

Professional Article 04

Young glazier trade – successful talent scouting

Modern glazing fascinates us in architecture and interior design, is part of the solution to climate change, protects buildings against overheating, saves heating energy and its smart products even adapt to weather conditions. The glazier trade is as varied as glass itself as a construction material – and yet the sector has found it hard to fill trainee vacancies and recruit skilled labour for years now. As the future of this industry will be a key discussion topic at **glasstec 2024 (22 – 25 October, Düsseldorf)** the author spoke to two young master glaziers in the run-up to the trade fair who have found successful ways to reach out to young people despite the problems facing the industry: **Robin Burmeister (Glaserei Manske, Schleswig-Holstein)** and **Thorsten Fimpeler (Fimpeler GmbH, North Rhine-Westphalia)**.

What young people like about joining the glazier trade early on is the financial independence it offers, the creative cooperation in developing new products and the high chances of being taken on as a sought-after skilled worker after training. Nevertheless, the sector finds it difficult to recruit apprentices and new skilled labour – why is that so? When searching for answers there was no way around Robin Burmeister and Thorsten Fimpeler, both of them young successful master glaziers who have found their own way to address new entrants, skilled workers and also their customers.

Robin Burmeister is 34 years old, a master glazier and owner of Glaserei Manske in Bad Bramstedt, north of Hamburg. He is very different from what you would expect to see in a generally rather “conservative” skilled craft: he is on first-name terms right away but with a respectful and friendly air. This is part of his corporate philosophy lived out every day: irrespective of status and experience the team at Glaserei Manske appreciates and treats each other at eye level – because it is easier to



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ask for advice and offer help where there is less hierarchy-based fear. And for customers service provided on first-name terms also means that staff personally know and look after them. Robin – whose philosophy the author wishes to follow using first name terms too – has no difficulty in finding interested trainees. It is more the case that he has to turn down too many good applicants.

The average age in the company is mid-20s, the oldest fitter is 39 years old. At the start of each month the whole team meets to touch base. Robin explains: “Young people want to feel at ease and make a contribution. In business they completely leave their comfort zone for the first time and often clash with rigid hierarchies, with colleagues unwilling to share their expertise, with corporate rivalry and other pressures to perform. We do away with this right from the outset giving them security in these insecure surroundings. Each one becomes a full-fledged part of the team and involved in planning.”

Skilled trade firms are invisible for young people

For firms in the skilled trades the hardest part is often making that first contact. “As a company you are as good as invisible to young people,” says Robin and adds: “This is why we try to attract those still at school through internships or holiday jobs before they have applications to deal with. This allows them to experience how much fun this work is and those fitting the team can easily expect to be approached by us later on.” The initial contact is made at regional education fairs inviting young people to the company where they get the thrill of their first holiday job – paid at the minimum wage of course rather than “apprenticeship rates”. In addition to this, Robin holds “creative glass finishing live” workshops at schools. He demonstrates to young talents how to be creative in skilled crafts and that craftspeople know how to use sketches and digital applications to produce creative works. The actual piece is then crafted on the basis of the digital twin.

Beyond this, Robin attracts attention through Augmented Reality ads with integrated QR codes in school newspapers. When students scan these ads they become moving images and the staff featured are seen



authentically speaking about the skilled trade and team work at Glaserei Manske. Even using social media is nothing out of the ordinary for Robin anymore but basically a key part of job satisfaction”: young people like to check you out first. So we provide insights into our work revealing very well how we handle things and what we create by hand.”

In keeping with its sustainable philosophy Glaserei Manske has specialised in energetic refurbishment and sustainable window refitting – towards a more circular economy, the sparing handling of resources and sustainable building. Business is going so well that these orders are favoured over others – for young people this is also a point that resonates. Today, Glaserei Manske is therefore often referred to by trainees as a remarkable place where work is fun and meaningful and where you feel appreciated and can make a difference.

Thorsten Fimpeler also sees great opportunities in leveraging social media to arouse young people’s and customers’ curiosity with insights into their daily work. The 34-year-old master glazier and painter has now taken over the management of his parent’s Glas- und MalManufaktur Fimpeler in the North Rhine-Westphalian city of Haltern am See. “We regularly feature short reels from our daily work, thereby winning over young people as well as many customers on Instagram. Many followers become personal contacts and occasionally also watch our stories in our WhatsApp status. As a result, the contact threshold is much lower and we now receive many enquiries via WhatsApp.”

Summary: Young people’s view of life has changed. The older Generation X had to work on an insecure labour market and often under very “conservative” conditions – accepting these primarily due to a need for job security. Today, companies compete on an “applicants’ market” where young people are more inquisitive about potential employers and want to play an active role that involves their own personal skills.

Those operating at eye level with “the future of the glazier trade” can count on success. In this context, the world-leading trade fair glasstec in Düsseldorf is a “must” for all glaziers wanting to gather information on the latest trends and developments in the industry and wishing to align their business for the future.

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About the author:



Marc Everling studied Media Education at the Technical University of Brunswick, worked as a consultant at PR and marketing agencies for 14 years, and as Head of Marketing at one of the global players in the flat glass sector for six years. In February 2021 he founded his networking agency specialised in communications consulting and press liaison for construction material producers, initiatives, associations, trade fairs and architects working and producing sustainably in the interests of the ecological transformation of the construction sector. Photo: Marc Everling Nachhaltige Kommunikation

Bildmaterial/Visuals

[24-04 Robin Burmeister]



Robin Burmeister guides the fortunes of Glaserei Manske. He thrills young people with creative skilled crafts and communication “at eye level”.

Photo: Glaserei Manske



[24-04_Mitarbeiter]



Young, authentic – the team at Glaserei Manske.

Photo: Glaserei Manske

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