



FOCUS ON...

WAMITAB Skills Survey Challenges and Training Trends

January 2014

Introduction

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

The Context

The waste and recycling industry has been recognised by the Government in recent years as having the potential to provide a substantial contribution to the improvement of environmental and economic outcomes across the UK (Energy and Utility Skills, 2013).

The drive to minimise waste and maximise the efficient use of our resources has resulted in the Government setting the target to recycle 50% of household waste across the UK by 2020.

Ottery (2013^a) argues that this is particularly important for small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who could lose money if they do not commit to recycling as a result of the landfill tax rise to £72 per tonne.

It is estimated that businesses can save £22 billion annually by cutting out wasteful practices, while homeowners can save £12 billion by not throwing away perfectly edible food (Ottery, 2013^b).

In response, businesses of all sizes are adopting sustainable procurement practices to prevent waste and reduce the costs associated with materials and services by embedding environmental, economic and social criteria into contractual documents (Goodwin, 2013).

This approach is designed to motivate suppliers to offer more sustainable products and services by using resources efficiently so less waste is sent to landfill (Goodwin, 2013).

However, evidence suggests that the shift towards a more sustainable approach to business is slow with 33% of SMEs across the UK making no effort to reduce their environmental impact through waste recycling, reducing energy used for heat or modifying products and services to reduce waste (MRW, 2013).



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 2013 designed to identify the challenges employers in the industry face and their training requirements for the future.

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

To achieve this, 56 waste and recycling industry professionals were interviewed by the Projects Team at the RWM show in Birmingham.

The Findings

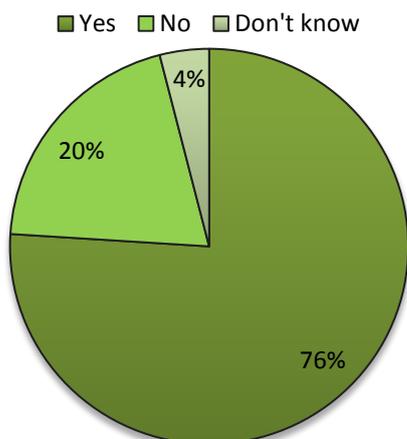
A wide range of challenges were cited by the WAMITAB Skills Survey respondents, examples of the challenges cited by the respondents are shown in the diagram below.



The majority of the challenges highlighted by respondents focused on waste and recycling related issues (72%) or financial and market share related issues (63%).

The majority of respondents (76%) reported investing in training during the last 12 months, compared to 20% stating that they had not (Figure 1).

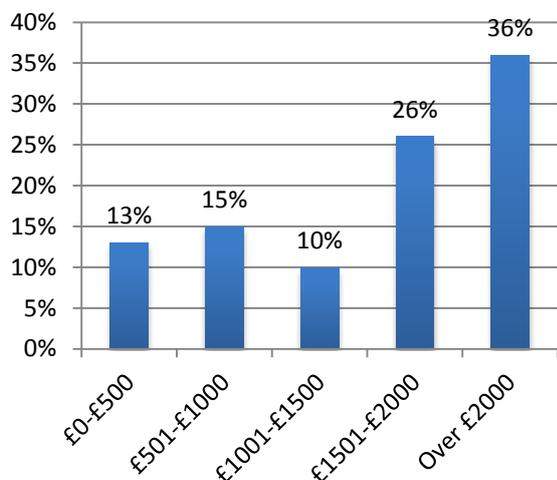
Figure 1: Invested in Training



Source: WAMITAB, 2013

Figure 2 shows that the majority of those respondents that stated they had invested in training (62%) were willing to spend over £1501 on developing their workforce.

Figure 2: Investment in Training



Source: WAMITAB, 2013

Overall, 72% of respondents to the WAMITAB Skills Survey stated that they planned to invest in training during the next 6 months.

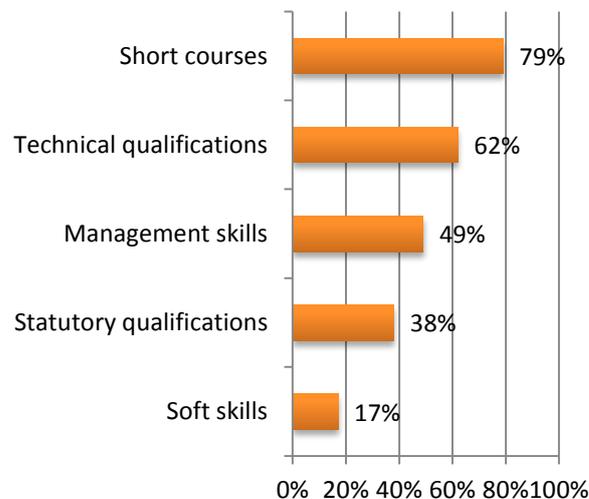
Respondents were asked what factors motivated them to invest in training.

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

- To develop staff (86%)
- To address skills gaps (87%)
- To improve productivity (68%)

The majority of respondents reported that they were interested in purchasing short courses (79%) focused on improving specific skills that would benefit their business, while a further 62% of respondents stated that they were interested in technical qualifications (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Type of Training



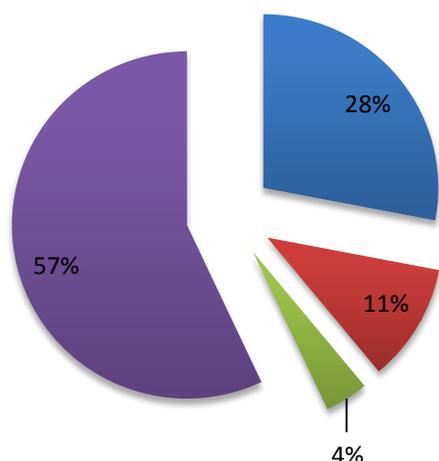
Source: WAMITAB, 2013

57% of respondents to the survey preferred courses to utilise a combination of training styles (such as classroom based, distance learning or online) rather than one style in particular (Figure 4).

This suggests that training courses will have to be more flexible to meet the needs of learners in the future.

Figure 4: Preferred Training Style

■ Classroom based ■ Online
■ Distance learning ■ Combination of the above



Source: WAMITAB, 2013

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 (50%)
- Lack of time (50%)

Summary

Overall, this research has shown that the majority of employers are willing to invest in training to ensure their workforce have the knowledge, skills and understanding to support their business.

This remains a priority for employers despite the challenges associated with staffing and training, such as: difficulties retaining skills personnel, finding the time to train and ensuring the delivery of cost effective training.

Improving the productivity and profitability of a business are key motivational factors for employers as this allows them to overcome the financial challenges associated with the tough financial climate in the UK.

However, barriers to investment in training such as cost and lack of time mean that training providers will need to develop more flexible forms of course delivery by using a combination of classroom based learning, distance learning and online learning.

Sources

Energy and Utility Skills (2010) *The UK waste management and recycling industry 2010 labour market investigation*, Energy and Utility Skills, Solihull

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For more information visit:

www.wamitab.org.uk

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