

Industrial strength

youth

WORDS BY EDITOR IMAGES BY DAVE LORIMAR

McIntyre (aka Doug the Digger) and his crew run programmes aimed at promoting the infrastructure and road transport industries to the younger generation.

The name is pretty clear: Youth into Industry — nice, simple and easy to understand. Much like what Alistair McIntyre is about.

Their latest instalment saw six students from Whangarei high schools progressing to, initially, a six-week work placement programme in a joint venture with Hirepool. This was aimed at providing them with skills and knowledge gained from experiences to take forward to prospective employers.

As McIntyre says, “In days gone by we all learnt about the industry by riding around with our dads and watching what was happening on job sites. As you got older and showed some aptitude, someone would put you on a machine and instruct you on how to use it. You knew what not to do, as you had spent all that time observing what was happening.”

Unfortunately, with this style of learning we didn't have many, if any, ‘bits of paper’. “In today's world we have created many ‘bits of paper’, but unfortunately we don't have much hands on experience. As a result, young people can sometimes get awarded competency certificates, without actually being practically competent, as many employers have found out,” McIntyre says.

With the importance of the safety culture these days, there needs to be an equal balance of time for learning the theory, paper work and hands on experiences in a safe work place environment to create a positive safety-culture foundation to grow and develop from.

As I sat in Hirepool's yard storage shed (that gets turned into a classroom one day



From left — Mason Reed, Jamie Patterson, Jake Rouse, Trent Hodgkinson, Keelan Fenwick, Isaac Martin

a week) observing McIntyre and his crew with their students, it got me thinking that they have got the formula of balance and learning pretty much right. I am also sure this was the feeling of the representatives of the who's who in local industry-related businesses that were also present on the day.

What got me was that McIntyre and his team focus not only on teaching the necessary industry-related skills, but also life skills — of which should be a core component of every young person's school curriculum. Cleverly, they had enlisted the help of local Lions Club members, who supported Youth into Industry's standards, with everything from keeping their hands out of pockets to looking someone in the eye when speaking to them, not to mention the all-important meaning of respect. All very straightforward ‘old-fashioned’ things that a lot of us take for granted, but can mean the difference between clinching that all-important job and being able to keep it.

Another thing I liked was the way things like mathematics and English were integrated in a meaningful way. An example of this was students were asked to measure up port-a-loos and generators and then work out how many could fit onto different trailers. Filling out paperwork, is another necessity these days, and learning to write so it can be easily read by someone else was another simple but educationally-relevant task. It was really interesting to hear how some of the students even managed to get eight trailers into one port-a-loo, when they first started out.

The clincher for me was watching each student tell us what they thought of the course. At the very least, I was expecting one of the lads to get a bit tongue tied speaking to a group of ‘elders’, however each and every student spoke clearly and well — something I attribute to their excellent training. A common theme they spoke about was how they could connect education with the real world, and especially how mathematics and English skills relate to the world of construction and transportation.

Of course, all this would not be possible without the buy-in from the industry and many companies have made themselves available to make sure the students get the best possible start. Hirepool has got right on board with the provision of facilities for training. Whangarei branch manager Taj Bhai is especially enthusiastic about the program and has worked hard to make sure each

Toll owner operator/driver trainer, Shane Stewart (left), Alastair McIntyre and Barbara Busst from Youth into Industry



Practical training features high on the programme



student is ready to make a strong contribution to the industry.

“It's amazing to see how the students have developed during the time they have been here and I now see them stand tall and strong,” he says.

People like Bhai are an inspiration to young people, being excellent role models and mentors.

Looking at what has been achieved, some local schools are hoping they can integrate the training package into

something that can be rolled out to more students. With that and some fine tuning, I see the training as suitable for youths nationwide.

Whatever happens, I do feel that Doug the Digger and the Youth into Industry programmes have the tiger by the tail. ■

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