

## Employers agree apprentices benefit business

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Apprenticeships have been given an overwhelming endorsement by employers – with over 80% saying that employing apprentices generates higher overall productivity for their business.

Research\* among 500 businesses carried out to mark Apprenticeship Week (February 23 to 27), also revealed that two thirds (66%) of businesses say apprentices make them more competitive in their industry.

And Apprenticeships are expected to play a major part in recruitment plans with over 80% (82%) of employers relying on their Apprenticeship programmes to provide the skilled workforce needed for the future. Almost all employers surveyed (92%) also believed that Apprenticeships resulted in greater employee motivation and job satisfaction.

There are currently 16,385 apprentices in the East of England, working and training in a wide variety of industries. To celebrate Apprenticeship Week there are a number of events taking place in the region including:

- The NOVA Partnership, which aims to expand career opportunities for young people through work-based learning, has a High Street kiosk in Southend and will be on hand to provide information on Apprenticeships on Tuesday 24, Thursday 26 and Saturday 28 between 11am – 2pm. Information, leaflets and goody bags will be available to those who visit the kiosk.

- Hertfordshire employers and Youth Connexions staff are invited to attend a 'Try It Out Day' at Ridgemoor Training in Stevenage on Wednesday 25 February between 11am and 3pm. The event includes the opportunity for employers to try a trade of their choice plus the chance to take part in a conference discussion about the benefits of Apprenticeships for both employers and learners, and existing and future opportunities to get involved in Apprenticeships. For more information call 01438 842200.
- Bedfordshire and Luton businesses and business support services have also been invited to take part in Apprenticeship Mystery Tours – one around Bedfordshire and one around Luton – on Wednesday 25 February. Employers will board a luxury coach and visit several different training providers and businesses to learn more about apprentices can help businesses succeed. Demonstrations by apprentices will be included in the tour. Graham Earl, world champion boxer and former plumbing apprentice for Luton Borough Council will be one of the tour guides.
- During Apprenticeship Week the Opportunities Plus team from Connexions Norfolk will be visiting employers across the county to promote the benefits of Apprenticeships for businesses and to encourage employers to consider taking on more young people. For more information call Connexions on 01603 764370.
- On Wednesday 25 February West Suffolk College will host an open day event providing opportunities for young people to meet with prospective employers and to receive guidance from Connexions on getting on in life. The day will also include a variety of challenging and exciting hands on taster sessions for visitors to try out.

Caroline Neville, Regional Director of the East of England Learning and Skills Council said: "Apprenticeships are one of the most effective ways we have of closing the nation's skills gap. Businesses benefit from the enthusiasm and fresh ideas that an apprentice can bring and investment in the future may help to secure success in a difficult economic climate".

To help celebrate Apprenticeship Week, the Learning and Skills Council spoke to a variety of celebrities and notable people from the East of England region to ask what Apprenticeship they would do and why.

Former athlete, Kriss Akabusi said: "I would study to be a journalist so that I could write powerful engaging articles on contemporary news with an optimistic world view."

Barbara Follet, Minister for the East of England, said her dream Apprenticeship would be something in film technology as she believes this is one of the industries of the future. "Go for it now," advised Mrs Follet. "Life does not offer many chances – so grab them while you can."

Ray Stubbs, BBC Sports Presenter and the face of The Learning and Skills Council's The Big Skill Awards 2009 said: "I would want to get in to a skilled trade such as an electrician. Without electricians we don't have the power to 'see' or 'do' anything. It's creative and rewarding and you are given the responsibility of making sure the job is done to the highest safety standards. It offers such a variety of work, from wiring new houses to lighting a television studio for coverage of the 2010 World Cup. As an electrician you could work on lighting the new Olympic venues or end up on the set of the next James Bond film!"

Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of Bedfordshire County Council, said he would like to be a paramedic so he could make a positive difference every day. He added: "Find someone you respect early in your career and watch them closely – learn from them and then put into practice what you have learnt."

Tim Yeo MP for South Suffolk decided he would choose an Engineering apprenticeship. "Engineering plays a major part in everything we do in life from how we travel to the homes we live in and how we heat and light them," said Mr Yeo. "Engineers will also be the people who solve many of the worlds problems, for example by harnessing new sources of energy to reduce Climate Change. But we have too few skilled engineers in this country"

He added: "Apply yourself 100 per cent - because you'll never live to regret having done your best at anything."

Gary Brabin, First team Manager of Cambridge United, said his ideal Apprenticeship would be sports science and personal training. "Give it your best shot, work hard and give 100 per cent," advised Gary. "Sometimes in life you don't always get your rewards straight away but if you keep your head down and keep plugging away you will. "

Janice Logie, Area Director for Essex Learning and Skills Council, said: "I would like to be an Aerospace Apprentice. I would want to learn at the cutting edge in an industry where I can travel the world and have the skills for future industries."

Oliver Heald, MP for North East Hertfordshire, said: "I would really like to be a joiner's apprentice. The sense of satisfaction in making a perfect joint or producing a perfect piece must be fantastic. It is a trade where success is obvious and failure unacceptable. It is important that such skills are passed on from generation to generation."

Caroline Williams, CEO Norfolk Chamber of Commerce and Industry, decided her idea apprenticeship would be within the manufacturing industry. Ms Williams advised: "Keep an open mind and say yes to every opportunity as the best things happen to you when you least expect them."

Skills Minister Lord Young, added: "Today's findings show just how well regarded Apprenticeships are by employers. They are rightly valued across Britain as a means of providing employers with a well-trained workforce which help their business to succeed. They're about businesses investing in their future, whatever the economic climate."

"An Apprenticeship offers a great deal to both young people and adults, giving them an opportunity to gain practical skills, a well-regarded qualification and invaluable on the job experience while being paid."

“The careers open to people who want to do an Apprenticeship are growing all the time - from the more traditional like engineering to film production and IT. All of this shows just how important it is to bang the drum for Apprenticeships which is precisely what we are doing this week.”

In January the Prime Minister announced an additional 35,000 new Apprenticeship places across the public and private sectors backed by £140 million which builds on a commitment to increasing spending on apprentices in the next year to just under £1billion. Ministers have also acted to make it easier for employers to take on apprentices by slashing bureaucracy. From April 2009, the new National Apprenticeship Service will lead the expansion and improvement of the apprenticeship programme. Since January 2009, prospective apprentices have been able to apply online for job vacancies advertised by employers.

Simon Waugh, Chief Executive of the new National Apprenticeship Service, said: “It is very encouraging to see that employers are really seeing the difference that apprentices can make to their business.

“Apprentices are ‘doers’ who make things happen and play a pivotal role in our economy. They will help businesses through these difficult times as well as helping to prepare for growth.”

Lorna Bryson, Head of UK Resourcing at Tesco concurs: “Since we launched the apprentice programme in 2004, a thousand members of staff have successfully completed their Apprenticeship, with a further 800 enrolling this academic year.

“Apprenticeships allow us to provide great training and development to our staff, helping them to recognise their long-term career goals; half of our 2006/07 apprentices have progressed to become managers or team leaders. And Tesco benefits, too, by having

hard working, dedicated, and talented individuals that are confident and satisfied in their roles.”

The Learning and Skills Council is also urging employers and apprentices in Bedfordshire and Luton to enter this year’s prestigious East of England Apprenticeship Awards where the best in the region will compete for titles including Employer of the Year and Apprentice of the Year. The closing date for entries is 27 February 2009. Entry forms can be found at [www.apprenticeship.org.uk/awards](http://www.apprenticeship.org.uk/awards)

To find out more, employers should visit [apprenticeships.org.uk](http://apprenticeships.org.uk) or call the Apprenticeships helpline on 08000 150 600.

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### **Notes to editors**

The research was conducted by Populus on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council. Populus interviewed 500 respondents who were responsible for Apprenticeship programme recruitment in their companies. The telephone interviews were carried out between 5 January and 29 January 2009.

#### *Company benefits from Apprenticeship Programmes.*

Apprentices will continue to play an important role within businesses despite the current economic downturn. The majority of employers recognise that there are many benefits in providing an Apprenticeship programme. 81% of businesses say that employing apprentices generates higher overall productivity for their company, while over two thirds of businesses say that their programme makes them more competitive in their industry (66%). Over two thirds of respondents say that their programmes allow them to lower both recruitment (67%) and training costs (71%) while also enabling them to fill vacancies more quickly (68%) with a better calibre of job applicant (74%). The majority of employers think that Apprenticeship programmes are beneficial because they lead a lower level of staff turnover (82%), while nearly all employers believe that their Apprenticeship programme creates a greater level of motivation and job satisfaction among their staff (92%).

#### *Apprentices compared to other employees*

Alongside the perceived benefits of providing an Apprenticeship programme, employers recognise that there are also many advantages in hiring an apprentice rather than other recruits. Over two fifths of respondents say that apprentices have a greater level of job satisfaction and motivation (43%) together with a greater level of commitment (41%) compared to other employees. Employers also think that Apprenticeship programmes lead to a lower level of staff turnover overall (41%), with nearly three quarters agreeing that apprentices tended to be more loyal, remaining at their company longer than non-apprentices (74%).

#### *Apprentices and the recession*

Although most employers are not taking on apprentices to help them through the economic situation (78%), Apprenticeship programmes were expected to play a major part in their recruitment processes in the future (78%), with 82% of employers relying on their Apprenticeship programmes' in providing them with the skilled work they will need in the future.

#### 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

#### Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship Week activities will take place around the country and involve celebrities, politicians and apprentices. The week is an opportunity to promote the benefits that apprentices bring to businesses and the economy.

Apprenticeships are a blend of on and off the job training that gives the apprentice the skills they need for their chosen career whilst earning a wage.

More than 130,000 employers currently employ apprentices. There are over 180 types of Apprenticeships available in more than 80 sectors of industry and commerce from engineering to boat building, veterinary nursing to accountancy.

To find out more, employers should visit [apprenticeships.org.uk](http://apprenticeships.org.uk) or call the Apprenticeships helpline on 08000 150 600.