

Securing the Future: Tackling Skills and Talent Challenges in the UK Pump Industry

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The UK pump industry, like much of the wider engineering sector, is facing a growing challenge that threatens its long-term resilience: the shortage of skilled people. While the sector continues to innovate and adapt to changing market demands, its ability to sustain that progress will ultimately depend on attracting, developing and retaining the right talent.

Pumping may not always be the most visible part of modern infrastructure, but it is fundamental to critical systems across water, energy, manufacturing and building services. As these sectors evolve – driven by sustainability goals, digitalisation and regulatory change – so too does the level of expertise required within the pump industry. Today’s workforce must combine traditional engineering knowledge with increasingly sophisticated skills in areas such as system design, data analysis and digital technologies.

However, the industry is contending with a number of structural challenges. An ageing workforce means that valuable experience and technical knowledge risk being lost, while competition for new engineering talent remains intense. At the same time, there is still a lack of awareness among younger generations about the opportunities the pump sector can offer as a modern, innovative and impactful career path.

Addressing this issue requires a coordinated, long-term approach. It is not simply about recruitment, but about building a sustainable talent pipeline that supports the industry’s future needs. This starts with improving engagement with schools, colleges and universities, ensuring that engineering – and the pump industry specifically – is presented as an attractive and rewarding option.

Equally important is the need to invest in training and professional development for those already within

the sector. As technologies evolve, so too must the skills of the workforce.

Upskilling and reskilling are essential if businesses are to remain competitive and capable of adopting new approaches in areas such as energy efficiency, digitalisation and advanced manufacturing.

At the British Pump Manufacturers Association (BPMA), we recognise the importance of this challenge and are actively working to support our members. Through our Recruitment Committee, we are helping to raise the profile of the industry and promote career opportunities, while our established training programme continues to provide practical, industry-relevant education across a range of technical and commercial disciplines.

Collaboration is also key. Industry, education providers and government must work together to ensure that training pathways are aligned with real-world requirements. Apprenticeships, vocational training and continuous professional development all have a vital role to play in creating a workforce that is both skilled and adaptable.

Importantly, businesses themselves must also take an active role. Creating clear career pathways, investing in employee development and fostering inclusive, forward-thinking workplace cultures are all essential to attracting and retaining talent in a competitive market.

The skills challenge is not unique to the pump industry, but its impact here is particularly significant given the sector's critical role in supporting essential infrastructure. Without the right people in place, progress in areas such as sustainability, efficiency and innovation will be harder to achieve.

Looking ahead, the opportunity is clear. By investing in people as well as technology, the UK pump industry can build a workforce that is capable, confident and ready to meet future demands. In doing so, it will not only secure its own future, but also strengthen its contribution to the wider economy and the transition to a more sustainable world.

To learn more about the work undertaken by the BPMA on behalf of the UK's Pump industry, please visit www.bpma.org.uk.