

CMC Aust Marketing

Getting ready to deliver Apprenticeships effectively

Case study



About CMC Aust Marketing

CMC Aust Marketing (CMC) is a Kent-based NVQ Centre working in a Train to Gain consortium with Canterbury College. CMC delivers NVQs in areas such as management, customer service and business administration at Levels 2, 3 and 4, and over the past 12 years has delivered European Social Fund projects and Jobcentre Plus programmes.

The organisation is a small family business, with three people involved in NVQ delivery. Staff are proud of being highly flexible and responsive to customer needs, and retention and achievement rates are well above national targets.

Starting point

The key contact for the Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme was CMC's Managing Director. The organisation became involved for three reasons:

- concern about future funding;
- concern about their ability to meet increasingly onerous quality assurance requirements; and
- wanting to determine if they could continue to operate as a business in the changing funding environment.¹

Reviewing the options

Initial support from the SER programme peer adviser took the form of a face-to-face

meeting to establish the current position of the organisation, its possible direction and its main strengths and weaknesses.

The funding situation with Train to Gain meant that CMC had reached a crossroads. They had to decide whether to continue under the current delivery model, which involved only the NVQ element of the training, or to adapt to the changing funding requirements.

Furthermore, as an organisation, CMC had to make some difficult decisions about the viability of continuing to run the business at all. They decided to move forward with a plan to deliver Apprenticeships.

The second peer adviser support visit was used to consider what extra elements CMC would need to deliver a full Apprenticeship. The review revealed surprising and positive results. The majority of frameworks were made up mostly of NVQs, which the organisation was already delivering well. The only extra elements needed were Key Skills. Delivering Apprenticeships seemed to be a truly viable option for CMC.

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Managing Director, CMC

¹ This resource was produced by CfBT for the LSIS Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme. It was current at April 2011.

Skills and Employer Responsiveness (SER) programme

Making the transition happen

The next stage was to approach the college through which CMC sub contracts training, to see if more of the Apprenticeship programme could be delivered by CMC in line with the changes. This proposal was met positively.

CMC then began to start analysing inspection-approved paperwork and the Apprenticeship framework requirements. These included progress review templates, Individual Learning Plans, session plans and schemes of work. This provided CMC with a good understanding of what to expect from the quality assurance aspect of delivering Apprenticeships.

The final stage of the intervention from the peer adviser was advice on the use of the electronic labour market information (e-LMI) tool. This enabled CMC to look at the local (and possible national) need for the services they could provide, in line with the changes. This will result in CMC taking more responsibility for recruitment onto the programmes they offer, rather than relying on the contract holder to refer learners.

Benefits

From the outset, the effect of accessing support through the SER programme was significant. According to the Managing Director:

“The changes brought about following the support from the peer adviser have prolonged the life of the company and brought it through a tough time. CMC has been able to diversify and, through changes to the programme offer, has increased profit as well.”

The increased awareness of what they could offer gave CMC more influence over the contract holder and enabled them to look at taking on more Apprenticeship candidates.

Use of the e-LMI tool helped CMC to determine their own direction rather than relying on the college to feed in the leads. Using LMI more strategically enabled them to identify potential target customers in their

operating area and to forecast potential sales. Roles have been reversed and the positive marketing from CMC enables them to refer potential learners to the college.

The overall effect on the morale and drive of the organisation alone has been worth the involvement in the SER programme. The peer adviser helped them to tackle quality assurance issues and consider business development prospects. CMC's vision and objectives have been refreshed and staff can now see opportunities for the future. Learners are also now in a more advantageous position to access training opportunities.

The Managing Director of CMC commented:

“Without the SER programme we would not have considered offering Apprenticeships and we would have had to completely redefine our business model. Instead we have a route to build on our heritage and experience for the next five year plan period.”

Next steps

In planning for the future, CMC would benefit from input on the Training Quality Standard (TQS) and other quality-related tools such as the Common Inspection Framework used by Ofsted. This would help to prepare them for the new requirements in the delivery of Apprenticeships, which might be different from what was expected under Train to Gain. They would also benefit from updates on current equality and diversity legislation in line with inspection criteria and from visiting some Apprenticeship providers to share effective practice.

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