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**November 2017**

**UK tradespeople struggle to recruit due to a lack of focus on training**

* **More than half of tradespeople (57%) struggle to find skilled labour – 37% think apprenticeships are not respected as much as university and 31% believe school leavers are put off by a poor perception of trade careers**

UK tradespeople are optimistic about the future, with 82% expecting business activity to remain at the same level or grow over the next 12 months, additionally, nearly half (45%) report being busier than last year. However, research conducted by trade retailer, Screwfix, has revealed the majority (57%) are reporting difficulties in recruiting staff to support them. This is primarily due to:

* a lack of focus on encouraging new people to train in the trades
* not enough local skilled tradespeople
* too much red tape.

For those who struggle to recruit skilled employees, more than one third (37%) believe it is because apprenticeships are not given the same level of respect as a university education. Furthermore, 31% say poor public perception of a career in the trade means school leavers are not interested in pursuing a future in construction.

The research, conducted as part of Screwfix *Trade Pulse\*,* a monthly index of more than 500 UK tradespeople, also revealed strong work levels across the trade at the moment, as nearly one fifth (18%) of tradespeople has more work than they can handle and 40% are quoting for more jobs than 12 months ago.

Nearly all (94%) tradespeople said they would recommend a career in the trade and of the reasons why, 85% say they have a strong sense of achievement when a job is done and, 80% enjoy seeing the results of their hard work.

More than half (57%) of those surveyed said they started as apprentices and, when it comes to increasing the numbers undertaking trade apprenticeships, more than one third (35%) believe greater focus is needed on vocational education in schools. More than one quarter (26%) believe improved awareness about the opportunities offered by a career in the trade would drive greater uptake of apprenticeships, with 19% saying that reducing red tape for employers looking to hire an apprentice should be considered.

The research also looked at views around those entering construction at a later stage in their careers. The significant majority (82%) of tradespeople think more could be done to attract people to the trade further into their working lives. More than two thirds (69%) think increasing awareness of the opportunities available would help attract people into the trade and 61% believe greater knowledge of the support available to retrain is also crucial.

Graham Bell, CEO of Screwfix, comments: “When we speak to tradespeople across our 533 stores, they reflect what these findings show us. Tradespeople tell us they have full work diaries but, many struggle to recruit skilled employees when looking to support their growing business so, it is clear that focused efforts are needed to drive recruitment and training into the trades.

“There is much focus on a reported construction skills challenge with various reasons given including loss of talent during the downturn and a lack of new entrants joining the trade. That’s why, now more than ever, all parties including government, suppliers and education providers should work together. It was encouraging to see the investment pledged into improving construction skills by the government in the recent Budget but, collectively, we also need to demonstrate why construction is such a great sector to work in and, help those who may be interested in embarking on a career in the trade to overcome barriers they may face. We also need to support tradespeople who want to take on apprentices or hire skilled labour to support their business at a time of much opportunity.”

Screwfix supports the trade however it can, so alongside practical support such as opening a store at the rate of one per week, to bring Screwfix even closer, it offers ‘Your Guide to Hiring an Apprentice’, a free, bitesize guide available in stores for those tradespeople who may be looking to take on an apprentice. To further shine a light on those hardworking new entrants to the trade, it also holds an annual Trade Apprentice competition where a £10,000 business start-up kit is up for grabs. Both this award and its Britain’s Top Tradesperson nationwide search showcase what a great career option the trade offers, whether you start out as an apprentice or retrain later in your working life.

In addition, to support skills growth in the construction trade, Screwfix has recently started to work with colleges directly, partnering locally first with Yeovil College. It has invested in the Screwfix Trade Skills Centre, a new purpose-built site for students studying the pilot Screwfix Trade Academy course, which covers bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry and electrical contracting. The first recruits started in September 2017.

Screwfix is also looking at other ways it can support the trade and will be launching further initiatives in the future.

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*\*Screwfix Trade Pulse is a monthly index which surveys more than 500 UK tradespeople to track work levels and optimism among the trade. Nearly 250 tradespeople were also surveyed on special topic areas including skills and availability of labour. The retailer undertakes the research to gain greater insight into the needs of its customers to ensure it provides the services and products required.*

**Note to editors**

**About Screwfix:**

Screwfix is part of Kingfisher plc, the international home improvement company, with nearly 1,200 stores in 10 countries in Europe, Russia and Turkey. For further information go to [www.kingfisher.com](http://www.kingfisher.com).

Screwfix is convenient, straightforward and affordably-priced, helping its trade customers get the job done quickly, affordably and right first time. Tradespeople can shop 29,000 products over the phone, online, via their mobile or in-person from their local store.

* From power tools and work wear to cables and pipe fittings, Screwfix offers over 11,000 products available for pick up from over 545 stores nationwide. Our full range of over 29,000 products can be ordered over the phone, online or from a local store, with orders taken up until 8pm (weekdays) for next day delivery to home or site.
* Screwfix.com attracts 2.6 million unique visitors per week.
* The Screwfix Click & Collect service means customers can conveniently purchase supplies online or over the phone and then collect from the store in as little as one minute.
* Customers can call the UK-based Screwfix Contact Centre 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including bank holidays) on 03330 112 112.
* UK stores are open 7 days a week, from 7am – 8pm Weekdays, 7am – 6pm Saturdays and 9am – 4pm Sundays. Excludes selected stores. See [www.screwfix.com/stores](http://www.screwfix.com/stores) for details.
* 9 out of 10 customers would recommend Screwfix to a friend.
* Screwfix was voted the 5th highest rated UK company for work-life balance by Glassdoor Employees' Choice Awards in 2016.
* Screwfix was awarded Glassdoor’s Best Places to Work in 2017.
* Screwfix was awarded Retail Week’s Multichannel Retailer of the Year in 2017.
* In 2016, Screwfix sales surpassed £1bn for the first time.
* Screwfix was awarded 2nd place in Retail Week’s Best Employer Rankings in 2017.
* Screwfix was awarded South West Contact Centre Forum’s Large Contact Centre of the Year Award in 2017.
* For more information about Screwfix please visit our media centre: [www.screwfixmedia.co.uk](http://www.screwfixmedia.co.uk)

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