

Developing business Developing careers

How and why employers are supporting the
career development of their employees

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- Jo Hutchinson - iCeGS, University of Derby;
- Dave Devins - PRI, Leeds Metropolitan University;
- Tristham Hooley - iCeGS, University of Derby;
- Sarah Kelsey - PRI, Leeds Metropolitan University.

INTRODUCTION

A key feature of most successful organisations is their ability to recruit the right talent and to develop and use their knowledge and skills effectively. If your organisation:

- is hampered by the shortage of adequately skilled individuals in the labour market;
- struggles to recruit workers with the right skills and attitudes;
- has a workforce which lacks the skills to support the sustainability and growth of your organisation;
- needs to re-structure and find a way to retain staff commitment whilst adapting to new business conditions;
- wants to foster a strong reputation and reap the benefits from a better motivated, more responsive and productive workforce;

then focusing on career development can help maximise the potential of your staff and bring real business benefits.

Through practical examples from successful organisations, this guide shows how organisations are currently using career development activities to realise considerable business benefits. It features businesses such as Morrisons Supermarkets, which works with social enterprises to help deliver its ambitious growth strategy; BeOnsite, which recruits and trains disadvantaged adults to overcome specialist skills shortages; Barclaycard, which works with a trade union to encourage internal staff progression; and Gentoo, which uses its career management structure to build a strong community brand. The experience of these employers is diverse, but together they show the advantages of focusing on career development.

So what do we mean by career development? Everyone has a career. It is the mix of learning with paid and unpaid work, linked to family commitments and leisure, that makes up our individual lives. A focus on career development helps individuals find employment that fits their lives, and helps employers to find and keep the right kind of individuals for their business.

There are a variety of strategies and activities that employers can use to support career development. Employers can adopt one or more of these to meet their needs. However, they are most effective as part of an overall strategy with planned activities, rather than undertaken in isolation.

Examples of employer career development activities :

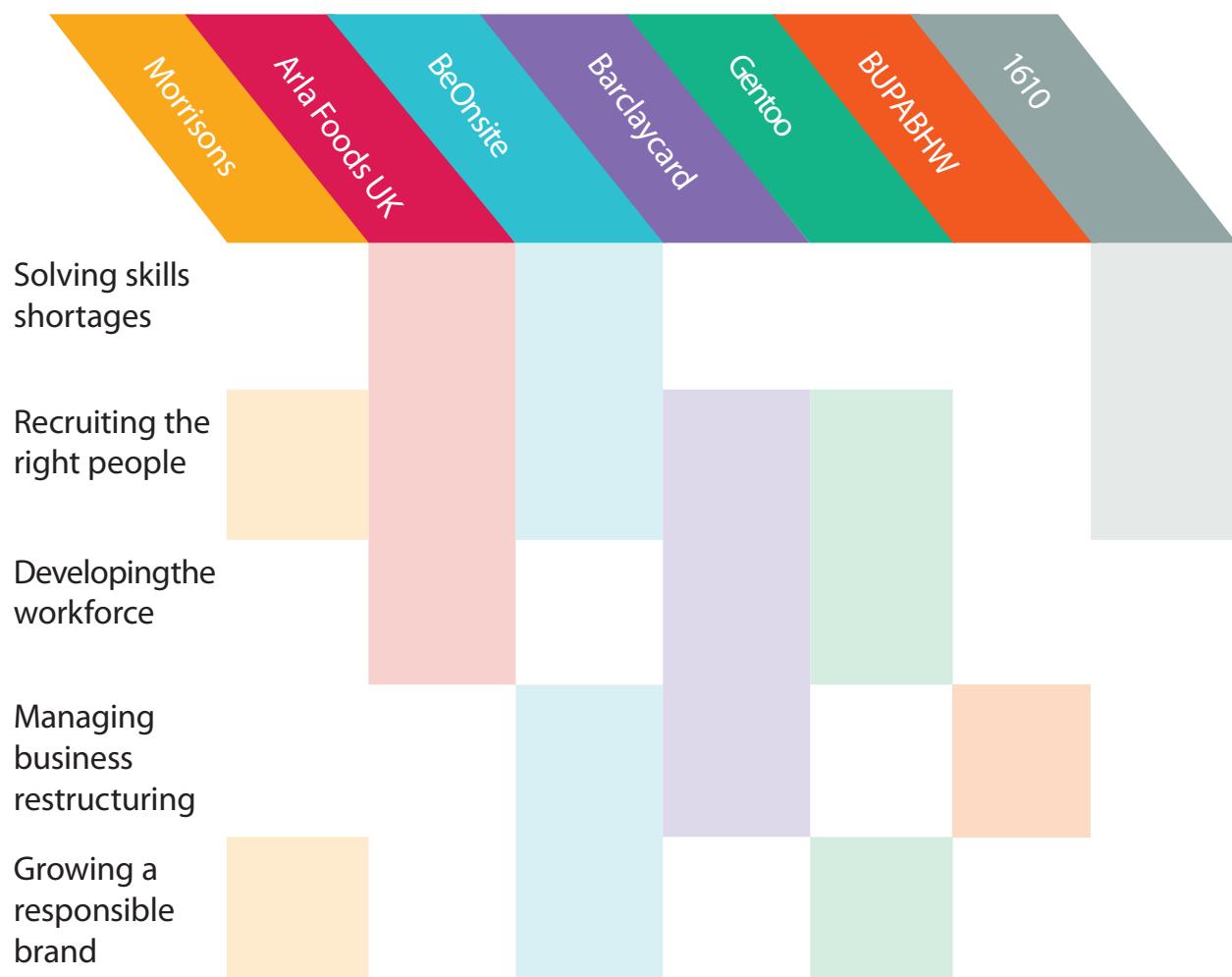
Solving skills shortages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• working with local colleges and training providers to shape the training offer;• responding to requests from Sector Skills Councils, professional/business representative organisations, local employer groups or careers providers about their skill needs;• joining employer networks and telling economic development agencies such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships about skills shortages and workforce development issues;• providing information that encourages people to think about working in an industry sector or employer.
Recruiting the right people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• working with careers advisers such as the National Careers Service, Skills Development Scotland or Careers Wales and recruitment companies to promote the quality as well as the type of employment opportunities available;• providing job-seekers with opportunities for work experience, work placements and other forms of 'work taster' that allow both sides to assess the suitability of the employment opportunity;• providing employment opportunities through Apprenticeships or the Work Programme that combine work with training.
Developing the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• having a long-term strategic approach to skills development;• considering developing the skills of the current workforce alongside recruitment to overcome skills gaps;• working with employees to find skills solutions that help match individual needs with business needs and bring a win-win solution to both employees and employers.
Managing business restructuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• providing outplacement services to individuals who are at risk of redundancy that give practical support and advice;• offering career advice to individuals during periods of change or growth to help them prepare for new challenges or opportunities;• working with other local employers to help support people through transition by engagement in work placements, volunteering or networking opportunities.
Growing a responsible brand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• mentoring local community organisations;• supporting community enterprises and social business;• supporting community-based employability programmes.

Partnership is often the key to success, whether it is with an education provider such as a school, FE college or university, with a trade union, social enterprise, Jobcentre Plus, or with the National Careers Service, Skills Development Scotland or Careers Wales. Some businesses choose to work closely with these services, whilst others choose their own solutions to career development, or mix and match between the two.

USING THIS GUIDE

The case studies presented in this guide demonstrate how support for career development can bring a wide range of benefits to business.

The matrix below will help guide you to business cases which identify how those benefits have worked for them:



If you are interested in finding out more about some of the ideas mentioned in this report, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills have published a more detailed report called 'Tackling unemployment, supporting business and developing careers' which is available on the UKCES website (www.ukces.org.uk).

MORRISONS

How a strategic link with a social enterprise is bringing career opportunities that help local communities and the retail business

"At a time when the number of young and long-term unemployed continues to increase, we will provide opportunities for many people and help them build a career in retailing."

Norman Pickavance, Group HR Director,
Morrisons Supermarkets

The business issue

Wm Morrisons Supermarkets PLC is a rapidly growing FTSE 100 business employing over 135,000 people. It has an ambitious growth strategy which will create more than 7,000 new jobs in 2012 as it continues to open new stores and develop its manufacturing and logistics arms. Many of the job opportunities require craft skills associated with butchery, bakery and fishmongery and the training the company offers provides an opportunity for all staff, new and existing - to reach their potential. However recruiting so many workers can be a challenge. One of the ways Morrisons are meeting this challenge is through working in partnership with community-based organisations to provide job opportunities for unemployed people. The company report that around half of the jobs available in new stores are taken by unemployed people and three quarters of the new staff are drawn from the local areas they serve.

Context

Norman Pickavance is Group HR Director of Morrisons Supermarkets. Norman helped lead the company to Employer of the Year in UK Retailing for 2010 and chairs Create, a unique social enterprise established in 2007. Create were originally established in Leeds and continue to grow with sites opening in Doncaster, Sunderland, Greater Manchester and Liverpool. They offer high quality, professional catering and food services and invest all profits into training and jobs for marginalised people.

Critical success factors

Director level championing

An inclusive approach to recruitment

Partnership with an exceptional social enterprise (Create)

The availability of jobs with training

Key benefits for the business

Lower recruitment costs

Staff commitment

High levels of customer service

Improved company image



Process

The Create enterprise provides two routes to employment for trainees. Firstly, the work placement offers them the opportunity to train for a real job in the Create catering company or restaurant. Secondly, trainees also gain work experience across the Create business which helps them to think about and plan what they want to do with their future career.

Create has an Academy which offers a work based training programme and a hub for organisations that work with disadvantaged groups to come together and join up their services. Trainees spend three days a week in the workplace and two days looking at what they have learned and developing their employability skills and their confidence through job search. They work on the employability skills they will need when they return to employment. Trainees can gain a nationally recognised Level 2 qualification in Food Safety and sign up for a qualification in Retail Skills and Customer Service.

Each year Create has trained between 80-100 people in each of their locations and helped them into employment through their own workplace or with partner organisations. One such partner is Morrisons supermarkets who have worked with Create to design a training programme that prepares unemployed people for entry into the retail sector and provides jobs at Morrisons for them.

Morrisons has committed to securing 1,000 trainees from the Create Academy working in store. Starting in Leeds in 2010, the first Create graduates joined the shop-floor workforce at the supermarkets store in Harehills, one of the most deprived areas of the city. Dalton Philips, CEO of Morrisons says "We have a commitment to retraining people from all sections of the community, helping people to realise their potential whatever their background".

Benefits

Morrisons recently opened a new store in Salford where more than half the 200+ recruits were previously unemployed people drawn from the local community. Norman Pickavance said "For us, this kind of engagement is a win-win: people get jobs, regeneration receives a boost and we get the commercial benefits of being a valued part of the community. We are looking at adopting this engagement strategy as we plan and open new stores across the country". The benefits to Morrisons are a combination of good knowledge of local markets and customer demands, enhancement of the brand and an efficient recruitment process.

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Norman Pickavance, Group HR Director,
Morrisons Supermarkets

ARLA FOODS UK

How an organisation developed their own qualification and career progression routes to overcome skills shortages

The business issue

Arla Foods is a global dairy company and co-operative owned by Danish, Swedish and German dairy farmers. It has production facilities in 13 countries, sales offices in a further 20, and a total of more than 16,000 employees, 2,800 of which are based across the UK, located in dairies, distribution centres and at head office.

The dairy industry is changing, and whilst traditional skills are still highly valued, the industry needs a wider range of skills and knowledge to be able to respond to customer demands and issues of technical and environmental compliance and to retain competitiveness.

Arla Foods UK has in the past had to look to traditional engineering and manufacturing industries such as car and aircraft manufacturers when recruiting to technical and engineering positions within its dairy production and distribution operations. It is therefore embarking on a number of different strategies to influence the labour market through direct involvement in education, training and work-related learning and workforce development programmes.

Context

To bridge the skills gap in dairy technology, Arla Foods UK is actively influencing and feeding into customised training and development qualifications so members of its existing workforce and externally recruited candidates can be trained and qualified to progress to senior roles within the company.

Project Eden is a structured training programme, launched by the dairy industry to find and develop technical and operational leaders to work in the dairy industry. The programme recruits 25 employees a year from across the industry on to a three-year Foundation Degree in Dairy Technology. Ten of these participants are employed by Arla Foods UK.

Critical success factors

Industry-led and customised training programme delivered by top dairy college

Full support for employees throughout training

Clear progression routes for employees

Key benefits for the business

Appropriately skilled employees with industry-specific technological skills

Learning is able to feed directly from the classroom or technical facilities into the production process

Improved staff retention

Enables effective succession planning and talent management



Process

The recruits (who might be existing employees or externally recruited candidates) are employed to work with Arla Foods UK and also study at Reaseheath College in Cheshire, which is the top dairy college in England and has a new state-of-the-art dairy technical facility. The professional training, which takes place over three years is split into two intensive residential blocks of up to 9 weeks, per year, after which employees return to work and concentrate on coursework and applied projects to transfer their training directly back into the business and maximise training transfer. Arla Foods UK pays a salary for the duration of the studies.

The course covers technical and management processes involved in milk production and distribution, as well as project and financial management skills and personal development in areas such as leadership. At the end of the three years, employees qualify with a Foundation Degree in Dairy Technology. Before Arla Foods UK began to help shape this training offer qualifications in dairy technology were one or two levels below where they needed to be and did not reflect how automation technology and process flow within the dairy industry have moved on in recent years.

The outstanding facilities at Reaseheath, including three 5,000 litres storage tanks; a pasteuriser for cheese making that can process 2,300l of cheese per hour and the flexibility of the plant to make anything from sauces to jellies or yogurts mean that students have the opportunity develop and hone key skills important to both the present needs and future demands of Arla Foods UK. Employees learn key scientific principles associated with dairy technology, including lean thinking, and then become directly involved in driving the process improvement techniques necessary to run an efficient manufacturing and processing operation which is not only up-to-date but market leading.

In addition to the Eden Programme, Arla Foods

UK is looking to extend its career development programme to postgraduate level by exploring ways to 'top up' Foundation Degrees to a BSc, with a view to completion of an MSc qualification in dairy technology later on. There are no such courses currently run in the UK, so suitable employees would be supported through the two-year full-time course in Copenhagen.

Arla Foods UK also has plans to develop an Advanced Apprenticeship dairy engineering programme recruiting for September 2012.

Benefits

Participation in the Eden Programme ensures that Arla UK's workforce has the industry and company-specific knowledge and skills to work in the modern dairy industry and to progress to more senior positions in the future. The unique involvement of the college and the opportunity combined with work at Arla Foods means that learning from the course feeds directly into dairy production and distribution processes, which can very quickly result in greater efficiencies within plant operations, and processes as well as supporting innovation and cost savings.

BeOnsite

How recruiting unemployed people helps provide flexibility and new skills

The business issue

BeOnsite is a national not-for-profit company created by Lend Lease, a property development company. Modern building contracts often require a large number of workers on site anywhere in the country, meaning that major building projects can bring in a lot of itinerant labour to work in an area with next to no benefit to local people. This coincided with a skills shortage in new construction techniques such as on-site assembly, alongside an oversupply of traditional skills such as bricklaying. BeOnsite was set up to ensure that the economic benefits of construction are felt within the communities adjacent to the development, whilst at the same time bringing much-needed modern construction techniques to their workforce. It developed the first recognised 'Formworking Apprenticeship' in the UK.

In the three years since BeOnsite was created, they have provided over 250 people from excluded groups with tailored, industry-specific training, and over 150 people with permanent paid employment either as a direct BeOnsite employee or with a partner organisation. Furthermore, over half have been employed for over 6 months, with over 25% exceeding 12 months employment, and a further 10 per cent still employed by BeOnsite after two years.

Context

Lend Lease's founder, Dick Dusseldorf, has embedded a culture of social responsibility into the organisation, saying that it should be measured not just on its financial returns, but also on its positive contribution to the environment and society. Lend Lease is the parent company of BeOnsite, which starts from the premise that anyone is employable, "We work with people who want to work despite the many multiple challenges they face. We work with individuals that may face barriers into employment, such as those with past criminal convictions; current serving prisoners as part of a rehabilitation project; and both long- and short-term unemployed people."

Critical success factors

Community commitment part of business culture

Links into local job centres and recruitment agents

Links to local training and accredited provision

Experienced recruitment and retention manager

Ongoing pastoral support for trainees

Key benefits for the business

Unique selling point in a competitive market place

Lower recruitment costs

Quicker recruitment leading to increased productivity

Adding value to communities adds value to their property portfolio



Process

BeOnsite works with various partners in the local authority area in which it is recruiting. These organisations are both statutory and non-statutory, and include colleges, third-sector organisations and local government. As an example, in Newham they work with Workplace, which is a 'one-stop shop' where Newham residents can receive advice about their employment options or guidance about starting a business, and where employers across London can place their vacancies. Workplace helps to select candidates who are then referred to BeOnsite for a selection event. Following this, successful candidates are assessed over a two-week period, both one-to-one and in groups, to establish their behaviours, suitability, attendance, attitudes and team work. After that, they combine work on the construction site with accredited training.

BeOnsite take great care to make its ethos clear to its local recruitment and training partners, so that from the very moment a person expresses interest in construction or property as a potential career, the realities of the job are made clear. Construction involves long days, often working outdoors in extremes of weather, and can be a very tough environment, "Throughout the assessment we are drumming home exactly what the job is on offer and what it entails. A huge part of our job is to ensure that the individual understands what is on offer, as for many of our candidates this is their first encounter with the world of work, and so it is important for us to guide them through the process and ensure that they fully understand what is expected of them and how to progress."

Benefits

BeOnsite has developed a highly effective recruitment process which means that trainees can be recruited and start working within two weeks: an estimate of the value of additional productivity gained is around £2,050 per recruit. Recruitment through BeOnsite also reduces costs for Lend Lease's labour supply chain saving £1,500 per recruit, which is passed on by Lend Lease through lower contract bid prices. BeOnsite has also been a key factor in Lend Lease winning business: it features in virtually all Lend Lease's bid documents and was a critical factor in their recent successful tender to construct a £330 million Schools for the Future project in Wandsworth.

"We choose to work with people who are representative of the communities in which we work. This includes people who traditionally have been excluded from the job market. We see it as our role to provide opportunities to individuals not only to help build their own future but to physically build that of their community."

Jessica Mellor-Clark, Head of Communications & Public Affairs, BeOnsite

BARCLAYCARD

How partnering with Unionlearn has led to enhanced talent management

The business issue

Barclaycard is one of Europe's leading credit card providers, with about 12 million customers in the UK. Operating in a highly competitive sector, the company is continually looking for ways to improve operational efficiency and to deliver good-value products and innovative services to customers. Ensuring that the workforce is able to respond to these challenges and remain internationally competitive is at the forefront of thinking at Barclaycard Stockton, a contact centre employing about 900 staff in the north of England. The provision of information, advice and guidance has supported the internal progression of staff, helping the company to realise cost savings associated with recruitment whilst at the same time improving employee engagement.

Context

Barclaycard has been operating in Stockton for 15 years and has a proud tradition of supporting the development of its workforce. It welcomed Unionlearn when it was introduced three years ago and the development of the Insight Centre to encourage and support training amongst its workforce and those working for contracting organisations (e.g. cleaners, security, catering) servicing the multi-floor building. Unionlearn seeks to provide a framework and resources to support access to learning for workers. Union Learning Representatives have been instrumental in raising interest in training and development, especially among the lowest-skilled workers and those with literacy and numeracy needs.

Critical success factors

Embedding throughout the organisation

Staff trained to provide information, advice and guidance

Partnership between employer and union

Talent management

Key benefits for the business

Improved staff retention

Effective succession processes

Lower recruitment costs

Higher levels of staff motivation



Process

Two years ago, Sean Green, the Unionlearn Co-ordinator, decided to develop the centre through pursuit of Matrix accreditation. Matrix is the quality standard for providers of information, advice and guidance services. The process of achieving accreditation requires the development of policies and procedures that underpin effective career development practice. Along with three other colleagues, Sean undertook this training and the development process. It brought the Insight Centre staff together as a team and developed a better understanding of what was required to provide impartial advice. Sean noted: "You always think you are doing things right but when you go through the process you identify where things can be done better or differently."

The Insight Centre has brokered learning provision with local FE colleges and training providers which includes a range of literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages qualifications. More recently, the Centre has developed an approach to Talent Management which seeks to identify skills gaps or vacancies in the business and to support the development of existing staff to fill these needs. A four-stage support process is provided through the Insight Centre, which includes developing a coherent CV, drafting covering letters, explaining the competency-based interview process adopted by Barclaycard, and supporting candidates' interview preparation.

Benefits

The Insight Centre supports the development of skills and the applications for jobs, helping people to realise their potential. The Centre has supported more than 120 colleagues to accreditation in various subjects, from ITQ, Literacy, Numeracy and NVQ's in work based subjects. Sean notes "you can see the confidence of the people coming through the centre improving and that there are lots of word-of-mouth referrals". In the last year, 14 people have been helped to progress in the company, which has helped to reduce recruitment costs and to remotivate staff. The estimated financial cost of recruiting and training a new starter is £4k + Salary and so developing current staff is a cost-effective means of meeting changing workforce requirements.

GENTOO

How career support blends career aspiration of individuals with the company culture

"Gentoo group are a people, property and planet organisation – a profit for purpose organisation. Our mission is to generate wealth by improving the lives of our customers and re-invest it through passionate people to create a climate for personal and collective opportunity."

Kath Curry, Head of People Development,
Gentoo

The business issue

Gentoo is a Registered Housing Association with approximately 30,000 homes in Sunderland. Formerly the Sunderland Housing Group, the rebrand to Gentoo reflected the organisation's wider activities and ethos. The organisation builds and manages homes, but it also sees its role to build communities and to have a tangible, positive effect on the way people live, develop and improve. As part of this aim, it has developed an Employment and Skills Strategy which helps the Group embed employment and training initiatives in all of its operations. These include an Apprenticeship programme and the Gentoo Employment Agency, which allows it to call upon local bank staff whom it has trained and who are familiar with the company's business.

Context

Gentoo has a strong association with its local area. It has been offering Apprenticeships to local people in construction for many years and has developed a business brand culture that has a strong 'people and planet' philosophy.

Critical success factors

Recognise and celebrate achievements such as Gold Investors in People standard

Embedded in the community

Strategic approach to workforce development

Leadership that takes decisive action

Key benefits for the business

Improved staff retention

Excellent customer feedback

Flexible staffing with the Gentoo agency

Helped in securing new business contracts



Process

As part of the process of building an Employment and Skills Strategy, Gentoo has reviewed its current skills profile and future skills needs in line with the prevailing business environment. This has led it to make difficult decisions to offer redundancy in its construction areas, whilst recruiting Apprenticeships into its social care business. A career planning approach has been used to support those who are being made redundant, with the option for a sideways move into other areas of the businesses being considered alongside the potential to be part of the Gentoo Employment Agency bank of temporary staff. This is part of a supported process managed by the People Development team, who are qualified learning and development advisers who plan training and development opportunities that support the business whilst growing the skills, confidence and flexibility of their employees.

Gentoo's engagement with its local area takes many forms. It is a sponsor of a local school, Academy 360, which is located in a very deprived area of Sunderland. It also publicises its Apprenticeship schemes through Jobcentre Plus and in local schools and colleges. Gentoo uses its recruitment as an opportunity to run workshops to highlight to young people and younger adults the importance of employability skills. Such workshops feed into careers education programmes, as they include an element of positive action training, with pupils at an all-girls school being challenged to consider construction as a viable and attractive career option. Gentoo often provides work experience placements for young people as part of its career-related learning. It has supported over 60 pupils in a local school in attaining a BTEC Level 1 Introductory Certificate and Diploma in Construction, with a further 19 pupils going through this programme at the moment.

Benefits

Gentoo finds that its employability skills training in the community brings a higher standard of applicant to the interview process. Meanwhile, Gentoo Agency means that it can cover staff holidays and sickness and save on fees for temporary staff from recruitment agencies, as well as saving on down-time since Gentoo Agency staff already have experience within the Group. The organisation's strong community base and employee development work has led to its listing within the top 50 of the Times Top 100 companies to work for – an achievement they are proud of.

BUPA HEALTH & WELLBEING (BHW) UK

How a career development intervention helped manage a people change process

The business issue

Bupa is one of the UK's leading healthcare companies, and Bupa Health & Wellbeing (BHW) UK makes up a key part of the business. It provides a range of healthcare products and services to customers – whatever their stage of life, and whatever health and wellbeing challenges they face.

There have been many changes in the healthcare sector over recent years. BHW UK continues to evolve and develop its products, services and processes to best meet the needs of its customers. Economic and market conditions have meant that BHW UK has embarked on a large-scale programme of people change, which has affected a number of areas of the business. A key facet of this change programme has been the design and implementation of a comprehensive package of career development information and support to those employees potentially affected by the change programme.

Context

BHW UK has been through significant change in recent years, and there have been a number of changes in job roles to improve customer experience. This has resulted in a large number of employees being placed at risk of redundancy. In 2010 the scale of the people change was unprecedented, with 420 employees affected.

Over a period of six months, a number of areas within the business including Operations, Processing, Sales and Marketing and Human Resources were affected. The primary role of the BHW Learning and Development Team was to provide a comprehensive package of career development support to those employees. Unfortunately, given the scale of people change, not all employees could be relocated or redeployed within the Bupa Group, so BHW UK felt that it was crucial that those individuals 'at risk' were given career development coaching and support to facilitate them in finding alternative employment.

Critical success factors

Comprehensive package of career development support for all employees placed 'at risk'

Experienced and committed team of in-house Learning and Development professionals to design and deliver support, complemented by external expertise

Engagement activity post-change to re-engage all employees

Key benefits for the business

Staff that remain in the organisation are supported into other roles or locations within the Bupa Group

Staff that leave the organisation are skilled and prepared to apply, and interview for new positions outside the organisation

Resources are made available to all areas of the Bupa Group



Process

The support included a number of interventions, including the delivery of workshops, the design and production of e-learning materials and workbooks, and the hosting of a number of road shows where external career agencies were invited to take part.

A number of bite-size modules were delivered face-to-face by the Learning and Development team, comprising two-hour workshops. All employees affected by the people change were invited and enabled to attend the various sessions on topics such as CV writing, interviews (practice and support), self-marketing/self-promotion, assessment centres, and understanding and dealing with change. The primary aim of these sessions was to skill people to go into the employment market, preparing them both mentally and practically to obtain and attend interviews and assessment centres. All sessions were evaluated, and feedback from participants was very positive.

A range of e-learning materials were created to complement the workshops. If individuals felt that they needed more information or support on any of the topics after the workshops, this was readily and easily accessed through a newly created learning directory on the BHW UK portal. Workbooks on CV writing, including examples of good and bad CVs, were very popular, as well as another on how to carry out organisational research to inform and enhance job search, application and interview. These resources are now stored on the Bupa Group Worldwide intranet site and have been utilised by other English-speaking areas of the business.

BHW UK also hosted a number of road shows which invited agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and HM Revenue and Customs, and arranged talks from experts about the local jobs market, as well as sessions on how to manage your money and information on benefit entitlements.

For all staff that were still with BHW UK after the people change programme (including

many who had been placed 'at risk') a Group-wide conference-style engagement event was organised to re-engage employees after the change. All 3,500 employees, in groups of 50 people at a time travelled through a number of interactive zones designed to communicate key messages about the reasons for the change and information on the future strategic direction of the company. Within this event employees were also actively engaged in identifying and key behaviours required of BHW staff after the people change.

Benefits

Focus groups and exit interviews revealed that those employees who had been through the change programme had found the careers support and guidance very helpful and rated the various interventions highly. Staff that remained within the organisation were supported into other roles or locations within the Bupa Group. This enabled key skills, experience and knowledge to be retained within the business. For those staff that did have to leave the organisation the package of career development information and training meant that they were better skilled and prepared to apply, and interview for new positions outside the Bupa Group. The learning resources and materials created as a result of this people change have subsequently been made available to the entire Bupa Group.

1610

How a company's career progression framework supports the appointment of new apprentices which led to business innovation and growth

"Our career opportunities frameworks ensure that all members of staff can see how they can build their skills to help to build our business."

Margaret Luck, Head of Workforce Development,
1610

The business issue

Formerly Somerset Leisure Limited, 1610 is led by Tim Nightingale, an entrepreneurial business manager who has adopted an energetic and creative approach to reinvigorating the business. 1610 currently operates 13 Leisure Centres across Somerset and is pursuing contracts further afield. The business is growing rapidly, moving from a turnover of £4 million to £7 million within the space of two years. 1610 runs leisure centres, but is also developing a wide range of other activities. To help meet the needs of an expanding and diversifying business, the company needed to recruit staff with new skills and leisure interests and fresh perspectives.

Context

The company vision is that 'we are all about active living, which is why we live to ensure you get the most out of life, by squeezing every last drop out of every experience'. This approach to the business brought renewed drive and enthusiasm for change and development to the company. This in turn required a fresh approach to workforce development, both to develop the skills and entrepreneurial talents of existing staff and to recruit new staff.

Critical success factors

Effective and active recruitment processes

Career progression framework visible to all staff members

Working with accredited training providers to develop new qualifications

Work with existing staff members to demonstrate the potential benefit to the business

Key benefits for the business

Diversified the business offer

Reinvigorated work for existing members of staff

Enhanced flexibility among the workforce

Enhanced ability to offer outreach services into the local community



Process

1610 plan and manage their workforce using a career progression framework which sets out the expectations of post-holders at all levels in the company, the necessary skills and qualifications needed at each level and support available to encourage employees to progress. As part of their workforce planning, 1610 decided to recruit some young apprentices. Their first round of recruitment saw 14 trained young people leave with qualifications and enter employment. A second round has continued to recruit and support apprentices in a process which incorporates career development throughout. Vacancies are advertised through Connexions and Jobcentre Plus with an online application process which apprentices have said was straightforward. This was followed by a day-long selection process which provided ample opportunities for candidates to find out more about careers at 1610 – of the eight Apprenticeships that were offered, six were taken up. Then, as part of their induction training, apprentices participate in sessions that explain how their training builds their competence across a wide range of skills and how these fit with the development plans of the company. Finally, they are introduced to the Career Progression Framework which sets out the skills and qualifications alongside interpersonal skills needed at each level in the organisation's management structure and across all specialisms from lifeguards to special needs to fitness to business support.

The process has had an impact on setting up national qualification standards in its engagement with SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for the Active Leisure, Learning and Wellbeing Industry. Its young apprentices were keen to explore how their skills in new sports that they were passionate about could become part of the 1610 offer. Consequently, 1610 have been working with SkillsActive to develop a Framework for accrediting Parkour skills, and its business managers have been piloting ways to build this into their customer offer of activities.

Benefits

The new recruits are strong advocates for the business. One former apprentice recalled that: "At the interview for the first time in years I was spoken to and treated like a somebody, not a nobody. Since joining 1610 I have achieved lots of different qualifications. My wife is proud of me and my kids think it is 'cool' that I work in a sports centre. They tell all their friends about this!"

Margaret Luck has seen other benefits, with all the new apprentices showing great potential. They are very enthusiastic, engaging and keen to learn. As a consequence the company has been able to expand their business by offering additional and different activity sessions. They have also noticed an improvement in overall staff commitment and enthusiasm for the company as the new recruits have brought fresh ideas and energy to the business.

Employers who decide to participate in career development are driven by a commitment to workforce development as a way to build a broad set of business benefits.

This report presents seven examples of how businesses in the UK have benefited from approaches to business issues that include a career development approach. These businesses cover a range of sectors from manufacturing to leisure and in size from small enterprises to major international companies. The UK Commission would like to thank those employers who took part in this work.

Their experiences show how career development approaches can bring a range of benefits including:

- Solving skills shortages
- Recruiting the right people
- Developing the workforce
- Managing business restructuring
- Growing a responsible brand



The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a social partnership, led by Commissioners from large and small employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector. Our mission is to raise skill levels to help drive enterprise, create more and better jobs and economic growth.

UKCES

Renaissance House
Adwick Park
Wath-upon-Dearne
Rotherham
S63 5NB

T +44 (0)1709 774 800

F +44 (0)1709 774 801

UKCES

28-30 Grosvenor Gardens
London
SW1W 0TT

T +44 (0)20 7881 8900

F +44 (0)20 7881 8999

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