

Jump-starting careers with Babcock's apprenticeships

Driving job creation and skills development is fundamental to Babcock's apprentice training programme that simultaneously contribute to building a motivated and committed workforce. This is achieved by creating a stimulating environment for young trainees to learn and enhance their skills through both theoretical knowledge and practical training.

The apprenticeship programmes, ranging from three to four years, train and mentor apprentices through instructor-led and on-the-job training, with the aim of producing graduates capable of operating in complex, highly regulated environments, where competence, compliance and safety are critical. Apprenticeships are offered in various trades including diesel mechanic, boilermaker, earthmoving equipment mechanic, and fitter/welder.

Calvin Muthelo, Training Manager at Babcock, says that the apprentice training programmes combine educational material with hands-on workshop experience. Each apprentice is also assigned a qualified tradesperson who works with them for the duration of the programme.

Babcock's various apprenticeship programmes include one year of technical theoretical training, which is phase orientated, and up to three years' relevant workplace experiential learning during which time apprentices are given the opportunity to work on the leading brands that Babcock distributes, including Volvo Construction Equipment, Terex Trucks and SDLG.

"Babcock also has various MERSETA-accredited workshops where practical tutorials are carried out while the trainers and tutors themselves are continually sent on technical training courses to keep up to date with the latest technology and equipment," says Muthelo.

Since 2016 Babcock's apprentice training programmes have not only achieved a 100% pass rate but have also shown equal opportunity in a largely male-dominated environment by producing a number of qualified female diesel mechanics.

Muthelo says that Babcock strongly supports diversity within its organisation and all the apprentice programmes are open to both male and female candidates.

Lonah Johnson, who recently qualified as a diesel mechanic and is now employed at Babcock after completing the four-year apprenticeship, says that although she always had a passion for engineering, she thought that being a diesel mechanic was a job for men. "During my studies, however, I became more and more interested in this field, not only wanting to learn more but also

determined to defy the odds by becoming a female diesel mechanic. I began my apprenticeship in 2014 and was privileged to be among the first group of female apprentices ever to be employed by Babcock in this field. Although challenging at first, support from my instructor and other artisans helped me push through four years of training.”

Also now a Babcock employee, Charmaine Maraba graduated from the apprenticeship programme earlier this year as a qualified earthmoving equipment mechanic, specialising in the service and repair of heavy machinery.

She says that although her job can be physically taxing at times, her strength lies in the deep level of knowledge and understanding of the equipment that her apprenticeship has afforded her, and that she plans to further her engineering studies through the organisation’s Workspace Skills Plan.

“At Babcock we never stop learning and the Workspace Skills Plan is open to any Babcock employee seeking to further their skills training. The company also makes bursaries available for this,” adds Muthelo.

Babcock’s apprentice training programmes are advertised internally and externally and cater for candidates between the ages of 20 to 35, with a minimum qualification of a Grade 12 certificate with Maths and Science, or an N2 certificate from a technical and vocational education and training or further education and training college. Once an apprenticeship programme is completed, candidates receive a nationally recognised qualification issued by the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO) and the potential opportunity of permanent employment at Babcock.

Besides meeting the minimum tertiary requirements, successful applicants are required to complete a round of interviews and assessments in order to qualify for the apprenticeship programme.

While Babcock employs as many qualified apprentices as possible, the company is also committed to encouraging an ethos of continual skills development and improvement within the company. To this end Babcock’s training centre offers technical training for their currently employed mechanics as well as soft skills training for any employee at the company.

Issued by: Serendipity Events, Promotions & Exhibitions

On behalf of: BABCOCK

Editorial contact: Loll Thomson (011) 467 2133

Mail to: lol@sepe.co.za

Client contact: Calvin Muthelo

Mail to: Calvin.Muthelo@babcock.co.za

Date: 31 August 2018