

Christopher Knight

Overview

My name is Christopher Knight and I would like to present my nomination for the 2018 Apprentice of the Year Award. I commenced with Followmont Transport in 2013 as a GenR8 student aiming to complete 20 days of work placement in Packing & Distribution Department and obtain a Cert II in Logistics. Initially my reason for participating in the GenR8 Program was to get one day off school a week and an additional two credit points towards graduating Year 12. However, once I started I quickly realised that it provided far more! I completed the program, obtained my qualification through TAFE, graduated and later secured employment with Followmont Transport in a warehousing position.

During the program I expressed interest in becoming a mechanic as my father was a mechanic. I spent afternoons at the workshop discussing possible opportunities. I wasn't just handed the job, I proved myself and was able to do so through the skills and values that my training instilled in me. My persistence over the year finally paid off despite being knocked back three times when an opportunity arose for an apprenticeship. I completed my apprenticeship 23 October and am now a fully qualified Heavy Vehicle Commercial Mechanic.

Commencing my apprenticeship in January 2014, I had no mechanical experience or aptitude but wanted to prove to myself I was capable. I generally struggled during high school with normal subjects and changing high schools three times due to personal circumstances made it difficult to maintain good grades. My training through the GenR8 Program allowed me to utilise skills that I didn't realise I had and encouraged me to improve my outlook and motivation for the future. Finding my passion and talents has changed my life and made me a far more confident and positive person both personally and professionally.

Criterion 1: Career and study achievements

During my first year in my trade as a heavy vehicle mechanic I became accountable, applied myself to my first competencies and learnt how to become domesticated and use a mop and bucket. During my trade I have not only been taught by senior and experienced mechanics, but also mentored apprentices under my supervision in areas such as attitude, skill set, efficiency, time management and communication as I had learned the value of structured training. I taught them the key core values of Followmont Transport - 'Service, Unity, Passion, Integrity and Innovation'. I went from a struggling student to someone transferring knowledge to fellow team members and that in itself has been life changing.

My biggest achievement from my trade is completing my competencies earlier than the nominal time and getting signed off as a tradesman nearly 3 months earlier. Considering I was once a student who got low grades, I was so proud to finally excel at competencies and subjects within my trade that I enjoyed.

By working on-the-job I have been able to build and develop skills in leadership, in particular guiding apprentices, scheduling services, ordering of parts and general running of the workshop. From being trained by some of the industry leaders of Followmont this has allowed me to provide on-the-job training to others in need, whether it be apprentices, trade assistants, other tradesman or washbay staff. This benefited the business as I was able to learn and train at the same time and upskill myself as well as other team members. One of the highlights of my career to date would be winning the Queensland Trucking Association's Excellence in Contribution Award in 2014 which I was honored to receive.

Criterion 2: Communication, team and leadership skills

An unexpected benefit of my training journey as an apprentice and the completion of the GenR8 Program was gaining the confidence to allow me to feel comfortable as a public speaker. I have been able to positively speak at information nights and career expos to groups of up to 100 students. Prior to this, I would have never have spoken in public and it would have eaten me up inside to be honest. During my high school years I had no interest in business subjects, however after joining as an apprentice I found myself needing to gain and refine skills required to express myself in writing through emails, word documents, fault reports and online tracking systems. My industry requires me to accurately and efficiently relay information or instructions both verbally and in writing, and I have developed my communication skills as a result.

One of my biggest challenges during my time at Followmont was being continuously knocked back for the apprenticeship role and I thought I wouldn't be able to achieve what I wanted. My resilience is what kept me going and ensured that I fought for what I wanted, the more I fought the more other leaders noticed how committed I was. They saw the hard work I put in, how far I was willing to go to get ahead and that the drive I have to succeed will never go away.

Our workshop team holds daily and weekly meetings and I always actively participate by discussing safety bulletins, running through safe operating procedures, giving the floor to staff to raise grievances, discuss cleanliness within the workshop and communicate any other pressing matters. I value the input from the team and am always willing to take constructive feedback on board. My approach to our meetings is to encourage open communication, and I always ensure that my tone is positive and uplifting.

I wear the hat for Followmont, for GenR8, for Transport, for the VET sector, for the Heavy Vehicle Industry, for all mechanics out there as well as those out there who think they're not good enough to succeed. My passion lies in giving others the inspiration to achieve their biggest and wildest dreams and ambitions because I can stand here today and say it CAN be achieved.

Criterion 3: Ability to represent the national training system at a broader level

I have learnt that hard work pays off and that you need to go three steps back to go two steps forward. As an apprentice you sacrifice your income, your time, social life and lifestyle initially in order to obtain a trade in 4 years' time. During the 4 year period I faced challenges both physically and emotionally with moments of doubt. In our industry we learn that we have to overcome these down times as we are responsible for others safety, especially as a Heavy Vehicle Mechanic as we need to ensure the equipment is serviced and repaired in a manner which is safe to operate on the road. I believe that because Vocational Education and Training was hands on and in the industry I wanted to be in, it was more suited to me than Tertiary Education when reflecting on my schooling. I am continually learning new things, and have developed the ability to adapt to new concepts. In the end, my qualification has given me everything that I had to sacrifice initially and more and I feel as though I am mentally and physically stronger, and able to overcome any obstacles thrown my way.

After being in the transport industry for 5 years I can now see there are so many career opportunities available to individuals who may not know what career path they want to take. When I entered as a GenR8 student in the warehouse, I didn't think I would end up where I was today and this is the beauty of transport. In the Transport Industry you could go from loading trucks while operating a forklift, to servicing trucks, to completing sales targets, to analyzing data trends and more. Eventually I would like to further my qualifications through undertaking training to become dual trade qualified (heavy vehicle mechanic and auto electrician) and also a business and management course to further develop my skills. I plan to continue to work hard to achieve my goals; with a short term goal to be a 2IC which I am currently taking steps towards and my long term goal of becoming a Workshop Manager.

Criterion 4: Other pursuits

Housing affordability is generally not at the forefront of most Gen X's mind. I'm proud to say that I managed to save money during my apprenticeship in order to purchase my first home achieved by sacrificing social activities, material possessions and strict budgeting. I consider this to be a key personal achievement and the result of my hard work - if I can do it so can other young adults!

My community involvement has been heavily linked with the GenR8 Program and visiting local schools in Brisbane to share my story and hopefully inspire more students to take the risk that I did and know they're not alone. My growth in confidence has also seen me previously coach the Saint Joseph's football team which I believe required strong leadership skills.

Since leaving school I have noticed few apprentices come through for Heavy Vehicle Mechanic, which causes a shortage of skilled tradesman. This causes difficulty for our Workshop as we struggle to keep up with services and repairs. People need to understand that it is a sacrifice for 4 years and the money isn't great at first, however it's worth it in the end as the accomplishment is greater and you develop skills that you can utilize in both work and personal life. As a result of my trade I have been able to achieve both job and financial security.

Obtaining an apprenticeship is just the start, it's up to you how you treat the opportunities you earn. I have come to realise that with a little bit of guidance it doesn't matter what background or economic scale you come from, if you apply yourself you can achieve whatever you set your mind to. In the future I would like to be the voice for future apprentices and partner with the Department of Education and Training as well as local TAFE's to provide more support for apprentices from a mental, physical and economical perspective based on my own experiences and training journey by providing more benefits and outcomes.

In closing, I believe that through obtaining my qualification I have learnt not only invaluable practical skills but also enhanced my people skills that have helped shape the person I am today. It is about having self-belief to progress and make something of yourself and I can honestly say that leading the way for the younger generation gives you a great feeling of self-worth!

Log in to qta.awardsplatform.com to see complete nomination attachments.



Attachment type
Headshot

KNIGHT Christop... 3.4 MiB



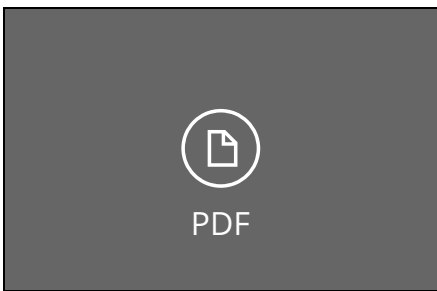
Attachment type
Headshot

KNIGHT Christop... 3.5 MiB



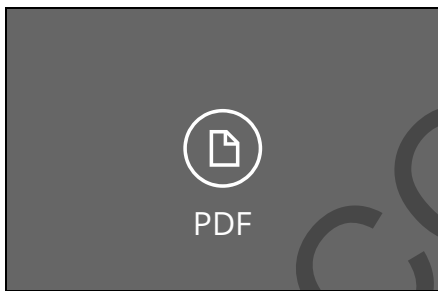
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Letter of support

KNIGHT Christop... 383 KiB



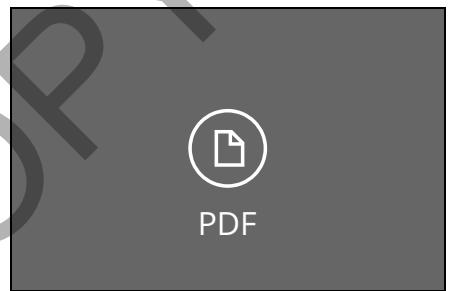
Attachment type
Evidence of qualification

KNIGHT Christop... 628 KiB



Attachment type
Photocopy of award or
certificate

Young Achiever A... 2.4 MiB



Attachment type
Newspaper articles

Industry Feature... 452 KiB

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