

Skills Highway Award Entrant:

C3 Ltd.

Dedicated to Literacy. C3 provides Stevedoring, Warehousing and Log Marshalling services for 15 ports in New Zealand. They have over 800 staff handling 14.5 million tonnes of cargo each year, including 23 million logs, 3.5 million tonnes of forest products and 300,000 tonnes of steel. The majority of C3's workforce come directly from school, with very few employees having any higher qualifications.

It is an industry where health and safety is paramount. C3 recognised the need to improve the way health and safety culture and procedures are learnt and communicated throughout the organisation and saw improving literacy as integral to this change.

The 'C3 Accelerate – Safety Leadership' programme was put together to address several different elements of safety. Firstly the employees needed to have a thorough understanding of health and safety documentation and procedures. Secondly, employees needed to cultivate the soft skills necessary to instruct others in safety requirements, such as buddying new staff effectively or challenging those who were not following procedures.

C3's focus on up-skilling employees in functional literacy gave staff across 14 New Zealand branches the opportunity to gain a more complete knowledge of C3 Systems, health and safety processes and standard operating procedures. Participants were also shown how to identify and assess risk in the workplace.

Alongside understanding safety from a literacy perspective, the initiative also focussed on improving employees' ability to lead safety in the workplace. Participants were taught soft skills that would allow them to share their knowledge with others, through better verbal communication. The aim was for participants to feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback, as well as participating in, or even leading, safety meetings.

"The idea was to create a workplace where life-long learning is valued and where the company and its staff can grow together," says Chief Executive Dean Camplin.

"The course has given participants the confidence and the communications strategies required to influence the behaviour of others, along with the ability to understand and effectively use workplace documentation to drive a more safety focussed culture."

The initiative was also seen as an opportunity to build digital literacy across the organisation. Many employees did not have access to a computer either at work or at home, or if they did they lacked the confidence to use it. The Accelerate - Safety Leadership course utilised C3's e-learning portal in order to increase employee's familiarity with computers.

C3's dedication to improving literacy across their entire workforce is undeniable. C3 were successful in gaining funding from a TEC Workplace Literacy and Numeracy grant, however some prospective learners were ineligible for this funding. C3 decided to give all applicants

the opportunity to participate, ending up with 54 learners funded and 11 learners unfunded.

The positivity and co-operation of senior managers throughout the organisation was integral to the success of this course. The branch managers were fully supportive and were willing to allow workers the time to take advantage of this opportunity. This was often not an easy task, as C3 works on a 24/7 basis with employees on different employment contracts which require minimum shift hours. For some branches the cost was considerable, due to both travel time and time off rosters.

Auckland Branch Manager, definitely saw the benefits of the course despite the costs.

"The C3 Accelerate course, in my view, was the best initiative to impact on C3 in Auckland over 3 years. I closely watched the staff as the course progressed and found that there was a total engagement and uptake of course content. Also of note was a positive change of attitude and behaviour in all of the team without exception."

All participants were assessed upon entry to the course and at the end. The results showed that 69% of participants achieved a reading gain of one full step or more over the length of the course, and 86% of participants achieved a gain of one or more steps in writing.

Alongside these improvements in literacy, one of the major organisational benefits of the course has been increased employee engagement and performance. This was most evident in the way participants were willing to take on more responsibility. By the end of the course, 42% of participants had formally taken on either a new role or new responsibility, such as Health and Safety Rep, Trainer or Supervisor.

Similarly, using the e-learning portal has been a great success for the organisation in increasing digital literacy and confidence. One participant said she felt fearful around computers, but at the end of the course her partner bought her a computer as a graduation present. Another participant who had never owned a smart phone before participating in the course, now feels he knows more about how to use a smart phone than his grandson!

The success of the C3 Accelerate- Safety Leadership course has shown that dedication to improving literacy can impact on the safety and wellbeing of an organisation, as well as provide employees with the confidence to communicate effectively and take up new responsibilities.