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Trinder Engineering managing director Kerry Hill, second right, with training coordinator Gordon Laird, right, and NMIT's Jeremy Classen, left, with Trinder's new apprentices on Monday. Photo: Simon Bloomberg.

Turning out more tradesmen

Simon Bloomberg

A Richmond company is engineering its own solution to a shortage of skilled staff by doubling the number of apprentices and employing a training coordinator so that it can continue to meet the demand for its services. Trinder Engineering, which also owns Hope-based Waimea Engineering, has just taken on seven new apprentices with another three to be employed in the next few months. That will bring their number of apprentices up to 19, double the number the two businesses usually employ, and increase their staff to around 95. Trinder managing director Kerry Hill says they needed to step-up their training programme to "meet our current and future growth needs while maintaining our reputation for quality engineering". Kerry says they decided to "engineer our own solution" to the staff shortage because there is "a real lack of skilled applicants in the market". The demand for their services is based on the region's strong economic growth, he says. Many of their big clients work in forestry, viticulture and road transport and all three of these sectors are

"busy".

"Other people's businesses are growing, so we have to grow to support them," he says.

Kerry says they are pleased with the quality of their latest intake of apprentices who will spend four years and 8000 hours training as fitter turners and fitter welders.

"Young people get a bad rap at times but we are very pleased with the high calibre of the young people who have joined our work sites recently. We look forward to providing them with a safe and rewarding career and a good future in engineering."

The two companies have also employed Gordon Laird as a full-time training coordinator as part of the initiative. Gordon's brief is to "oversee junior staff and provide ongoing trade and safety training to all of our team". "Gordon is adding a lot of value to our training programmes with his strong engineering background and many years as a training provider," Kerry says. One of Trinder's new apprentices, Dan Rusbatch, says he has always wanted to become a qualified engineer and jumped at the chance to do an apprenticeship at Trinder.

"I'd been working in engineering as a labourer for five years but wanted to get a trade," Dan says. "The company I worked for didn't have any apprenticeships going, so when I got the opportunity to do one here I took it."

Trinder Engineering and Waimea Engineers are also fully supporting the new Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology's managed apprenticeship programme this year. Kerry says that's providing more opportunities to "tailor the training to suit our business and local industry needs".

"The management team at NMIT have been very good to work with and share the same commitment to training as we do," he says.

NMIT's engineering apprenticeship coordinator Jeremy Classen says they started the general engineering programme last year and are delighted that Trinder has come on board.

"Trinder has a great name and really leads the way in training apprentices, so we are thrilled they have given us a vote of confidence," Jeremy says.

NMIT has 19 general engineering apprentices enrolled on their courses.

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