

Introduction

This is a summary of the development work undertaken with the National Skills Academy (NSA) for Food and Drink Manufacturing and their training provider network during the period August 2009 to March 2010, as part of the LSIS World Class Skills (WCS) programme.

Who is it for?

This report is aimed at providers who were not involved in the support and would like to know more about it.

What will they gain from it?

The report describes the support and shares some 'top tips' that participants took from the support.

Project background

The work with the NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing provider network involved a series of workshops and follow-up individual consultancy. It supported the participants to become more employer responsive to the needs of this specific sector.

National Skills Academy for Food and Drink Manufacturing

Aims

The aims of the work with NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing were to:

- refresh participants' understanding of what an effective employer engagement strategy looks like;
- increase understanding of key marketing tools and techniques in the sector;
- highlight to participants how being part of the NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing can facilitate employer engagement;
- facilitate sharing of good practice in engaging food and drink manufacturing employers;
- support participants in implementing employer responsive practices within the wider organisation through follow-up consultancy support;
- provide a platform for participants to network with one another and the NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing;
- build on the work undertaken in year one of WCS.

Participants

The NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing is a 'network of excellence', consisting of 60 providers. This network is split into eight industry subsectors - (e.g. butchery, bakery) and eight subject areas (e.g. Lean manufacturing, robotics and automation).

Twenty-one delegates from 15 participants attended workshops, with 11 of these participants taking up the consultancy support. The participants included further education colleges, independent training providers and higher education institutions.

NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing staff were involved in developing the support activity and had significant input into workshops.

“ We were conscious that for the foreseeable future public funding was likely to be significantly harder to find and therefore we needed to develop training products that businesses would value and be prepared to pay for. We now have a strategy that will form the basis of our focused efforts to maintain and increase both the volume of business and our profitability.”

Les Webb, Campus Training

For further information on the World Class Skills programme please visit
www.excellencegateway.org.uk/wcs

Activity

Participants attended the following events:

- a standard WCS workshop on employer engagement strategies customised for this specific sector;
- a bespoke workshop focusing on marketing and the importance of being market led in this sector. It also included a session on using the NSA branding effectively.

Participants were also offered a short period of follow-up consultancy. The focus of the consultancy support included:

- development of an effective employer engagement strategy;
- development of an organisation or sector specific marketing strategy;
- guidance on cross-selling provision across the organisation.

Challenges

Although overall employment numbers are expected to contract in the sector, employment projections suggest that the industry will need in the order of 137,000 new recruits between 2007 and 2017.

This presents a challenge to providers who need to:

- keep abreast of the changing requirements for new entrants to the industry;
- create genuinely employer responsive provision to generate sustainable income;
- target individual sub-sectors in a highly fragmented market;
- influence employer responsiveness strategies within the wider organisation.

This often requires a change in culture and operations within the provider.

Impact

The support has encouraged participants to take a step back from operations and consider their strategic goals in order to target the employer engagement effort in the right place.

Many participants indicate that they will review their employer engagement strategies with renewed enthusiasm, having been equipped with the tools and techniques to do so.

Participants also report that the discussion of the marketing cycle has prompted them to review the extent to which the employer is at the centre of their activities, and to make the necessary changes to become more market-led.

Participant case study

Campus Training Ltd

Campus Training is an independent training provider that delivers bespoke programmes and national qualifications.

Campus Training aims to grow by reducing dependency on funded training and by increasing the employer-responsiveness of provision.

A delegate from Campus Training attended the Employer Engagement Strategies workshop and the company benefited from the follow-up consultancy.

As a result of the support, they have instigated a three year employer engagement strategy with the aim of increasing sales through existing and prospective employer relationships.

In particular the WCS support has encouraged them to take a whole organisation approach to employer responsiveness, involving all staff with a common aim.

“The employer engagement strategy we have developed with the WCS team has provided a ‘sat-nav’ for our organisation - we are heading in the right direction and have specified the route that we want to take!”

Les Webb, Campus Training

Top tips

- Be specific about which industry sub-sectors you are targeting and understand its particular needs and challenges.
- Improve (the Sector Skills Council for Food and Drink Manufacturing) and the NSA for Food and Drink Manufacturing are a useful source of labour market information for the sector.
- Consider developing clusters of short courses, linked to the Qualifications and Credit Framework, which can be closely aligned both to sub-sector and subject specialisms.

What's next for you?

If you are working in this sector, these are some of the issues you should consider:

- Employers in the sector are looking for training that impacts on their business performance including productivity and efficiency based training. This includes Lean manufacturing and leadership programmes.
- You can link these programmes to support that goes beyond simply offering training and extends into diagnosis and consultancy support, with knowledge transfer of techniques to staff.

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