

# There's no such thing as a typical electrical apprentice

WITH NEW ZEALAND'S DEMOGRAPHICS CHANGING AND THE TYPICAL RECRUITMENT POOL FOR APPRENTICES DIVERSIFYING, SMART EMPLOYERS KNOW THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD APPRENTICE AREN'T LIMITED TO THE YOUNG EUROPEAN MALES THEY'VE TRADITIONALLY TAKEN ON. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT DEAN WILLS, WAIKATO CO-DIRECTOR AT NME ELECTRICAL HAS DISCOVERED FIRST-HAND.



Dean Wills with new apprentice Alice Wright

NME has recently employed Alice Wright, the company's first ever female apprentice, and so far they've enjoyed nothing but success. Alice was originally studying accounting, but she found that it wasn't what she wanted to do, and when Dean offered her some casual assembly and labouring work helping to build switchboards she jumped at the opportunity. "She was fantastic," says Dean. "She showed a lot of initiative and had a great work ethic and as we were looking at adding another apprentice to our team, it was a great opportunity to employ Alice."

For Dean, recruiting a female apprentice wasn't a matter of affirmative action, or of equaling the gender imbalance in trades, it was simply a case of taking on a good apprentice who would be an asset to the business. "As far as I can see there's no difference between the genders when it comes to what makes a good apprentice. Though perhaps females might have a little more patience than their male counterparts when it comes to a difficult task!

But really, she's the equal of anyone else."

Bob Thomas, ETITO Training Manager for the Waikato region says the face of New Zealand's workforce is undergoing a drastic change, and suggests that it's no longer practical for the European, middle-class male to be the mainstay of electrical apprenticeships. And that doesn't just mean there's a need to recruit female apprentices. "It's predicted that in 11 years 40% percent of the population will be non-European – while currently European males make-up 80% of new apprentices. Businesses need inter-cultural competence to deal effectively with their client base, and one of the best ways to achieve this is for a company's staff to mirror the diverse environment they operate in," says Bob.

Dean thinks that when it comes to recruitment everyone deserves a chance. "In our case with Alice, some of the work is more physically challenging, but that's really just a case of getting the right person on the right job. The only thing I consider when I'm taking on an

apprentice is whether they've got an open mind, and if they'll be dedicated to their apprenticeship."

With a push from government to get more diversity into trades, ETITO continues to encourage young people from across the board to embark on an electrical apprenticeship. Ultimately however, the decision rests with employers and who you choose to take on as apprentices. Besides a good attitude, the only entry requirement should be the minimum of 12 credits of English, Maths and Science each, all at the same level – which indicates they can cope with the theory component of an apprenticeship. A more diverse industry is a more robust industry, and if you pay a little more attention to those people you may have overlooked in the past they might surprise you!!

For advice on recruiting or training apprentices, contact your ETITO training manager or visit [www.etito.co.nz](http://www.etito.co.nz)

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