

Pipex Belliver, Plymouth

City College Plymouth is saving a specialist manufacturer time and money by assisting in the selection process for apprenticeships.

Bill Murphy, the director responsible for training at Belliver-based Pipex which specialises in the design, manufacture and installation of corrosion-resistant thermoplastic and composite products, says jointly interviewing potential apprentices with the college reduces expense and improves the chances of finding people with the right aptitudes.

“One of the key advantages of using the college for our apprenticeships is not having to go through the time-consuming and costly normal process of recruitment. We’re hoping this process will provide a regular, highly motivated, good quality source of operatives to work in the business.”

Mr Murphy is full of praise for the college’s approach to the construction and engineering apprenticeships that equip employees to work on the company’s projects worldwide and in the domestic market.

“We’re hoping we will be able to develop our relationship with the college to allow us to have an input into the courses so the apprentices can be even better prepared and useful to the business. Because of the bespoke nature of the training we do, we’ve found it difficult to recruit people with relevant experience or qualifications, but hopefully the apprentices will become very useful to the business very quickly.

“The first apprentices will join us in the summer after spending a year at the college. They’ll come to us with a Level 2 NVQ and an ECITB Safety Passport to allow them access to site work and will continue to be assessed here while they carry on training in the workplace. The apprenticeships will last for another two years with weekly day release to college until they have attained a Level 3 NVQ in pipefitting.

“We’re hoping this scheme will provide mutual benefits to the business and the apprentices, offering them the opportunity to join a dynamic, young company, becoming part of the team with good long-term

prospects, and the opportunity to develop individually.”

Pipex has always invested in people by employing and training them, then gradually promoting and developing them.

Mr Murphy is hoping the college link-up will help Pipex end up with people who are trained and certified in pipefitting and have a basic understanding of the job requirements before undergoing the firm’s own specific training. He says the company’s growth over the past five to 10 years means it needs a big pool of people from which to pick its workforce to then train and invest in – something the apprenticeship scheme should be able to deliver.

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“The signs are very encouraging,” he says. “We have a very stable local workforce and we’re on target and budget for all current projections across the Pipex group of companies.”

Pipex hopes to expand the apprenticeship scheme in future years and will demonstrate its commitment to its workforce by applying for Investors in People accreditation this year.

“We couldn’t do this without the cooperation of City College Plymouth,” adds Mr Murphy. “They have always met us whenever we’ve requested and listened to what we need.”



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