

# Opening the door to a career in rail freight

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*Guest writer article from Oliver Schepisi, head of operations at [Nuclear Transport Solutions \(NTS\) Global](#)*

The rail industry has a recruitment problem, and freight is no exception. An ongoing skills shortage is forcing operators to compete for candidates, with salary often the deciding factor.

It's a frustrating state of affairs – and one that threatens to undermine, not just productivity, but freight's efforts to keep pace with other logistics providers.

In this article, I'll discuss the roots of our recruitment crisis, and outline the steps we can take to address it – from talent development to raising the sector's profile.

Rail freight recruitment; shuffling the pack

At NTS, I'm lucky to be part of a truly talented and dedicated team – but competition for skilled individuals remains fierce. It's resulted in a continuous 'shuffling of the pack', with candidates moving between operators as the money changes.

Tracing the roots of the problem, a recent [CWE report](#) pointed to rail's ageing workforce, a decline in the

number of available EU workers, and a shortage of candidates from diverse backgrounds.

We also have an image problem. There's a wholly inaccurate perception that freight is less interesting, with fewer opportunities, than other sectors, which makes tapping into new pools of talent challenging.

And little wonder. Rail freight isn't just struggling to market itself properly – its culture can also be antiquated, with traditional approaches to leadership and a lack of diversity partly to blame.

And without investing in new talent, our fantastic sector will struggle to keep up with developments in safety and performance. Where road freight is embracing innovation (just look at the autonomous lorries being trialled in Scandinavia), we continue to lag behind, still relying largely on diesel locomotives to move goods.

Graduates and apprentices could help to address this, bringing new ideas to the table, challenging outdated ways of working, changing the face of our sector, and throwing the door open to a more diverse workforce.

#### Opening the door to new talent

At NTS, we're keen to invest in this new generation of talent. I joined the industry 25 years ago, and make an effort to stay relevant by reading the latest reports, attending events and speaking to peers. What I'd really love, though, is to hear from new recruits with fresh ideas; it's about developing sustainable talent, rather than relying solely on experience.

But how do we attract graduates, apprentices and young job seekers? Context is key, and we must help them to recognise the incredible opportunity a career in rail freight represents today. Those joining us have a chance to innovate, effect real change, and achieve something they can be proud of, just as I did over 20 years ago. And, with the conversation around a modal shift to rail heating up, it's an exciting time for the sector.

Training initiatives are also important, providing a route into rail freight. NTS has developed its own graduate programme, which gives candidates the chance to work in every area of our business – including rail, nuclear logistics and even shipping. They can then make an informed decision about their future.

Indeed, a career in logistics can be hugely rewarding – something we need to communicate more effectively, whether by engaging with schools and colleges, or via platforms like RBD. I love working in rail freight because every day presents a new challenge; it's all about solving problems and managing a whole range of variables. What's more, rail plays a key role in the supply chain, moving everything from highly-regulated nuclear waste to refrigerated food products. Running a train removes up to 73 lorries from the road and reduces congestion on motorways. The right individual will relish these challenges – and the chance to make their mark.

But, when it comes to diversity, recruiting one person isn't enough. We need teams of trailblazing professionals to drive change and bring about that cultural shift – and NTS is throwing its doors wide open to them.

## New opportunities

Indeed, there are opportunities to join the company in every area of its ops function. We're currently recruiting duty managers (who will serve as a single point of contact for customers, managing disruption), service delivery professionals (whose focus is safety and performance), and competency assessors. Each role involves a different set of challenges, and we're looking for diverse, forward-thinking candidates who are ready to meet them head-on. Together, we can get our sector on the right track.

NTS is a nuclear transport and logistics specialist, which delivers reliable, safe and efficient rail freight solutions. To learn more, visit <https://nucleartransportsolutions.com/rail/>.

You can find the latest job opportunities at NTS [here](#).