Nurturing talent

At VolkerWessels UK, our people are key to our success, and we are proud that our teams are made up of some of the industry’s leading people.

We pride ourselves on the authenticity of our people and this is embedded in our culture. We place a great deal of value on ethical behaviour; we reward loyalty, and we are focused on pushing boundaries in the pursuit of equality, diversity and inclusion. So, our teams can be comfortable that, whatever their background, VolkerWessels UK can be a place for them to thrive.

Throughout 2018, we have continued to invest in attracting, nurturing and retaining the most talented people in our sector. This means focusing on development, enabling our people to reach their full potential and deliver to the highest standards, and recognising and rewarding their achievements.

We are proud that our already positive level of employee stability improved again in 2018, boosting the experience and talent we are retaining in the business.

**Naturally nurturing**

Our Learning and Development strategy aims to nurture and develop the potential in all of our people, to ensure that VolkerWessels UK is a best in class employer, with a reputation for developing a high performing, dependable and skilled workforce. This is important not just for the business and our people, but to ensure that we are playing our part in addressing the skills shortage in the industry, and ensuring continuous improvement in the value we offer our clients across all sectors.

Through our VolkerWessels UK Academy, we offer a range of opportunities to enable our people to grow and develop their skills and competencies. As well as our formal graduate, apprentice and industrial training placement programmes, our in-house Learning and Development team offers ILM accredited management and leadership development programmes that help our employees build their careers across all levels, with a range of classroom-based courses, and a full suite of self-service online learning opportunities. This encourages our people to take ownership of their learning, and gives flexibility and agility to add new courses as required.

Formal learning is complemented by on the job training and mentoring, and we are constantly open to new and innovative ideas to evolve our range of learning opportunities to suit the needs of the business and of individuals.

**People facts:**

- 2,925 number of employees
- 82% employee engagement score
- 100 mental health champions trained

We’ve continued our work to attract and retain the best people. Our engagement score and retention rate reflect our efforts to be employer of choice.

Hannah O’Sullivan
Head of learning and development
NURTURING TALENT

In 2018, employees and teams from across the business got involved in Learning at Work week, where a wide range of business and non-business learning was delivered by a variety of face-to-face and digital methods, not only by the Learning and Development team, but also by in-house experts in their field.

Investing in the future

Many of our people join us as graduates, on placements during their university courses, or as apprentices, and our membership of the 5% Club recognises our commitment to ensuring a minimum of five per cent of our workforce are trainees on formal training programmes. In 2018, we had an average of 113 apprentices, 66 graduates, and 32 industrial training placement students.

Our graduates undertake roles in engineering, quantity surveying, construction management and in corporate services, and we offer them the opportunity to develop in the workplace, with a view to becoming tomorrow’s leaders in our business. In 2018, we once again held our annual graduate conference giving an opportunity for graduates from all of our business units to develop through learning, meeting up with senior management and board members, and sharing their experiences, whilst at the same time creating a network across the business.

We are also expanding our apprenticeship offering and will be offering a degree level apprenticeship programme for new entrants from September 2019.

Schools engagement programme

During 2018, we formalised our approach to raising awareness of the career opportunities that exist within the construction and engineering industry and in our business, with the aim of helping to bridge the skills gap and help to future proof the industry. Our schools engagement programme involves us redoubling our efforts in this area, engaging earlier with the future workforce, interacting with schools, creating volunteering opportunities for our teams, and building new relationships with educational establishments. We are particularly focused on helping open up our industry to a wider demographic and promoting the range of career options to people who might not typically consider a career in the construction or engineering sector.

Reviewing development and performance

Our development programmes are supported by the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process ensuring that our people can access the right learning and development support when they need it. A new online PDR process was launched this year, which has made the process more user-friendly, and effective, and enables users to revisit their goals and objectives throughout the year. PDRs are underpinned by a set of role and discipline-specific technical and behavioural competencies, which help identify development needs, and assist with the setting and assessing of objectives.

Employee engagement

Our annual employee engagement survey, ‘Your Say’, offers all employees the opportunity to share their views about working for VolkerWessels UK openly and honestly. In the 2018 survey, our overall employee engagement score was 82%. 89% of people said they were proud to work for the company, 91% said they were clear on the company’s values, and 86% agreed that they understand the company’s overall goals. The results of the survey are shared with employees across the business, and action plans are put in place to ensure continuous improvement in response to the results of the survey and comments received.

Celebrating our success

Every year, our employees are recognised through the achievement of both external and internal awards. 2018 saw a record 320 nominations and 64 finalists across 12 categories, along with a number of special recognition awards in the internal, peer nominated Platinum awards. In their sixth year, the awards recognise the work of talented individuals and dedicated teams across all areas of the business, who have gone the extra mile. The awards were presented at a celebratory ceremony, which was streamed live on social media channels.

In 2018, our Learning and Development team and head of HR services, Jenni Flanders, were finalists in the Construction News Talent Awards, while our BMV joint venture won the Best Diversity and Inclusion Initiative and Best Place to Work awards. Apprentice, Alan Gardiner, attended a ceremony at the House of Commons having achieved ‘commended’ in the YouthBuild UK Young Builder of the Year awards.

The Institution of Civil Engineers North West Volunteer of the Year award for 2018 went to Chris Hudson, design engineer at VolkerStevin in recognition of his hard work promoting civil engineering; head of EDI, Hollie Woodard, was a finalist in the Northern Power Woman’s ‘One to Watch’ award; and VolkerFitzpatrick Rail division’s industrial training placement site engineer, Jack Raftery, was named Most Promising Trainee Civil Engineer at the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) Southern Awards.

Building inclusion together

Having appointed a permanent head of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), Hollie Woodard, our EDI strategy has been formalised and a full programme of work put in place to support it.

Our goal is to ensure that VolkerWessels UK is thoroughly inclusive of people from all lifestyles and enriched by a diversity of perspectives, cultures and backgrounds, characterised by fairness and equality of opportunity.

I really enjoy coming to work, spending time with my colleagues, and delivering tasks that I know will make a difference to the team.

Alan Gardiner
Apprentice

Alan Gardiner is an apprentice with VolkerFitzpatrick’s Rail division. He was a commended finalist in the YouthBuild UK Young Builder of the Year awards.

Tell us about your role at VolkerFitzpatrick?

I’m a construction management apprentice with VolkerFitzpatrick Rail, working on the West Anglia Main Line (WAML) project in North London.

What does that involve?

On site, I’m working to build up a wide range of experience and an understanding of processes and how a construction site is managed. I also attend college one day each week and have to study in my own time.

Why did you come to work here, and what’s your goal?

I wanted to find a role where I would receive structured training and development opportunities, leading to a skilled job. I’m working towards a career in site management.

What do you enjoy about your role?

Teamwork is one of the aspects of my role that I enjoy most. I really enjoy coming to work, spending time with my colleagues, and delivering tasks that I know will make a difference to the team.

You were recently nominated and then shortlisted for the YouthBuild UK Young Builder of the Year awards. What are those awards?

They celebrate the achievements of younger people who have succeeded in training or gained employment in the construction industry, despite having to overcome personal barriers.

What was your nomination for?

I was a finalist in the 18 to 24 age group and was commended for my journey into the industry and achievements and progress I’ve made with my apprenticeship. I went along to the awards ceremony in the House of Commons, which was a great experience. I was really grateful to have the opportunity and the recognition.
Our diverse steering committee, led by the head of EDI, includes key functional managers, and senior operational directors with key roles across VolkerWessels UK’s business units, and is chaired by a member of the UK management board. Each member is responsible for planning and supporting the delivery of the strategy across their own business units.

The wide-ranging EDI plan includes multi-channel communications, and activities to raise awareness of key issues. We believe that EDI is fundamental to our business; alongside our focus on attracting and retaining a diverse workforce, inclusion is a key part of our culture, and we place a great deal of importance on ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued.

A key activity has been the development of EDI awareness training for all. Already delivered to some of our teams, spearheaded and championed by the UK board, this training is now being rolled out to every employee across the business.

We are also committed to working with the wider industry on raising awareness of EDI. For example, during the autumn, our head of EDI represented the business on the diversity and inclusion panels at both the Institute of Engineering and Technology’s conference and the TransCity Rail conference. Naomi Connell, chief finance officer was a speaker at Construction News magazine’s Inspire Me event, aimed at encouraging women into construction industry leadership roles.

The commitment of the business to equality, diversity and inclusion has already led to the achievement of our Investors in Diversity accreditation.

Wellbeing

We recognise that the physical and mental wellbeing of our workforce is the foundation of our business. The subject of mental health has been a taboo in the construction industry for many years, so it is our ambition to break down the barriers and offer our people an outlet to talk openly, offering support whenever it is needed.

During 2018, our Corporate Responsibility team ran mental health awareness sessions, in collaboration with the charity MIND, attended by over 250 people across the business. These were supported by an ongoing programme of health and wellbeing awareness campaigns, including blogs and video stories from employees who have worked to overcome stress, depression and mental health issues, and we run drop-in clinics for any employee who wishes to attend.

Our next step was to train 100 of our employees to become Mental Health Champions. The champions went through a two day training course and, with the support of the wider occupational health team, now provide a listening ear in the business, and signpost fellow employees to additional support networks.

Mental health and resilience training will continue to be a main area of focus as we move through 2019.

Workplace improvements

As our business grows, we have also been making sure that our facilities support the needs of our people. During 2018, we began a project to extend the Hoddesdon head office building to offer improved and expanded modern facilities, which will increase the space available for meetings and in-house training, as well as offering more flexible working facilities. This project was delivered by our own VolkerFitzpatrick Building division team. We also expanded our Farrington corporate office to open up additional space in central London, to further enable collaborative working. We have also expanded our VolkerRail office in Doncaster and it is set to grow still further in the year ahead to provide additional space for the team.