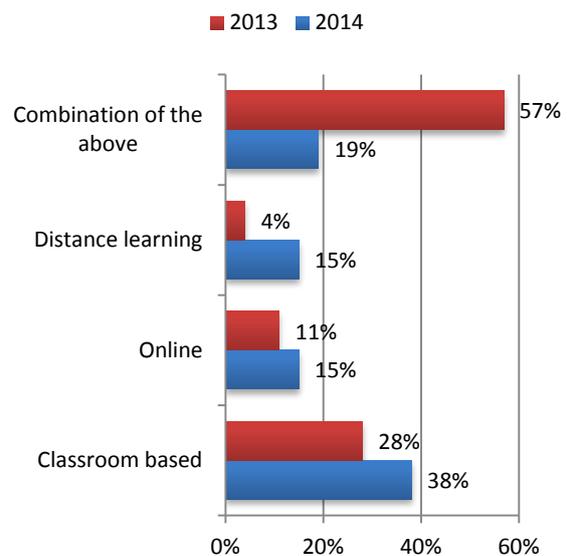


Source: WAMITAB, 2014

38% of respondents to the survey preferred classroom based courses, while 15% preferred online courses and a further 15% preferred distance learning (Figure 4).

The remaining 19% of respondents stated that they would prefer a combination of these.

Figure 4: Preferred Training Style



Source: WAMITAB, 2014



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However, evidence suggests that there are still some barriers to investment in training within the waste and recycling industry.

The respondents to the WAMITAB Skills survey identified the following as the most significant barriers to investment:

- Cost (63% compared to 50% in 2013)
- Time (41% compared to 50% in 2013)

Summary

In a challenging economic climate, the knowledge and skills that employees possess become increasingly important to employers, while funding the required training and qualifications to develop these skills can be difficult.

The British Chamber of Commerce (2014) identified the major barriers to training investment are cost (50%), freeing up staff to participate in training (31%) and a lack of suitable courses (19%).

Overall, this research has shown that waste and resource management industry professionals are finding changes to legislation and compliance to facilitate a reduction in waste and increase in recycling a significant challenge.

As a result, respondents reported that they were interested in purchasing technical and statutory qualifications that focus on improving specific skills that would benefit their business – an increase on the previous year.

However, barriers to training such as cost and time remain an issue for employers.

Sources

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This paper has been written and produced by the Project Team at WAMITAB.

