

Introduction & agenda

- Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen.
- First of all, thank you to the Institute for the invitation to speak today.
- It is a great pleasure to be here today, kicking off an afternoon of many distinguished speakers, whom I am sure will provide plenty of content for discussion over dinner this evening.
- Today, I'd like to tell you about a Ports of Auckland project that has been a particular focus for me since joining the company – our Graduate Leadership Development Programme.
- With the theme today being 'The next decade - challenge and solutions', I'd like to start by taking a look back, to a decade ago, to set the scene...
- Where were we as an industry, and a company, 10 years ago? What are we like today, and looking forward, what do we need to succeed over the next ten years?
- This will lead me to why this programme, and programmes like it, are so important to the future success of our company and to the wider logistics industry.
- I'll then give you a quick overview of our Graduate Leadership Development Programme framework and some of our learnings after three years.
- And finally, what can a Graduate Programme deliver to the business? It is a lot of work – so is it really worth it?

A decade ago... 1999

- Now, a decade ago – in 1999 –and following the disestablishment of the AHB, the Ports of Auckland Limited was just eleven years old.
- And the company was grappling with new challenges and opportunities as New Zealand emerged from the 1998 recession...
- Things in the shipping industry were really heating up, with regular announcements of mergers and takeovers among shipping lines and talk of bigger ships – the now very familiar 4100s.

- It was also a time of milestones and growth. For the first time in the company's history, Ports of Auckland handled more than half a million TEU, or 20-foot equivalent container units.
- We had recently reorganised our operations, with a focus on containers and, under that new structure, we launched the very first of our new e-commerce products.
- Today, many of these same trends and issues remain on the agenda.
- Economic recovery, volatility in the global shipping industry, the next generation of larger ships, the trend towards hubbing and growing our efficiencies through technology – all are still very relevant in 2009, and potentially, in the future.

Our Vision

- Now, we don't have a crystal ball, we don't know what will be on the agenda in 2019. But, we do know where we want to be.
- As an industry, we know we have a skills shortage that must be dealt with. New Zealand needs more, better-trained logistics and supply chain management professionals. And I'd like to commend all those here today that have endeavoured to make a contribution towards that.
- For Ports of Auckland in particular, our Vision is to be the best port company in Austral-Asia, with world class performance.
- Yes, it's ambitious – but we believe it is achievable!
- In my view, we will achieve it through leadership.
- We know that to achieve our goals, we need good people and strong leaders in our organisation.
- We also know, even just through looking at the demographic in our own company, we need to attract new, young professionals to the industry.
- For instance... About a decade ago, just 11 out of our 540 staff were under 30. Today, we are a bit more balanced, and have around 50. But there still work to be done.
- So, to complement our apprentice training programme in Engineering and our support of the University's chair of logistics and supply chain management, the Graduate Leadership Development Programme was born.

Programme overview

- Ports of Auckland started the programme in 2007, welcoming our first two graduates, Colin Tasi and Julian Clarke.
- We followed in 2008, recruiting Vikrant Saraf and Matt Kidman, and were most recently joined by Jesse-Lee Thomson-Cowley and Antony De Pont.
- We choose our candidates from a range of universities and disciplines – Arts, Commerce, Business, Engineering degrees, they all feature.
- While the graduates must have performed academically, they must also show an interest or skill in being a leader – whether through school, sport or other activities in the community.
- We also look for recruits with key attributes and competencies that we think someone working in ‘2019 and beyond’ will need... technical proficiency in information systems, operational management know-how, conceptual thinking and problem solving skills, project management abilities, the capacity to learn and innovate, and an eagerness to work as a team.
- The Graduate Leadership Development Programme is formed around a closely managed but flexible 24-month rotation schedule through three to four areas of the Port business.
- And this is an important point. We need a programme framework that is flexible – working for us and our new recruits.
- So, we place the graduates in positions that suit their interests and skills, as well as the needs of the business – whether it be in an operational role or on a special project team.
- We aim for fixed terms, but if a need or project demands more or less time, we work with that.
- So far, our graduates have worked in stevedoring operations, at the road office, in capacity and planning, with marketing, communications, in engineering and at general wharves.
- But, our programme is not just about exposing these new staff to our business. It is about giving them real experiences and fostering their leadership abilities.
- Our graduates are not at the bottom of the heap. We give them challenging and stimulating work, and their performance is measured against goals and objectives set at the start of each rotation.
- They have the same accountability to deliver results as our existing staff and managers.

- We support them through this process with a mentor, an ex-Port senior executive and 2008 Norman Spencer Memorial Award winner, Sandy Gibson, who I am sure you all know well.
- Sandy has a wealth of knowledge and experience in the wider industry, and most importantly, he is a committed and passionate leader himself.
- And finally, we are aiming to offer each graduate the opportunity to go on an international leadership exchange.

Challenges & key learnings

- Now, after three years, three iterations, we have learned a lot.
- Here are a few of our challenges and key learnings...
- Careful recruitment is critical. We are bringing these young people into a very different and complex industry, and into a business steeped in history and with a strong culture. Our expectations are very high.
- We have interviewed many, many talented young grads over the years and it can be hard to choose – but I must stress how important it is to choose just the right ones for the job. You are looking for people with a good academic record, balanced by the right attitude.
- We have also learned the importance of setting goals and objectives – clear outcomes, expectations and timeframes. We also have a system of fortnightly monitoring, where the graduate reports on their work, what they have learned and challenges.
- The mentoring role of Sandy Gibson has also been a lynchpin in the programme – we see it as an absolute must. This is ‘leading by example’.
- Flexibility is necessary. Things change everyday – be it through the natural evolution of your business or by the hand of the economic situation...
- On the other side of the coin, taking on staff fresh out of university and having them work at the same level along side existing staff, who may have been with you for years or decades, can be a big adjustment for the wider team.
- It is important to communicate to the company the ‘why’ behind the programme and get their buy-in.

- At the same time, we let our graduates learn from dealing with those few prickly customers you undoubtedly encounter. You can't wrap these guys and girls in cotton wool – this is experiential learning after all.

What's it worth?

- So, we know that our investment in these 'leaders in training' will pay dividends in the future... but what are the benefits today?
- To start with, you have competent and capable resources when and where you need it in the business.
- There is also the ability to apply the graduates to development projects – you know the ones, they are destined to breathe new life in to your business, but are often on the bottom of the daily to do list...
- But in addition to this, these new recruits bring with them enthusiasm and new ideas, having just been trained in the what is at the cutting edge and considered best practice in their chosen disciplines.
- And our graduates have delivered some great and innovative results over the last few years.
- Some examples:
 - Our first programme graduates, Colin Tasi and Julian Clarke, teamed up on a special Vessel Exchange Project after completing their rotations. The aim of the project was to test a range of theories and trial different methods of work with the overall goal of increasing our crane rate at no additional cost.
 - They really mucked in, donning steel caps and hi-vis, working the ships and leading the teams. Many of their findings have influenced ongoing productivity initiatives at the port – and we are achieving substantial and significant productivity gains.
 - A second year intake, Vikrant Saraf, on a solo project, developed an Oil Level Indicator during his time at Engineering, putting his engineering skills to the test and providing a tangible benefit to the team. His colleague, Matt Kidman, recently developed a model that quantifies the potential carbon emissions savings for our customers that choose to utilise our Wiri Inland Port rail link.

- And we are also keeping our recent recruits very busy. Antony De Pont recently worked on a financial modelling and asset management project in the Terminal Operations area, while Jesse-Lee is mid-way through delivering our major 10-day community event, SeePort.
- And as a major milestone, back in February of this year we celebrated Colin and Julian's completion of the programme.
- Each benefited from an international exchange, Colin with our sister port in Hakata, Japan and with a major shipping line customer in Shanghai, and Julian with another sister port, the Port of Shanghai.
- Colin then joined the Port team permanently as Resource Allocations Manager, overseeing the Allocations team. As did Julian, as our Strategic Capacity Planner, with responsibility for forecasting future container capacity requirements and providing strategic yard planning advice.

Conclusion

- In conclusion....
- For Ports of Auckland, the Graduate Leadership Programme, now in its third year, has been a great success.
- Fostering the development of future leaders is a key component to achieving our Vision to be the best.
- We are confident it will also go some way in addressing the industry's needs.
- I think it is safe to say the Programme is a win-win for our business and our graduates. I am sure we will continue to celebrate their accomplishments.
- We are excited to see what they will be up to in 2019...
- Thank you. And I'd be happy to take any questions...