



A VIEW TO UPSKILL

A strategy of upskilling employees has given FMB member McCombie Construction its competitive edge. Master Builder speaks to Managing Director Zak McCombie about how he maximised funding streams from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) to grow his business

As with all things in business, cost is an important consideration in any decision-making and it is sometimes difficult to justify the outlay for training. But where there's a will, there's a way as is demonstrated by Zak McCombie who secured more than £5,000 in grants from CITB to help train his workforce.

McCombie Construction was established in 2012 by brothers Zak and Arron, offering house building and home improvement services. One of the youngest ever fellows of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), Zak is a true believer in training.

"We have built the business, just as we do our houses, on solid foundations and those foundations are our workforce," he said.

"We carry out a 'gap analysis' of our



skills need and the current skill set within the organisation. We also recruit internally first.”

Zak and Arron also invest in their workforce and every member of staff must complete at least three days of Continued Professional Development (CPD) every year. Between 2017 and 2019, they helped to upskill a former Site Manager through an NVQ Level 7 Construction Senior Management course, which had a knock-on effect in the workforce. One of their Level 3

Bricklayers was put on an NVQ Level 4 Construction Site Supervisor course and another recent apprentice became a Team Leader.

“Our staff know that we expect a willingness and drive to improve themselves and the work they deliver on site and in the office,” explained Zak.

McCombie Construction has maximised multiple funding streams made available to all construction employers by the CITB to make this programme of training a reality.

The CITB’s Skills and Training Fund offers up to £5,000 annually for upskilling purposes. Companies are required to evidence their skills need using their own ‘gap analysis’. In addition, the CITB online portal and automated grant system makes claiming for shorter duration courses even easier, and payment is made within 28 days.

Zak’s own graduation as a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) was only made possible thanks to CITB grant funding.

“We know that we will lose productive days on site when in training, but this has never bothered me. I look at these days away from site as an investment in the business, just as I would look at an investment in plant or machinery,” explained Zak.

“Coupled with the shortage of skilled trades and construction professionals, the incentives provided by CITB means that upskilling is achievable and affordable.”



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