

Helping your team realise their potential



The rise of the apprenticeship

Karen Woodward, Interim Director of Apprenticeships at National Apprenticeships Service discusses what the training schemes mean for employers...

Apprenticeships have seen a real resurgence in recent years, with employers relishing the opportunity to grow their own talent, while young people are drawn to the chance to earn while they learn and gain experience while working towards a recognised qualification. Online applications for apprenticeship places have increased by a third (32%) year on year, with over 1.4 million (1,403,920) online applications for vacancies made in 2012/13, compared to 1,063,090 in 2011/12.

As a result of this high demand, Skills and Enterprise Minister Matthew Hancock is urging more employers to consider how hiring an apprentice could benefit their business, and in doing so help create opportunities for young people.

So what does this mean for employers?

If you are an employer looking to recruit new staff then taking on an apprentice can be a very rewarding experience; you can access an excellent package of support including a free recruitment service through the apprenticeship vacancies; access to quality assured apprenticeship training and support towards to costs of training which varies according to the age of the recruit.

Currently over 100,000 employers already offer apprenticeships in over 200,000 locations around England.

The rise in apprenticeship vacancies emphasises the popularity amongst employers to hire apprentices and many businesses have already cited the benefits of

doing so: namely how it helps businesses grow their own talent, develops a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce and can improve productivity while reducing costs.

Apprenticeships deliver for businesses of all sizes, with most employers citing a wish to improve their skills base as the main reason for taking on an apprentice, according to the British Chambers of Commerce. Companies offering apprenticeships view them as advantageous to their long-term development, with 96% of apprentice employers reporting benefits to their business.

Greater productivity is reported by around 72% of apprentice employers, with the average apprenticeship completer increasing business productivity by £214 per week, a figure incorporating higher profits, lower prices and better products. Other benefits reported by around two-thirds of apprentice employers include improved products or services, the introduction of new ideas to the organisation, improved staff morale and better staff retention.

Is there an apprenticeship suitable for my recruitment needs?

Apprenticeships cover over 170 industries and 1500 job roles, in a range of sectors from marketing to accountancy, engineering to veterinary nursing, community arts to construction.

There are also 3 different levels that open up more options for employers so you can recruit an apprentice for any level within your business. The 3 levels are:

- Intermediate – equivalent to 5 A*-C GCSEs;
- Advanced – equivalent to 2 A-Levels;
- Higher – equivalent to foundation degree and Level 4 or 5 vocational qualifications.

The National Apprenticeship Service is here to support employers of all sizes take on an apprentice. A team of experts, including small business specialists, will help employers:

- Decide on your requirements with an Apprenticeship Adviser, and drive recruitment through the free apprenticeship vacancies service;
- Deliver the apprenticeship, working with a training organisation to reduce the burden on your business;
- Develop your apprentice, for example entering them into awards and competitions to put your business on the map.

In addition, employers and businesses that employ up to 1000 employees may be eligible £1500 grant to help cover the cost of starting a new apprentice aged 16 to 24 years old. An extra 35,000 young people have been able to start an apprenticeship thanks to this grant.

Apprenticeships are steadily becoming a 'norm', or even the 'first choice' for many talented young people. It is also evident that with more employers creating vacancies it can bring about long-term benefits to employers in terms of increased quality, financial savings and a committed workforce.

Nonetheless there is still work to be done to ensure that the strong demand from young people for apprenticeships is met with a suitable supply of roles. It is vital that employers are encouraged to take advantage of the benefits that apprenticeships bring.

There really has never been a better time to recruit an apprentice.

Comment from Matthew Hancock

Recent figures show that more people than ever before are taking part in an apprenticeship, and The Skills and Enterprise Minister, Matthew Hancock said the figures are good news for the economy:

"These figures show that a record 868,700 people were in apprenticeships last year, which is up 77% on 2009/10. I am also pleased to see that there were 13,000 people in higher apprenticeships last year, which is double the previous year's figure.

"This is good news for the economy, and good news for those getting the skills they need to prosper," added the Minister. "I want the new norm for people leaving school or college to either go to university or chose an apprenticeship.

"By focussing on the quality and rigour that people and employers want from apprenticeships, this will make the vision a reality."

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Apprenticeships do not need to be taxing

Recently the Chief Executive of a digital media company commented to me that you were either in the club or not. I asked her what she meant and she explained that there were two clubs: those who fully understood what an apprenticeship meant to their organisation and the other that were still in a fog, muddled and bemused by the whole idea.

In the words of Edward De Bono it is time to think before it is too late! The public sector, in common with all sectors, needs to respond to new challenges and ideas. Within this is the recognition that there is a need to effectively plan for succession and success. All organisations need to respond to the impact of low economic growth, reduced public and consumer spending and a savvy electorate who are more enquiring and demanding value for money in terms of services. Never before have we been faced with a unique opportunity to look beyond the norm and to explore different approaches to seeking solutions, re-engineering ways of working and re-energising our workforce. Apprenticeships can form part of the solution providing both the acquisition of new skills through new entrants into the public sector and up-skilling the residuary workforce.

The true value of an apprenticeship can only be fully appreciated if we are able to fully explain how it works and why so many organisations across the public and private sector have taken this pathway as part of their post-recession recovery and sustainability strategies.

At the heart of an apprenticeship is a training offer that can form part of a public sector organisation's continuing professional development programme. The training programme brings together those key qualities and skills that employers demand, namely technical knowledge

combined with clearly demonstrable evidence that an employee can apply the knowledge to the working practices of the public sector using an appropriate standard of English, Mathematics and Computing expertise. This makes an apprenticeship training programme not simply something that is applicable to a young entrant or first time entrant to the public sector, but to all employees.

Apprenticeships provide a truly inclusive training offer at 3 levels: intermediate, advanced or higher, enabling clear career pathways that are capable of being embedded within a continuing professional training and development strategy for any public sector organisation. At The Real Apprenticeship Company Limited 10% of our apprentices are adults and the oldest apprentice is 55. So why does business use the apprenticeship framework as part of its approach to employee development. Three plc companies that The Real Apprenticeship Company Limited works with identified that apprenticeships provide opportunities to up-skill staff to meet emerging new markets, strengthen brand recognition, improve sales and embed business excellence.

Employees also value the apprenticeship training model.

Employers across the UK are increasingly seeing the value of using apprenticeships as an opportunity of bringing in new talent to their business. At The Real Apprenticeship Company Limited 90% of all our trainees are young people who have joined large and small companies across England, Scotland and Wales. Why does business use this approach? The answer is simple. Young people bring a unique skills set, are flexible and can uplift an organisation. For many employers, their experience of using computers, websites and other digital

CASE STUDY

Bethan is an excellent example of an apprentice utilising all her personal talents and striving to get the most out of her apprenticeship.

Bethan had only been with her employer for a few months before she made an impact! She took it upon herself to redesign and rewrite all customer letters in Welsh, and to make sure that all the signs within the depot were in both English and Welsh. As her employer is situated in the heart of Wales, where many of the local businesses prefer to deal in Welsh, this has already greatly improved the employers relationship with local trade.

The employers are delighted with their new apprentice and impressed with her initiative. Bethan's goal is to manage her own section of this business at the age of 25, and with her already proven dedication and drive, few doubt that this will become a reality.

Bethan is a great example of how an apprentice can have positive impacts within working environments, with their fresh perspective and willingness to work hard.

media adds immediate value to the business. The public sector is increasingly exploring this option.

This option also includes offering undergraduate internships. Each school has the opportunity to recruit a young person to support a broad range of activities including, laboratory assistant, modern foreign language assistant, receptionist, administrator, catering assistant, grounds and maintenance assistant, IT technical support, media, PR and website administrator, digital learning resources assistant, procurement officer, finance assistant, PE assistant and classroom assistant.

In this model each participating school offers at least a 30 hour placement for a minimum of 52 weeks. In return The Real Apprenticeship Company will employ the internee allowing the school to enjoy the benefit of having someone in the organisation without the burden of being the employer. The Real Apprenticeship Company will carry out the recruitment process at no cost to the

school and provide each school with work ready internees interested in working in their school. Some internees may have attended the school and so can act as great role models for current pupils. Such a model can contribute to raising low levels of aspirations within the pupil cohort and support raising self-confidence and personal achievement targets.

The Real Apprenticeship Company offers internees for flexible periods from 52 weeks or more to suit employer needs. Our aim is to allow participating schools to access talented people over the age of 16 years of age to fill skills gaps or meet new demands where there is currently an absence of skilled people in their workforce. This provides a cost effective staffing solution and the opportunity for an internee to find out more about working in the schools sector and to gain the skills to enhance the chances of securing a permanent post. This model works well where there is currently a freeze on permanent recruitment or where a public sector organisation is not looking to increase its permanent or temporary headcount. This model has already been successfully trialled in the advanced manufacturing sector using higher level internees and is transferrable to all areas of the public sector.

The Richards Review puts the employer at the heart of the apprenticeship. Employers will increasingly have the opportunity to shape apprenticeship programmes that truly add value. At The Real Apprenticeship we embrace and applaud the findings of the Richards Review. We believe the success of any apprenticeship programme whether for new recruits or existing staff, that it is imperative to develop an effective tri partite partnership between the employer, the apprentice and the training provider. Our unique approach to valuable partnership building has resulted in one employer working with us to develop a new intermediate framework that is truly employer led and enables this employer and others in the sector to have a training programme that will add value to the business, attract new talent and support succession planning and management.

Debbie Shandley
Chief Executive

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Workplace Learning Communities

There has never been a better time to invest in your workforce. Training and development supports organisational improvement, increases efficiency and productivity, supports decision making and allows creativity and objectivity in managing challenges.

In times of recession service organisations need to know that their staff, are able to respond in a rapidly changing environment. Many of the workplaces voted to be the best identify the organisation's attitude to training as a key reason for recommending them.

Public sector organisations typically include remote/field based and office based staff. The structure of public sector organisations supports the introduction of a learning community approach to workforce development. A learning community enables the organisation to support a solutions approach to problem solving, up-skilling and improving professional practice, creating a knowledge based workforce able to respond to changing demands, improving communication through keeping their workforce informed ,encouraging creativity through sharing information and ideas and to engage with other employees across the organisation. Successful learning communities can cluster strategic and operational teams to implement training programmes to respond to planning, policy and special projects. Cross organisation teams are able to improve services and practices to their stakeholders.

Underpinning the learning community is a training offer that provides participants with the ability to contribute to the community improve performance and gain additional qualifications. Participants in a learning community judge their continued engagement in the process as critical to meeting the demands of their job role leading to improved levels of performance.

The impact of technology provides opportunities for the public sector to develop virtual learning communities. Learning at work can literally mean this. Virtual learning communities can be designed around an organisation's and individual's need. They provide real inclusive opportunities for all staff to participate in development. Virtual learning can provide a link to join remote workers with their central team. This will improve communication and overcome isolation. A virtual learning community can be used as part of an organisation's learning community, bringing a blended learning approach. This approach provides additional e- learning opportunities for staff who are unable to commit to traditional learning programmes. The added value of mobile technology allows and encourages integration of learning with everyday activities through the use of tablet and phone technology. Applications can be developed to provide access to staff on the move and to accommodate different learning styles. A virtual learning community encourages dynamic approaches to training. It encourages creativity and provides a secure environment to test out ideas before sharing them more widely across the organisation. For learners it can build confidence, encourage participation and improve communication. A virtual learning community can feel more secure and responsive to an individual's need.

For the public sector either or both types of learning community can assist in integrating CPD and raising the value of workplace learning. Embedding a performance review model within a learning community can ensure that the organisation can build learning and development units that enable investment in the workforce. Unitisation can lead to the development of customised courses or the mapping of programmes across national qualifications. Unit accreditation encourages people to move to bite sized learning and to be certificated for each aspect of



the programme that they achieve. The use of the credit accumulation system could lead to the units being 'cashed in' for an award, certificate or diploma at the appropriate level.

The learning community can be used as a framework linking job roles, career ladders and promotions to a range of training programmes. Such a model can assign a skills set to each role encouraging staff to consider their own career planning and enabling them to gain the skills to apply for other roles.

A learning community gifts skills and knowledge to the wider community it serves. Staff who participate in

learning are able to use those skills to work with their families in improving their functional skills, approach to learning, use of technology and to reinforce the value of learning to lifestyle and choice. These staff serve as a beacon across a community and can encourage others to take up learning. Such an approach starts to engender community feeling, build self-worth, and improve economic prosperity.

Debbie Shandley
Chief Executive

The real apprenticeship company

Have the very best people working for you whilst helping them to grow.
At The Real Apprenticeship Company, we don't beat about the bush. We provide training and apprenticeships for people with a desire to better themselves and to contribute more to the company they work for.

For further details on how you can boost the quality of your team,

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