

CoC exam whisperer – Keri Harrison

Bernie Napp - Mon, 24 Aug 2020

Two years into running Tui Creek Consulting, Keri Harrison says she is “super busy” despite Covid-19 times, and she is still mentoring quarry professionals to gain their A and B grade tickets.

The first person to sign up to MinEx’s mentoring scheme in 2017, Harrison has since helped around 25 people through the oral examination part of their Certificate of Competency requirements.

“It’s been really good,” she says. “I have been mentoring and coaching in a classroom environment, and now we do site visits, applied to a more natural environment.”

She says in preparing for the oral examination, CoC applicants can relate formal learning to an actual site.

“There is a gap between the theory, the practical side and the exam,” she says, and one way of bridging it is to draw on expert knowledge of a workplace.

Another is to take an applicant into “a completely different environment than what they are used to.”

Last month Harrison took a quarry manager into a forestry setting, a high hazard setting just as quarries are, and had him think about the health and safety issues in that environment.

Where the industry is going

Harrison says in terms of her work: “People being more innovative about their businesses; they are starting to think of other avenues they can do. Instead of land-based quarries, they might go to a river site.”

She is spending more time reviewing clients’ health and safety management systems, from 10 per cent of her time on average to around 40 per cent.

Last month, she spoke at an Institute of Quarrying NZ meeting in Christchurch on where the industry is going in terms of workplace health and safety.

“Health and safety does not have to be overly complicated. If you keep simplifying while meeting the regulatory requirements, we will be in a better position to keep people safe.”

Getting through the exam

Harrison says many people feel intimidated about appearing before the examination panel and this is understandable. “Sitting in front of their peers; it makes them nervous”.

In her view, once through the oral examination, whether it went well or not, applicants feel empowered. “They are happy; they have given it a go.”

For those who do fall short at their first attempt, they are more confident the second time around as they know what they are in for, she says. She encourages them to draw on their own workplace experience in responding to an examination panel’s questions.

The impact of Covid-19

Asked about the impact of Covid-19, Harrison says: “I think there has been a reluctance to spend money on training.

“While I appreciate training budgets have been rationalised we need to keep empowering them towards their ticket. If we don’t, they will lose focus and they will walk away from the industry.”

Harrison has noticed a steeper uptake of webinars as a result of the lockdown. People were forced to stop doing what they normally do, and remote learning has become more popular as a result.

She thinks \$40 for a session is a reasonable price, and that people become rapidly less interested at a price of more than \$100, and urges these courses to remain affordable over the next 18 months as firms traverse the impacts of the Covid-19 downturn.

MinEx on mentoring

Wayne Scott, chief executive of MinEx, says requests for mentoring from industry to help quarry managers gain their CoCs have been slowing down over time.

“We obviously had a hiss and a roar when we started. We are being supported by WorkSafe; they are referring people to us.”

Scott says he has around 20 mentors on the MinEx books. “It’s probably half a dozen who do the majority of it. That’s partly to do with geographic reasons, the right people in the right place.”



"It's been successful. The majority of people who were worried about the oral exam or have previously failed it have got through," Scott says.