

# Palmer & Howells Bristol

The two ingredients that make the most difference in a commercial kitchen are self-confidence and ability – and the Royal Forest of Dean College has given the staff of Palmer & Howells a generous helping of both.

Thanks to a free training programme devised by the college specifically for the Bristol-based firm, two of its staff have been promoted, five more have gained qualifications, and the manager is able to delegate to his team without hesitation.

“We originally used another training organisation, but they were diabolical,” says Nick Watkins, manager of the unit at Vantage Point Business Village. “We were getting into all sorts of difficulties until the college came and offered to help.

**“The training has also made my job considerably easier”**

“The college have trained seven of our staff, and all the training has been done here in our workplace. The college come over with a laptop and do all the tests here. That’s made a big difference because, being such a small team, if we took one person out for training and another person went sick, things could snowball very quickly. This way, it hasn’t cost the company anything other than my time.”

The college created NVQs tailored to fit Palmer & Howells’ business, and as the unit is the only one in the group specialising in commercial catering, it had different needs including handling cash.

“The training has made our staff think more about what’s involved in the job and it’s made them feel even more valued. It was also rewarding them by giving them a legacy to take elsewhere if they ever leave us, as it’s no good going to another job and saying you can do it; you have to have the bit of paper as well.

“I had one person I wanted to make a supervisor so I put her on the supervisor’s pay rate as soon as she started the NVQ. I was also in a position to have a chef instead of me doing all the cooking as well as the paperwork. I promoted a girl to chef and put her on chef’s money immediately provided she did her NVQ.

“The benefit is that I now have a chef and she now has a career and a qualification.

“The training has also made my job considerably easier. I left them all for two days last week and they did their own ordering and cooking. I trust them tremendously and it works both ways. I have more time to do the horrible bits of my job, like the paperwork. Before, I used to be rushing around. This has made my working day shorter because I can now leave on time as I know I can leave my staff to it.

“It’s been absolutely excellent. I would recommend the college to other businesses – and have done!”

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