



SKILLS FOR OFFSITE AND CONSTRUCTION

How will changes in construction affect the need for skills in the offsite sector.

Will we be ready to take advantage of the skills shortage coming up in construction?

This is a crucial time for the growth of offsite construction and MMC – strategies adopted now, and skills retained, attracted and developed could prove critical to future success. Jim Roach, Owner of ARV Solutions examines how skills shortages will be a key driver.

Skills shortages in construction

The construction industry has had to deal with skills shortages for years, bringing in professionals from around the world - helped by a huge contribution from Eastern Europe in particular. We are now seeing much of this workforce leave for new opportunities back home. With the media coverage of the current slow down in the English housing market, fathers are again warning their sons and daughters against following them into the trade - as in the late eighties.

Ongoing construction demand

Richard Ogden, Chairman of Buildoffsite reminds us that there are strong forward workloads in the construction sector, citing major projects such as Crossrail, the Olympics and public sector work, that includes prison building and the massive 'Building Schools For The Future' programme, along with strong long term demand for leisure, hotels, the care sector, student accommodation and more. Confidence issues may delay some – though this could also benefit offsite with its ability to shorten programmes. House building will pick up once the external factors are resolved – we still have a huge need for new quality housing.

More reasons for offsite

There are further strong drivers in favour of offsite construction and MMC. End user clients and Government are pushing for improved safety, quality, sustainability, and cost control. High energy prices also make running costs a key factor. The industry, as well as organisations such as Buildoffsite, needs to keep up momentum, educating all parties on the benefits and against the many misconceptions of offsite. There is a huge opportunity to utilise our engineering innovation and implement some real 21st century thinking.

Are we ready?

Are offsite and MMC companies geared for increasing demand? 'We have a very good indigenous manufacturing workforce – better than the general perception – and world class in many areas' states Richard Ogden. However, there are limited numbers with a good understanding of offsite manufacturing for construction and even less who are skilled in the essential interaction with construction. There is a need to re-train onsite operatives to install offsite manufactured components. There is also a real need for Degree and Masters Courses relating to MMC and offsite techniques and thinking. We also need further training opportunities in areas such as timber and light steel framing design.

Although there is an acute shortage of MMC and offsite specific skills – ARV Solutions conclude that this is a good time to attract people. Some of the best talented people are on the look out for new opportunities, looking for moves where they can play a part in leading the way forward.

Offsite has the potential to provide the answer to construction skills shortages and other key factors. With the right development of skills we could really see the sector move forward and take on a large share of the UK construction market, and move on to deliver to the world market. Will you be ready to take up the challenge?

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ARV Solutions Terms of Business apply to all candidate introductions

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