Is the planning profession still facing recruitment and retention issues?

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Presentation outline

- 2005 key findings
- The current situation
- The issues in recruitment and retention
- Our experience
- Proposing a graduate rotation programme
- Conclusions
2005 key findings

“... severe problems recruiting and retaining permanent planning staff”

- Local and global problems reported
- Vacancies increased by 15% in NZ, 13% in UK and up to 19% in Australia
- New Zealand
  - 69% of employers indicated difficulties in recruiting planners
  - Up to 32% experienced issues retaining current planners
  - A significant number of new planning positions forecast in 2005
  - Graduates entering the profession were not keeping up with demand
- Australia - 50% of employers had problems with planning staff retention
- UK - 50% of local authorities reported issues with recruiting junior planners
• Not enough qualified trained planners entering the profession

• “Leakage” from the profession following graduation

• Increased planning workload creating more planning positions
Action plan - 2005

- For employers and the profession to overcome future recruitment issues
  - Acknowledge the ‘planner’ shortage
  - Retain existing staff
  - Promote “the positive”
  - Increase promotion of planning as a profession
  - Develop a good relationship between academia and employers
  - Support and mentor new planners
  - Explore overseas resources boost New Zealand resources
  - Monitor workplace stress and morale needs to be monitored
  - Review legislation and planning practice to reduce workloads
Fast forward 2012
What has happened since 2005

- Planner shortage peaked in NZ (2005-2008)
- Vacancies continued to rise (2005)
- Planner added to Long Term Skills Shortage list (2006)
- Global Financial Crisis (2008)
- Vacancies dropped sharply (2009)
- Reduced demand for planners and greater retention
- Christchurch earthquake (2010 - ongoing)
- Limited focus by employers on action points noted in 2005
- Reduced employment of graduates
NZPI Vacancy Service

Year

2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011

Numbers of vacancies

276 308 305 333 363 109 149 179
“When the NZ economy recovers, we are likely to see an ongoing shortage of planners that could be worse than 2005”
Christchurch – the situation in 2012

- Difficult to recruit at senior and intermediate level
- Very limited graduate recruitment
- As the economy recovers, similar results are predicted for other regions

75% of respondents hiring during the last 12 months reported difficulties recruiting senior and manager level roles, with 50% reporting difficulties for intermediate level positions
Christchurch – what employers are saying

“Very difficult to get highly experienced planners in Christchurch…”

“…limited number of responses to advertising for intermediate, senior and principal (leader) roles. It is difficult finding suitable candidates with the right mix of strong technical and business skills”

“Christchurch seems to be very thin at the senior level having needed to go out to the market three times to get capable people”
**Graduates** – the situation in 2012

The good news:
- Universities answered the call to action
- Higher graduate numbers
- Students who held student placements were more likely to receive FT employment on graduation

The bad news:
- Graduates struggle to secure work
- 60% of survey respondents without work
- Not enough student placements
- High levels of graduate disengagement
- Local authority amalgamation in Auckland has impacted graduate roles
The industry must continue to employ graduates through the lean times, otherwise the profession will suffer in years to come.
Graduates – the outlook

Graduates:
• Key message for graduates - don’t give up
• Entry level planning jobs should continue to trickle in throughout the year
• Limited competition in the future as it is predicted many graduates may have abandoned their career in planning

Employers:
• The planning professional shortage is critical
• There will be increased shortages at intermediate-senior levels
• It is up to all of us to bring balance back to the profession
• Employ graduates, or at the very least offer student placements
GHD – student and graduate employment

- Positive experience
- Getting the ratio of seniors to graduates right
- Student placements
- The Consultant Development Programme
- Graduate Rotation Programme
GHD – experience with student placements

- Great for cost effective help on projects, without committing to a full-time position
- Students are willing to turn their hands to anything
- Gives students valuable experience to include on their CV
**GHD – Consultant Development Programme (CDP)**

- Internal 3-year learning programme for all new GHD graduates
- Skill development and ongoing learning in the professional environment
- Provides new graduates a peer network outside of their profession
- Provides graduates with skills required to kick off their consultancy careers
- Focuses on “transition from student to professional”
What managers say:
“The [CDP] programme is great. It makes it much easier to hire graduates than in organisations where this is not available. This is because a large portion of the training and development needs of a new graduate are taken care of for me and I can just focus on developing their core technical planning skills. Graduates these days have a desire for formal structure around their training and the CDP provides this.”

What graduates say:
“The CDP has provided me with an excellent opportunity to learn and interact with other young professionals from other disciplines. The effort the company has gone to is great, using some of New Zealand’s leading professionals to obtain the learning outcomes. The three year programme has provided me with the building blocks needed to learn quickly for the profession. The greatest value has been the interaction and learnings brought from others in my year group from around the country on different jobs and issues.”
GHD – Graduate Rotation Programme

- Collaborative partnership between client, contractor and consultant organisations
- Provides engineering graduates the comprehensive/diverse experience
- Participating organisations employ one graduate each year for three years on a standard fixed employment agreement
- Graduates spend one year with ‘home’ organisation, before being seconded to two ‘host’ organisations for a similar period of time
- During secondments the graduate remains the employee of the ‘home’ organisation
- At the conclusion preferences are sought from graduates and participating organisations to finalise full time contracts

17% of graduates participating in the programme left within their first three years of employment, while 36% of graduates left when they were employed under standard employment terms
Options for the industry

- A CDP is a useful programme help in the development of good planners

- An industry Graduate Rotation Programme is a step up from the CDP
  - Engage our young graduates with the industry
  - Overcome commitment barriers for employers who shy away from employing full time permanent graduates
We are seeking interested partners to develop a Graduate Rotation Programme for the planning industry
Conclusion

The shortage of planners is still an issue for our profession
- It remains difficult to recruit senior level planners, and in some situations intermediate level roles are difficult
- Graduates are not provided with employment opportunities

The industry needs to increase the number of graduate positions available
- Structured graduate training with non-planning peers assists with developing good planners
- A graduate rotation programme offers significant benefits - we are seeking interested partners to get this underway within the planning profession
- Student placements offer benefits too

*A greater focus on graduate recruitment today will assist with the long-term supply of experienced planners for the future and will contribute to the promotion of a positive image for planning within the community.*