

Southernprint Poole

Choosing the right type for a headline is an important skill in the world of printing – but choosing the right type of training for your organisation is another matter entirely.

That's why brochure and catalogue producers Southernprint are so pleased with the training and support they've received from Yeovil College.

"We get a lot of training agencies on the phone who don't have any idea about our industry or the type of training we really need at Southernprint," says HR Co-ordinator Shelley Hargreaves. "The print industry is quite a technical industry and it can be difficult to identify training that's specific to printing staff and their roles. But Yeovil College understand what type of printing we do and they specialise in the print side of things. That means a great deal to us.

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"They didn't just come in and sign us up for some NVQ training like some people would. Instead, they helped us find the most suitable courses for our employees. People are getting very job-specific training and development, which is ideal, and it helps us with our succession planning as well. Yeovil even helped us find suitable funding. We had to contribute to the cost of the first NVQs but their help allowed us to train as many people as possible.

"The college tutors come to us, which suits us wonderfully. We don't have to release staff to go to college, which is good from a production point of view. It also means that the training is hands-on, as it takes place in the actual working environment. We also communicate closely. The co-ordinators and tutors are very flexible in their approach and that benefits everybody."

Shelley says the benefits are being felt throughout the company because employees have come to realise that training is good for them as well as their employer.

"We worked very closely with the union learner rep who has done a great deal of good. Having buy-in from the union really helped sell the idea so that people on the shop floor could see there was a benefit to them in completing their training as well as to the company. People like taking NVQs because they are a nationally recognised qualification. They feel it's about their own lifelong personal development.

"A few people who work for us left school without any qualifications and weren't interested in doing NVQs at first because they said they didn't want to study. Then they realised it was very practical and hands-on rather than a case of sitting in a classroom. Successfully completing an NVQ has been a big boost for them. The training sets a benchmark that helps us when we come to recruit. We can also identify staff who are keen to progress. It's an indication of attitude.

"We allow some people to step up into a more senior position temporarily as part of their training. They can see a succession plan and that leads to loyalty. They've realised that the company is putting a bit of investment into them and their regard for the company goes up."

Southernprint's relationship with Yeovil College began with just a print NVQ but it's now looking at print finishing, print administration, management and customer service training. And it's certainly proving to be a success, says Shelley, because she's just signed up another 65 people for training.



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