

# Transport

THE GAUTRAIN PROJECT AND THE UPGRADING OF BHISHO AIRPORT IN BUFFALO CITY ARE WELL UNDERWAY, AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED TO PLOUGH MONEY INTO ADVANCING THE COUNTRY'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS. AS SUCH, THE TRANSPORT SECTOR SEEMS SET TO GROW AT A RAPID PACE GOING FORWARD.

As the country gears up for the 2010 Soccer World Cup, the need for qualified professionals in all areas of the transport industry is even greater than ever before. Yet, according to Charleen Clarke, managing editor of *Focus on Transport and logistics* magazine, 'there is a huge skills shortage' in the industry.

'The perception is that if you work in the transport sector, you either have to work as a driver or a technician,' she says. 'And neither of those is seen as a remotely sexy job, neither is seen as well-paid, and neither is seen as very aspirational.'

She notes that there is a range of careers available in the transport industry that are more attractive and lucrative, saying, 'For example, a truck salesman can earn a million rand a year.'

## Career opportunities

Career opportunities in the transport industry range from pilots and drivers, to distribution, supply chain and logistics managers; import and export entrepreneurs, warehouse and stock managers, and consultants in various fields. Other possible career choices include becoming a maritime broker or agent; inventory planning and control; working in purchasing and materials management; a variety of jobs in the field of airline or railway transport; freight forwarding; or even in banking and finance.

There are numerous exciting opportunities available across both the government and private sectors. The transport industry is currently experiencing a shortage of pilots, air traffic controllers, flight attendants, ship's masters, port engineers, aircraft and avionics technicians and automotive electricians and technicians.

## Qualifications

There are specific qualifications available to those wanting to work in particular fields of the transport sector. For example, to become a pilot, you will need to obtain a pilots licence (for private, commercial or airline transport) with an Instrument Rating Endorsement. You will also need to be at least 1,6m tall, medically fit and have passed a security check, as well as have a matric certificate, grade twelve, N3 or relevant SAQA-accredited qualification, with a pass in mathematics and/or physical science.

Air traffic controllers, who work in teams to handle aeroplanes as they take off and land, will need to have completed training at the College of Air Traffic Control at OR Tambo Airport or a similar course. They will also have to pass a medical examination and an aptitude test, as well as undergo yearly physical examinations to



re-qualify for this position.

Cabin attendants, who are the people that ensure that passengers travel safely and comfortably on an airplane, need a National Diploma or National Certificate in In-service Training.

The University of Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula Technikon offer degree and diploma courses in maritime engineering and instrument engineering, while the Department of Transport and Supply Chain Management at the University of Johannesburg offers a range of qualifications that will open doors within various fields in the transport sector for those wanting to pursue a career in logistics, supply chain management, airline or railway transport, passenger transport and many other areas. These include:

- National Diploma in Transportation Management (three years) or National Diploma in Extended Transportation Management (four years)
- National Diploma in Logistics (three years) or National Diploma in Extended Logistics (four years)
- B.Com. Degree in Logistics Management (three years); and
- B.Com. Degree in Transport Economics (three years).

## In terms of personality

Various jobs within the transport sector will require different character traits and personal qualities. For example, air traffic controllers work under extreme pressure and will need to be cool, mathematical and have the ability to realise a three-dimensional picture from two-dimensional information. The following are also beneficial:

- A strong sense of responsibility
- A good microphone voice
- Confidence
- Ability to remain calm in stressful situations
- Good eyesight and hearing, and
- Good concentration.

Cabin attendants, on the other hand, will need:

- Very good communication skills
- A tactful and diplomatic personality
- Good health
- Stamina
- The ability to remain calm at all times, and
- A neat and well-groomed appearance.

Pilots will need good judgment and decision-making skills, a sense of responsibility and excellent problem solving skills. They should also have:

- The ability to multi-task
- Intellectual prowess
- Communications skills
- Willingness to work long and irregular hours
- A sound medical record
- The ability to work under pressure and to always remain cool and collected, and
- A customer- and service-orientated outlook.

Those working in supply chain or logistics management, as well as consultancies, will need to exhibit organisational and management skills and be able to work well under pressure. They should also have good people and communication skills, be analytical and solutions-focused, and have outstanding problem-solving skills.



Charleen Clarke is a well-known motoring journalist and the editor of *FOCUS on Transport and Logistics* magazine, published by Charmont Media.

## Pros

- Many jobs within the transport sector offer the opportunity to travel the world, see new places and meet people, as well as offering travel perks.
- As the Road Freight Association notes, 'Transport occupies an irreplaceable socio-economic position linking supply to demand. It is a necessary link between various industrial sectors.' As such, working in the transport sector can be very rewarding.
- The skills shortage that the transport sector is currently experiencing means that candidates with tertiary qualifications are in high demand. Dr Lynn Robton-Turner, MD of Ribton-Turner Recruitment, was quoted by *Freight & Trade Weekly* as saying that the most popular degree among prospective employers is a B.Com. in Logistics, followed by the more practical B.Tech. qualification available at various technical colleges.
- South Africa's transport industry leads many other African countries. With major ports, airports, and road systems in place, and a renewed focus on its railways, the country is ideally positioned for easy access to the countries of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

## Cons

- While many jobs within the transport sector offer flexible hours, you may also have to work long hours and/or night shifts, which can be disruptive to daily routine and to home life.
- Working in the transport sector often means being accountable for others' lives or possessions, which is an enormous responsibility.
- Those working in transport often have to adhere to deadlines, so work can be stressful and pressurised.
- The transport industry, like other sectors, has been profoundly affected by the HIV/Aids pandemic, and infection rates are very high in certain fields within the sector, such as among truck drivers.