

Otter Nurseries

Business Sector: Garden Centre

Business Size: 50-249

Region: South West

Business Profile: Over the last 40 years, Devon-based Otter Nurseries has grown from a small plant-growing business into a major regional garden centre chain. Today, the company has three sites in Devon at Ottery St Mary, Brixton and Torquay.



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Sean Duff
Manager Brixton Branch

The challenge

Sean Duff was appointed Manager of the Brixton garden centre two years ago, with a brief to increase the site's profitability, while gearing up for the boost that a potential new development of 5,000 homes at nearby Sherford could bring to the centre.

The solution

Training is an important part of the plans for the development of the centre. Working together, Plymouth City College and the Train to Gain service, which matches business' skills needs with local training providers, have helped access training for staff at the centre.

Over the past 18 months 12 people have been assessed for NVQs in areas including team leading, customer service, distribution and warehousing, IT and business administration.

Train to Gain Skills Business Link Adviser Janet Powell said: "Sean is trying to plan for the future as he looks to grow the business, putting in place a team structure that will allow the team to grow and take advantage of the new housing development."

The results

Sean Duff, the Brixton Branch Manager, said: "The business is moving forward and planning for the future development of 5000 new homes at Sherford, which forms part of our objectives in making Otter Nurseries the garden centre of choice for our community."

"Training is a key part of our staff retention and development achievements. NVQs have helped to develop and shape our business and we aim to have 20 per cent of our staff passed at a level two NVQ by the end of 2007."

What is Train to Gain?

Train to Gain is a service offering independent advice on improving the skills of your employees. The Service helps employers – of all sizes and in all sectors – to boost their business by training their staff.

Independent Business Link Advisers help you to find the right training and the right providers, and construct a training package tailored to each business.