

Bosses of small East Midlands firms lose out on holidays as staff unqualified to cover the work

Nearly 3,000 employers in the region have used new training service but hundreds still missing out

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Small business managers across the East Midlands could be losing out on holidays according to the latest research by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), carried out by FreshMinds.

The research shows two in five (41%) small business managers are failing to use their full holiday allowance, and of this figure, more than one in five employers (22%) cited unskilled staff as a reason.

The survey of nearly 500 SMEs across England also found that whilst nearly all small businesses surveyed (81%) recognise that training is the key to success, a staggering 43% admit that they should focus more on training. Of those employers, a quarter say that they don't have time to search for suitable training options, and one in five are bewildered by the range of training available.

Tony Belmega, Skills Development Director – Train to Gain, Skills for Employers at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) East Midlands said:

“Getting skilled is key to improving productivity across the East Midlands and making us more competitive. Being skilled is also key to our individual futures as skills enable us to take control of our lives and improve our skills.

“That’s why we’ve invested in Train to Gain, designed to drive up the nation’s skills by tackling historic barriers to learning, such as cost and time. We want it to be as easy as possible for people to access information and understand what help is available for them to get the skills needed to get on in life and business.

“Almost 3,000 businesses across the East Midlands have used Train to Gain to date and that’s marvellous, but there are still hundreds of businesses that are missing out. The tangible benefits to individuals, the company and the economy are too important to ignore.”

Companies across the East Midlands that have used the service to date include:

- Specialist Nottingham cleaning company Crown Deep Clean
- Derbyshire family Glazing Company Eckington Glass Ltd
- Wellingborough Security firm Chubb Security Personnel Ltd
- The Melton Mowbray plant of joinery manufacturer Jeld-Wen UK
- Mortons of Horncastle Ltd, publishers and printers.

See notes to editors for further details and quotes

A new advertising campaign launched on 16 July encourages employers to reap the business benefits of training their staff. This builds on the major national skills campaign launched on 9 July by the LSC and the newly formed Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). The campaign urges people to take control of their future by investing in skills, using the strapline, ‘*Our future. It’s in our hands*’.

David Lammy, Minister for Skills in the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills says:

“In launching a major new marketing campaign, we are responding to the challenge set out by Lord Leitch in his Review of Skills, to bring about a culture change in the nation’s attitude to skills.

“Achieving our world class ambition means dramatically increasing the number of adults who improve their skills and achieve qualifications each year, at all levels from functional literacy and numeracy to higher education levels. To deliver our ambition, we must forge a new partnership between government, employers and individuals, with each taking responsibility for increasing their action and investment.

“We need to dramatically raise awareness and aspirations on skills. We need employers to see the value of and the need to invest in skills at all levels. And we need individuals to pay more attention to and take action to address their skills needs”.

Train to Gain is designed to help businesses get the training they need to succeed and provides tailored, independent advice to businesses through a network of skills brokers - covering any issue from sourcing the right course or training provider to finding out if any funding exists.

For more information on Train to Gain telephone 0845 057 1817, text TRAIN to 64446, register at www.iwanttotrain.com or visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

For more information about the wider skills campaign, visit lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call 0800 011 30 30.

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Notes to Editors

EAST MIDLANDS CASE STUDIES

- Specialist Nottingham cleaning company Crown Deep Clean, who have arranged for a member of staff to do their NVQ Level 2 in telesales to improve their customer service skills, promoted three employees so they will be taking up an NVQ Level 3 in team leadership and got the Managing Director up to speed with the latest in employment law. Sales & Marketing Director Suzanna Evans-

Farley said: "In a small business its vital that staff are versatile and have a range of skills so a professional, quality service is always maintained."

- Derbyshire family Glazing Company Eckington Glass Ltd, who set up a training programme for all nine of their staff through a Train to Gain Skills Broker. They arranged for their office staff to undertake the NVQ Level 2 in office administration and are now looking at offering all staff training in manual handling, ladder training for the installers and first aid. The training project manager herself also arranged to bring her factory-based training skills up to date to enable her to deliver and verify in-house training, meaning the company can train staff more quickly, to the ultimate benefit of the customer. Project Manager Maggie Faley said: "We exist purely on word of mouth so reputation is everything to us. If our staff cannot give the customer confidence that they will be looked after every step of the way we won't remain the trusted, respected firm that we are."
- Wellingborough Security firm unlocked the potential of over 40 Northants security staff with help from Train to Gain. Chubb Security Personnel Ltd, based in Wellingborough teamed up with Daventry firm TQ Training to give a pilot of 40 security staff NVQ 2 customer service training. If successful it will be rolled out to their 6,000 staff across the UK. Jane Mckenna, Director of Training and Development for Chubb, said: "I think continuous training is vital to ensure we have high quality, motivated staff. We are committed to training so we can provide a superior service and Train to Gain is helping."
- Melton Mowbray plant of joinery manufacturer Jeld-Wen UK are boosting the skills of seven of its carpenters after securing places for them on the Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) NVQ 2 in joinery - with the help of Train to Gain Skills Broker, James Lund. Without the CSCS, the carpenters would not be able to carry out work at construction sites when required by the firm's customers. Keith Claydon, Jeld-Wen UK's Health, Safety and Environment Facilitator said: "The Trade Skills CSCS card is now required by many construction companies when tradesman are working on their sites, which means that even experienced workers will find it difficult to operate without one. Our Train to Gain Skills Broker James Lund has been very helpful in finding the best and most cost effective training provider for our needs. By the use of his contacts we have a faster way of finding training providers and possible funding available."
- Mortons of Horncastle Ltd, publishers of vintage and classic motorbike magazines and printers of newspapers since the 19th Century, have a long established history of training. Recently they trained 13 of their employees to NVQ Level 2 in Printing through Train to Gain at the accredited National Printing Skills Centre, part of Leicester College, Michael Gill, HR Manager, said: "Training helps people recognise their own abilities and helps them celebrate and recognise their achievement."

**MORE DETAILS, FURTHER CASE STUDIES AND PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE, CONTACT GNN
0115 971 2787**

The survey was conducted by FreshMinds, during May 2007. A total of 468 SMEs in England responded, where companies with less than ten employees were most prevalent. The companies were from the following sectors:

Retail: 114
Hospitality/travel/tourism: 101
Transport/automotive/logistics: 101
Manufacturing: 69
Construction: 51
Engineering: 32

Train to Gain:

Train to Gain is a new service from the Learning and Skills Council, to help businesses get the training they need to succeed. The cornerstone of Train to Gain is a free Skills Brokerage service that offers independent and impartial advice, matches training needs with training providers and ensures that training is delivered to meet employer's needs.

Train to Gain is important because skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness in the face of fast-growing economies.

Train to Gain aims to encourage all businesses and individuals to value and realise the benefits that learning and skills can bring and to invest appropriately. It is expected that by the end of 2010, over 500,000 learners will have achieved a first full Level 2 qualification through Train to Gain.

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Leitch Review of Skills

Published in December 2006, the Leitch Review warned that the UK must become a world leader in skills by 2020 if it is to sustain and improve its position in the global economy.

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