

EMPLOYERS TURN TO APPRENTICES IN TOUGHER TIMES

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Hundreds of employers have given Apprenticeships the thumbs up in a new survey in which 81 per cent of businesses said apprentices helped to generate higher overall productivity.

The research, carried out to mark Apprenticeship Week this week (February 23 to 27), also reveals one in five businesses questioned are hiring more apprentices to help them through tougher times with 22 per cent actively recruiting.

The survey's other key findings include:

- In London half of all companies questioned employed more women apprentices than men.
- London also had the more than twice the national average for older apprentices, with 1 in 7 being over 51.
- Overall, two-thirds of employers believe their apprentices help them to be more competitive in their businesses (66 per cent).
- More than 82 per cent saying they relied on their Apprenticeship programme to give them the skilled workers they need for the future.

Apprenticeships Minister Lord Young, said:

"This government has rescued Apprenticeships having more than trebled the number of people from 65,000 in 1997 to nearly a quarter of a million today, investing nearly £1 billion this year. The Prime Minister recently announced an extra £140 million to deliver 35,000 new Apprenticeship places.

"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.”

Luke Power, London, Young Apprentice of the Year, Apprenticeship Awards 2008 said.

“Because of my Young Apprenticeship, I feel I can handle any challenge that comes my way. Hard work brings rewards – this was made clear to me when, as a result of my efforts on a Young Apprenticeship, I was offered a permanent job with the company.”

Billie Nokes, London, Apprentice at The Salon said:

"I would say, if you get the chance to do an apprenticeship, grab it with both hands; it'll be the best experience you can have. I've learnt so much more than I thought I would. Not only have I got a skill that will set me up for life, but I could take the other key skills I've learnt such as customer service, product promotion, giving advice and being confident in myself to any job - even an office!"

To find out more, employers should visit apprenticeships.org.uk or call the Apprenticeships helpline on 08000 150 600.

Ends

Notes to editors:

The survey was carried out by Populus and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council. Populus interviewed a sample of 500 respondents who were responsible for Apprenticeship programme recruitment in their companies by telephone between 5th January and 29th January 2009.

The Government has rescued Apprenticeships. In 1997, 65,000 people started an apprenticeship. In 2007/08, that number had risen to 225,000. Apprenticeship completion rates are now at an all-time high of 64 per cent, compared to 47 per cent in 2005/06.

Background

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.

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.

Case Study

Luke Power

Luke undertook his Young Apprenticeship in Sports Management, Leadership and Coaching at Eltham Green Specialist Sports College, during which he completed three work placements at Venture Health Club, the David Beckham Academy and Bean and Co. This trio of work placements allowed Luke to develop a diverse range of skills, ultimately resulting in his decision to pursue a career in sports.

Now a permanent employee at Venture Health Club in Welling, it is clear that Luke has made a lasting impression in the workplace as well.

"The Young Apprentice Programme has proven to be invaluable in getting young people exposed to the world of work, especially in the active leisure sector," said Gary Adams of Venture Health Club. "Had it not been for this programme, we would not have been introduced to Luke and we would have been the poorer for it."

Case Study

Billie Nokes

Billie has served her apprenticeship at The Salon, a hairdressing suite that was set up by Newham College six years ago in East Ham. The Salon employs professional stylists and the enterprise is a commercial salon and trains its apprentices up to the advanced Level 3 qualification.

Billie, 18 of Canning Town is currently focusing on her Level 2 NVQ which she will complete in July, after which she hopes to apply for a part-time job while studying for the Level 3 advance hairdressing course.

"I would say, if you get the chance to do an apprenticeship, grab it with both hands; it'll be the best experience you can have. I've learnt so much more than I thought I would. Not only have I got a skill that will set me up for life, but I could take the other key skills I've learnt such as customer service, product promotion, giving advice and being confident in myself to any job - even an office!"

Contact

If you would like to speak to the LSC about Apprenticeship Week, or to an Apprentice, please contact **Lynn McSweeney**, 020 7904 0663, Lynn.McSweeney@lsc.gov.uk