Organisational change: developing responsive provision

A guidance booklet

Introducton

Making the organisational changes required to be responsive to the needs of employers represents a challenge for many providers. Developing strategies and structuring the organisation to deliver high quality, flexible training and support for employers requires providers to undertake strategic review and long-term planning.

The World Class Skills: Developing Responsive Provision (WCS) programme from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) supported this change process. WCS offered the Learning and Skills Council-funded providers a wide range of events, consultancies and innovative support to successfully implement plans to meet their goals for employer-responsive provision.

This booklet gives five provider case studies to highlight different aspects of organisational change and the support provided from WCS. The case studies reflect the diversity of the learning and skills sector. They outline the range of issues addressed by each provider in developing employer responsiveness and illustrate how they continue to work towards further improvements.

Each case study provides 'Top tips' based on the provider's experience. These should help your organisation review and plan different aspects of organisational change for employer responsiveness.

The case studies focus on the following issues:

a) **Organisational change and strategy**
   The North East Chamber of Commerce's strategic planning for its programme delivery across a wide geographic area

b) **Implementing Customer Relationship Management (CRM)**
   Implementing CRM at Huntingdon Regional College

c) **Using Labour Market Information (LMI)**
   NVQ Training and Consultancy Ltd using LMI for more effective targeting of new sectors and responding to market need

d) **Achieving Training Quality Standard (TQS) part A**
   Totton Sixth Form College making organisational changes to achieve TQS part A

e) **Embedding employer engagement**
   York College implementing effective practice to embed employer engagement throughout the organisation

Case study A: Organisational change and strategy

Name	North East Chamber of Commerce
ITP/FE college/Other	Independent training provider
Location	Durham (head office)
Size of organisation	2008/09 enrolments: 1,467
Provider contact details (email address)	Kelly Pattison (head of quality) kelly.pattison@necc.co.uk
Provider website	http://www.necc.co.uk/
Core areas of employer responsive support	Train to Gain, Apprenticeships, Entry to Employment and a Foundation Degree (with Tyneside University). As a Chamber of Commerce, NECC also supports approximately 4,000 members with networking events, information and other services

Background

The North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC) has been the only regional Chamber of Commerce since 1995, covering a wide geographical area from Berwick in the north to North Yorkshire in the south. There are regional offices in Newcastle, Sunderland, Darlington, Northallerton and Middlesbrough. NECC was one of the first providers inspected under the new Ofsted framework in 2009 and achieved a 'Good' grade 2 rating. NECC registered one in ten apprentices in the region, with good completion rates of 72 % (6 % above the national average) in 2008/09. On Train to Gain the completion rate in 2008/09 was 83 % (10 % above the national average).

Issues and challenges faced

In 2009, a new strategy for employer engagement was required to identify and effectively meet the business needs of employers. Up to this time NECC had two separate teams selling either training or membership services. Under this system visits to employers could result in missed opportunities for full engagement with NECC services.

On the training side, there were systems in need of improvement. A Training Quality Standard (TQS) application in mid-2008 had been unsuccessful. At that point, NECC tracked the impact of training on the learner but did not collect evidence of the impact on the employer's business. There also was no organisational needs analysis (ONA) system consistently in use with employers. Although an ONA form was in existence it wasn't extensively used in practice as account managers, particularly in membership services, could not see the benefits either to the organisation or to themselves. This became a clear priority for improvement.

In order to implement the employer responsiveness strategy, a restructure of account management roles took place in 2009 merging the two sales teams focussed on training and membership services. As a result, the new Sales and Marketing Directorate, in which the new team was based, was faced with several management challenges. For example, while the membership sales team used a newly introduced customer relationship management (CRM) system, the training sales team had developed a paper-based tracking system for themselves.

There was a further challenge as account managers who previously dealt with only membership services now required extensive knowledge on different vocational areas, funding streams and learner eligibility. Significant support was required for everyone to help them adapt to their new roles and to perform effectively using new systems.

'The WCS mapping exercises and support for the account team were very valuable and provided the ideal bonding exercise to support our restructure for employer responsiveness.'

Kelly Pattison (head of quality)

Organisational change development activity

Consultancy support from WCS provided a timely opportunity to review progress with these organisational challenges and to implement a new strategy to identify all areas of activity around improving employer responsive provision.

The training director and the head of quality used the strategy building template from WCS to provide a 'health check' for employer responsiveness (available in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers'). This tool enabled them to objectively look at their current employer engagement strategy and develop objectives, targets, success measures and an implementation plan. The process supported the need for restructuring account management alongside other operational changes.

One of the areas the strategy building template alerted them to in terms of needing development was process improvement. As a result, a workshop helped them see how much time had been spent on various administrative processes, along with the internal constraints and consequent waste of resources. This workshop clearly identified issues around the handover processes between the account managers and the delivery team. It also led to a review of key roles in the induction process, such as providing information, advice and guidance, administering Skills for Life checks and introducing health and safety for learners. The WCS document 'Thematics – Lean process improvement' explores these techniques further. (This can be downloaded from the website address in the Useful Resources section at the end of this case study).

Following this review, the training advisers took over these tasks, ensuring that learners enrolled on the best programme for them. NECC put in place a seamless sign-up, induction and course start up process. The impact of this change was measurable in improved success and retention rates. Success rates for Apprenticeships improved from 72.6 % in 2008/09 to 79 % in 2009/10 – and improvements in retention continue. Involvement of training advisors in providing information, advice and guidance (IAG) and initial assessment has also proved crucial in developing provision for specialised sectors such as engineering and dental technicians as these staff know what the learner requirements are for the course.

Additionally from the initial 'health check', NECC believed that they could make more of their relationships with employers. The head of quality attended a WCS event on measuring bottom-line benefits. As a result, NECC recognised the potential impact that a well designed ONA could have on its business. An employer's goals and targets form the basis of its high-level business plan, and therefore need to be well defined. Without this, the measurement of benefits realisation is ultimately difficult. Taking this on board, the head of quality worked with NECC staff (including the account managers) to review and redesign its ONA form to make it more streamlined and better support its bottom-line benefits impact model that was separately under development within NECC.

To maximise the use of these products, NECC needed to develop a support programme for the 14 account managers in the newly merged team. Two of the key topics covered in this programme were:

- Introducing them to the concept of bottom-line benefits from an employer perspective and some of the possible impact measures; and
- Training them in the use of CRM for the whole of the employer journey, as it had previously only been used for enquiry tracking. By using CRM for the whole employer journey, they could ensure a joined-up approach to liaising with employers and would be able to analyse their engagement with them. One of the WCS tools used for this was 'Guidelines on developing CRM systems'.

Results and impact

Following the strategy for employer responsiveness a number of activities were identified, implemented and monitored. The strategy provided a valuable structure so that the appropriate organisational changes could take place.

The account management team work well together and are now more effectively embedded in the organisational structure. A comparison of employer survey data from January 2009 to June 2010 illustrates the impact of this. The survey recorded the responsiveness of the Training Recruitment Team (i.e. experience of recruiting a new apprentice) as 79 % good or better in 2009 and this increased to 92 % in 2010. ONAs are also used as a matter of course (use is up by 60 %), enabling impact plans to be captured at the outset of employer engagement for review after six months.

The whole account management team now successfully use CRM. Kelly Pattison says, *'CRM is now at the heart of how we hand over information from one team to another.'* The CRM system was changed to make it more user-friendly and to streamline processes (recording the information collected on ONAs, for example). This has not only significantly reduced the amount of paperwork but has reduced the delay for learners between induction and course commencement – now an average of 48 hours compared with up to a month previously.
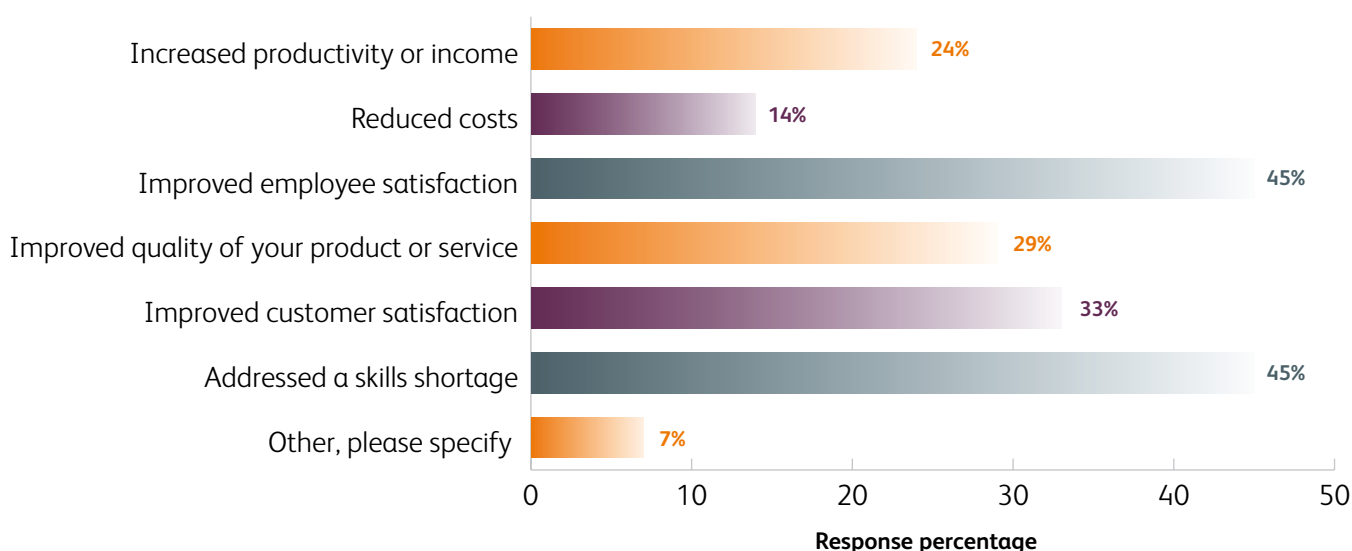
As the revised ONA was only introduced in December 2009 it is too soon to identify any meaningful impact measures. The NECC impact model uses the bottom-line benefits model introduced through the WCS programme. For each new employer NECC makes a record of the relevant impact measure – which business measure(s) the company is trying to improve because of its use of the NECC service. The account managers record these impact measures on the CRM system using a dropdown selection and open text fields and are able to record the business targets in more detail, such as 'reduce customer complaints by 10 %'.

In the future, reports will be available to show what percentage of employers had achieved their impact measures, backed up by the employer survey data. These reports will also have the detail in the background to identify good case studies, testimonials or even lessons to learn for the future.

As an example, the latest employer survey has the following question: 'Has using NECC Training Services had a positive impact on your business?'

69 % said yes, 26 % said it was too early to judge, leaving just 6 % who said no. The positive impact was broken down as follows (employers could tick more than one box):

How would you sum up the positive effect on your business?

Category	Response percentage
Increased productivity or income	24%
Reduced costs	14%
Improved employee satisfaction	45%
Improved quality of your product or service	29%
Improved customer satisfaction	33%
Addressed a skills shortage	45%
Other, please specify	7%

Response percentage

Further organisational changes planned

NECC is clear about its activities for the future:

- To carefully track and evaluate the impact measures resulting from starting the six month follow-up of ONAs;
- To further develop a sustainability strategy which will take place with wider use of e-portfolios for assessment to reduce assessor travel; and
- A second application to TQS as the process itself will provide a valuable opportunity for review and further quality improvement.

Top tips for developing an organisational change strategy

The experience of organisational change for employer responsiveness at NECC has led to the following top tips:

- Involve staff fully in improvement exercises to get their support and buy-in upfront for any subsequent changes;
- Think about the customer – a customer journey mapping exercise can focus the mind on what your customers expect;
- Have a clear goal in mind as improvement activities can raise unexpected issues which could be distracting – it helps to be clear about what outcomes you want to achieve;
- Be realistic – it can take more time than senior management may expect to make changes and even longer to see a positive impact; and
- Explain fully to staff *why* changes need to be made and they will be much more likely to accept them.

Useful resources

- **Strategy building template**
  Included in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers'
- **Guidelines on developing customer relationship management systems**
- **Thematics – Lean process improvement**
- **Event pack – Identifying bottom-line benefits**

To download these resources go to
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser

Feedback from NECC employer customers

'I must congratulate NECC for the commitment and dedication shown by its staff. The advice and management has greatly enhanced the abilities and attitudes of the young people we employ. This will inevitably lead to developing the business as a whole and a more secure future for the people within the business.'

Washington Components (engineering sector)

'We believe that the best way to maintain our leading market position is to develop our staff and one of the reasons our Apprenticeship programme has been so successful is the partnership we have with NECC. In the past six years all our apprentices have successfully completed their studies with NECC and they have recently shown they are prepared to go the extra mile with professionalism and dedication.'

Draeger (engineering sector)

'NECC's responsiveness to our company has massively improved. We were allocated a new training adviser following issues we had experienced, and he has worked wonders with our learners. Communications have improved, and learners contact the training adviser through email and get responses the same day.'

Sintons LLP (business and professional sector)

Case study B: implementing customer relationship management (CRM)

Name	Huntingdonshire Regional College
ITP/FE college/Other	General further education college
Location	Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire
Size of organisation	2008/09 enrolments: 6,877
Provider contact details (email address)	Anne Phillips (vice-principal) anne-phillips@huntingdon.ac.uk
Provider website	http://www.huntingdon.ac.uk/
Core areas of employer responsive support	Train to Gain with only low volume and 'out of region' provision sub-contracted to three independent training providers, Apprenticeships and bespoke full-cost recovery programmes

Background

Huntingdonshire Regional College was described by Ofsted in 2008 as 'a small general further education college with a main site in Huntingdon and a smaller campus at St Neots'. The catchment area is largely rural, with a high proportion of small and medium size employer customers from a wide range of sectors. This case study looks at the challenges involved in implementing CRM for employer responsiveness with relatively limited resources.

Issues and challenges faced

Huntingdonshire Regional College faced a challenge in 2007/08 when the local consortium of four colleges disbanded. There was a clear need to focus on employer engagement to meet new targets. Initially these targets were for Train to Gain and Apprenticeship provision and later for full-cost provision. This focus required an organisational and culture change at the college, and CRM was a potential catalyst to achieve this.

The Ofsted inspection in 2008 had recognised 'good work-based learning provision', but stated that the college needed to make improvements in its 'sharpness in the evaluation of data'. Employer responsive provision was an example where there was a need for easy access to consistent data across the college to provide information such as:

- the number and location of employer customers and sponsors
- employment sectors being engaged with
- the source of enquiries from employers
- the volume of repeat business
- measures of the quality of customer service being offered.

Huntingdon Regional College also required improved management information to assess the value of proposals being offered to employers, the conversion rate from proposals to contracts and the sources of most profitable employer engagement activity. This information was proving difficult and time-consuming to obtain from multiple databases without a single CRM system. The CRM system used by the Train to Gain consortium was seen to be too complex and cumbersome for a small college – and too expensive if it needed to customise it.

The structure at Huntingdonshire Regional College meant that there was no clear and consistent communication with employers and stakeholders. The college had not effectively mapped the employer journey with service level agreements (SLAs) in place. As a result, the college created a 'Services to Business' team responsible for employer responsiveness to increase its focus on employer engagement.

A small working group from this team was set up to begin the process of specifying requirements for a new CRM system together with an implementation plan. After extensive research and consultation with stakeholders, governors, staff and an external agency, the college purchased their chosen CRM system. The college made this decision because the system was closely integrated with Microsoft Outlook, and so would be widely used with minimal staff training.

However, implementing and embedding the CRM system did not prove as straightforward as expected. The issues that had to be addressed included:

- The new business development team at the college added late requirements to the original specification;
- Additional short-term reporting requirements to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (now Skills Funding Agency (SFA))for Train to Gain added further complexity;
- Data cleansing for transfer to the new system proved prohibitive and so it was decided to build a new employer contact database from scratch;
- The CRM entry screens proved over-complex and as a result more intensive support for users was required than anticipated;
- Functionality of the CRM system was not as good as expected – for example, multiple key contacts with a single employer could not be recognised;
- Making bespoke changes to the CRM system itself proved more difficult and expensive than expected; and
- The lack of a permanent CRM project manager with technical expertise and a strategic overview hampered the implementation and training on the new system at the outset.

Organisational change development activity

The employer responsiveness manager at the college attended the World Class Skills (WCS) workshop 'Making customer relationship management systems work for you'. (The event pack can be downloaded from the website address in the Useful Resources section at the end of this case study). She used the workshop resources to confirm the strategic benefits of CRM to the college. Following this, the new employer engagement team reviewed its planned use of CRM in conjunction with a review of its marketing strategy for employer engagement and an examination of the employer journey.

By reviewing the employer journey and the existing marketing strategy with WCS consultancy support, it was possible to identify the stages in the journey where employer data was needed and how the CRM system could support the process. The new marketing strategy enabled the team to determine exactly what information the CRM system needed to provide. This included metrics such as the source and number of leads, conversion rates, customer value and cross-selling opportunities.

Following a second restructuring at the college, which moved the assessors into the Services to Business team, there were additional requirements for the CRM system. It needed to track the assessors in their work with employers, as well as potentially open access to the system for a wider group of users in the college, including the general enquiries office.

A small dedicated group used WCS support over a five-month period to go through a structured review and practical planning process for the implementation of CRM. This group comprised the newly appointed CRM project manager, the CRM co-ordinator, the employer responsiveness manager and the vice-principal responsible for this area. A wider group than this would have made the review and planning process more complex and time-consuming.

Issues addressed by the group included:

- shared college values;
- vision for employer responsiveness;
- strategic plans for employer engagement; and
- CRM implementation planning guidance (see 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers').

Working through these issues enabled the group to gain a holistic view of the college employer engagement strategy, basing its use of CRM on a clear and reasoned vision and strategy. This helped to focus plans for CRM use primarily on collecting the information that was of benefit to the college.

The process confirmed that the CRM guiding principles already established were secure and that the strategy for employer engagement was sound. Some of the WCS planning tools that were available proved very useful, including the recognition and mapping of the 'employer journey' as well as clear identification of the key data capture points.

'It's really good to know that each employer opportunity is now on the CRM system so I no longer need to keep it in my in-box.'

Trish Wright (employer responsiveness manager)

Results and impact

The WCS consultancy gave the employer responsiveness team at the college a set of tactical and operational plans to drive the required culture change of using the CRM system forward with renewed enthusiasm. These plans contained short and medium operational targets and longer-term strategic direction for the more sophisticated use of CRM. The employer responsiveness team feels that it still has to grapple with the complexities and technical difficulties of its chosen CRM system. As a small college, it really needed a system that was simple to use and could be amended quickly and cheaply as funding regimes and policy priorities changed. The key learning point from this case study is the need for clarity about system requirements before purchasing a system. By purchasing the system first, it created difficulties as requirements were then identified which that system was not suited for.

Although challenges remain, the organisational change towards employer responsiveness continues to manifest itself, supported through the growing use of the CRM system. The Services to Business team currently use the CRM system, although there are plans to extend this use to other front-line staff and the curriculum teams.

Implementing culture change across the college is a long-term process. The college is determined to develop an evidence base to show results of successful implementation before a wider roll-out of CRM takes place. As an example, the college sends costed proposals for provision and services to employers within an agreed period in line with service level agreements and then records, tracks and follows up all such proposals.

As a result of constructing a new employer database, the college is now clearer over how many employer customers and sponsors it has. To provide better customer service, the teams now share details of agreed ONA outcomes and records of communications with employer customers. Data is available on the sources of enquiries from employers to inform marketing planning and the employment sectors being engaged with to support curriculum planning. Senior managers are able to receive reports showing progress towards other strategic targets in 2010/11, such as 70 % of learners coming through repeat business from employers and 60 % of new employer business being with SMEs.

In the short term, the CRM system will mean that the college can carry out more accurate and comprehensive employer surveys and conduct TNA follow-ups with named contacts. Going beyond this, it will be better able to target campaigns to enquirers and contacts in specific employment sectors.

The organisational change strategy for employer responsiveness will continue, supported by the CRM system. Plans are in place for CRM to also help to provide the necessary evidence for a Training Quality Standard (TQS) submission in due course.

Top tips for developing the use of CRM

Huntingdonshire Regional College has not found CRM implementation straightforward. It offers the following top tips to other providers:

- Plan carefully what you want your CRM system to do and ensure that senior managers are on board for cross-college implementation;
- Consult widely with external stakeholders, governors, managers and staff to ask what they want to get from the CRM system;
- Be very clear and precise about scoping system requirements before starting the process of researching and selecting an appropriate system;
- Specify a simple front screen and easy system access for users if at all possible;
- Take up references and make visits to reference sites for your chosen system;
- Make sure that any bespoke requirements are fully specified and costed prior to purchase of the CRM system;
- Prepare carefully for your institution to become data- and process-driven and ensure that a support programme is in place for all users;
- Have a dedicated project manager who can act as an 'evangelist' and a technical specialist if required;
- Provide 'good news' feedback and evidence of the benefits of CRM to managers and staff across the college; and
- Be prepared to meet the challenge of keeping data and contacts up to date.

Useful resources

- **CRM implementation planning guidance**
  Included in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness:
  A Toolkit for providers'
- **CRM benefits case template and example benefits**
  Included in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness:
  A Toolkit for providers'
- **Customer journey mapping**
- **Service-level agreement (SLA) checklist**
- **Strategic sales and marketing**
- **Event pack – Developing your vision for employer responsiveness**
- **Event pack – Employer engagement strategies**
- **Event pack – Making customer relationship management systems work for you**

To download these resources go to
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser

'I am still convinced of the benefits of CRM in supporting culture change towards employer responsiveness across the college. However, it would be a mistake to think that this process is simple – or quick!'

Anne Phillips (vice-principal)

Case study C: Labour market information (LMI)

Name	NVQ Training and Consultancy Services Ltd
ITP/FE college/Other	Independent training provider
Location	Birkenhead, Merseyside
Size of organisation	2008/09 enrolments: 1,500
Provider contact details (email address)	Jackie Hutchinson (director of sales and marketing) jackie.hutchinson@nvqworldwide.co.uk
Provider website	http://www.nvqworldwide.co.uk/
Core areas of employer responsive support	Train to Gain, full-cost recovery programmes, National Employer Service programme support, Apprenticeships

Background

The company started to offer training provision in health and social care (which is still 80 % of the business) to support the increased professionalism and legislative requirements of the sector. The company is now extending its provision into Scotland in response to market conditions and opportunities with a core client. It is also a member of consortia in other regions in England such as the Manchester Solutions Partnership.

Issues and challenges faced

The company has always regarded itself as very 'employer responsive', but in 2007 faced challenging growth targets with new opportunities arising from Train to Gain provision. A new employer engagement strategy was required to move beyond existing employer relationships and to extend provision beyond the health and social care sector. It recognised that this strategy would require access to new sources and forms of market intelligence in order to plan and deliver employer responsive provision. The initial strategic focus was on developing its sales capacity.

NVQ Training and Consultancy Services Ltd put a sales team in place to achieve a high volume of starts on Train to Gain. This approach soon resulted in a rather disjointed employer journey as members of different teams from within the company engaged with employers at different stages of the engagement and delivery process. Furthermore, the separation between the sales-driven 'front-end' team and the delivery team was not very conducive to discussions by assessors when visiting employers about how they could provide further support. The result was that the company could miss additional support opportunities.

A strategic approach was therefore required. World Class Skills (WCS) resources and consultancy support offered an opportunity to support this through training the team in the use of labour market information (LMI). This would help to implement good practice within the organisation and in turn widen the client base and increase turnover and profit.

The organisational change development activity with LMI

The employer responsive team decided to develop the use of LMI to help it continue to achieve growth targets and meet revised strategic priorities for diversification into other sectors.

The LMI development activity took the form of an initial workshop which provided an overview of the use of the eLMI Tool to identify and target new sectors and employers beyond health and social care. (The eLMI Tool can be downloaded from the website address in the Useful Resources section at the end of this case study). The workshop identified the type and range of information available and how it could inform product development and the targeting of employers.

For all providers, the benefits of using the eLMI tool are that it can do the following:

- Build an accurate and current picture of local geography and the employers working within it;
- Identify opportunities for employer engagement by reviewing employers in location by sector to help inform strategic development;
- Identify details of nearby employers for use in future contact or marketing activities; and
- Monitor progress by uploading your own employer data and therefore analysing the penetration by each market – measured over time it demonstrates the achievement of strategic objectives.

The workshop also looked more broadly at LMI, covering LMI evaluation, action planning, the development and delivery of provision and marketing to employers. The employer responsive team reviewed the use of local data analysis for sector research in order to get more targeted employer engagement. Details on these aspects of LMI are in the LMI section of 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers'.

The use of LMI has helped the company to inform the organisational strategy for employer-responsive provision with the use of external surveys and data from sources such as the National Employer Survey. The eLMI tool also gave the company the opportunity to review trends at regional and local level and to check variations from the national picture. Using LMI helped to provide clear regional and local mapping of provision and facilitated the targeting of potential new customers. The company is now better able to focus sales and marketing activities such as newsletters to new target sectors. It also uses employer focus groups and face-to-face interviews with new clients to maximise a two-way flow of information about training opportunities.

Results and impact

The LMI support from WCS helped to establish robust strategies for structuring the business around knowledge of what is happening in the market. Restructuring of the employer responsiveness team has resulted in meeting the opportunities for growth in not only Apprenticeships at 16 to 18 and 19+, but also commercial training alongside the National Employer Service and new initiatives such as provision in Scotland, where revenue has increased to over £200,000.

Market information has enabled the company to respond quickly to new opportunities. Employer focus groups have enabled the development of a deeper understanding of client needs in new sectors. Good relationships with Sector Skills Councils also provide relevant and current data to share with prospective and existing clients.

The potential new funding streams for Apprenticeships will require continued growth in geographical coverage by the company. LMI data from reports such a 'Working Futures' informs these plans as well as enables bids for new external funding such as European Social Fund (ESF)[1].

There are now tangible benefits resulting from organisational change and the strategic use of LMI. There is now a more streamlined structure with growth in the share of revenue from new sectors other than health and social care, which has increased from 8 % in 2008/09 to 20 % in 2009/10. There is a high level of repeat business from satisfied clients, currently running at around 70 %. Above all, attrition rates across the board have fallen from over 10 % in 2008/09 to less than 2 % in 2009/10, reflecting more successful learners.

'The World Class Skills resources were amazing. They were succinct, appropriate to our needs and really useful for helping to drive the changes required in our use of LMI.'

Jackie Hutchinson (director of sales and marketing)

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[1] Working Futures 2007–2017 sets out labour projects to 2017 by industry and geography. It is available at:
http://www.ukces.org.uk/working-futures-2007-2017-executive-summary-2

Jackie Hutchinson, director of sales and marketing, says, *'LMI now informs our strategy at all levels and has simply become business as usual.'*

WCS gave NVQ Training and Consultancy a strong market position, improving what they already did well, introducing new perspectives on the employer journey and made them look at the market in a different way – not just for today but for tomorrow.

The company continues to see good growth at almost 50 % year on year in a fast-changing environment. It is trading profitably and feels it is ready for forthcoming changes in policy and funding. These challenges will inevitably require new business models, but due in part to WCS, the company feels that it is well equipped to meet whatever new challenges emerge in the coming months and years.

Top tips for organisational change and the use of LMI:

- Make strategic decisions based on the best available market information about sectors targeted for growth and dedicate resources to LMI research and information exchange;
- Get the organisational structure right for your business – with a focus on market opportunities and employer needs;
- Identify opportunities for cross-team working, ensuring that assessors are engaged throughout the employer journey and sharing information to improve efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Understand your employer clients and their business needs in order to maximise opportunities for further training and gain market intelligence.

Useful resources

- **eLMI user guide**
  Included in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers'
- **LMI toolkit for Apprenticeship Expansion**
  Included in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers'
- **Event pack – Using LMI for commercial advantage**
- **eLMI tool**

To download these resources go to http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser

- **Working Futures Report**
  Download from http://www.ukces.org.uk/ working-futures-2007-2017-executive-summary-2

'We have an excellent professional and productive working relationship with NVQ Training and Consultancy Services. They are responsive and flexible and the quality of their training provision is excellent.'

Alan Howells (training manager, Community Integrated Care)

Case study D: Training Quality Standard

Name	Totton College
ITP/FE college/Other	Sixth Form College
Location	Totton, Hampshire
Size of organisation	2008/09 enrolments: 4,119
Provider contact details (email address)	Chris Herbert (head of business development) cherbert@totton.ac.uk and Sarah Rowland (Apprenticeship manager) srowland@totton.ac.uk
Provider website	http://www.totton.ac.uk
Core areas of employer responsive support	Train to Gain, Apprenticeships, full-cost recovery programmes and work preparation for full-time learners

Background

Totton College is a medium-size sixth form college on the outskirts of the New Forest National Park. The catchment area is very mixed with rural SMEs to the west and the urban and industrial areas around Southampton to the east. Totton College gained TQS Part A in 2010 – only the second sixth form college in the country to do so. The organisational change needed to achieve this is the focus of this case study.

Issues and challenges faced

There were a number of challenges facing Totton College in 2008 including:

- a reduction in the core grant to the college with reduced funding from the LSC (now SFA);
- the recent departure from a Train to Gain consortium and winning and fulfilling its independent contract for 200 new enrolments;
- an ambition to become an 'outstanding college' for employer responsiveness following an Ofsted inspection which had graded the college as 'good'; and
- a separate business arm of the college (Services for Business) had been dissolved in 2007, having had little involvement with the main college, and a new employer engagement strategy needed to be developed.

The college recognised a need to communicate the importance of employer engagement and embed the principle across the college. There were no clear and consistent mechanisms for communicating and engaging with employers. For example, a large local employer, Esso, was a sponsor of a prize for maths but there had been no discussions about potential training provision which the college could offer to the company.

An organisational change was required to embed employer responsiveness as a strategic priority. The academic departments needed to participate in the whole process of employer engagement and not just the delivery of programmes.

As a first step, the head of business development devised business plan targets. These provided a new focus on the following aims:

- Achieving targets and growing Train to Gain provision;
- Expanding full-cost recovery programmes (including NVQs); and
- Introducing Apprenticeships in 2008/09.

He reviewed the financial records and financial decision-making processes. This enabled the business development team to account for all income from employer provision, to set financial targets and to develop a 'skills budget' using a forecast and monitoring spreadsheet for income and expenditure. These financial controls were a significant challenge in a sixth form college, in which learner 'headcount' and the funding that followed the learner had been the prime focus of funding and accounting.

This financial review was essential in order to demonstrate the business value of employer engagement to the rest of the college and address the question from academic staff of 'What's in it for us?'

In addition, CRM was a significant challenge. Like financial records, the college's management information systems (MIS) only followed individual learners and not the employer. A new information system was required to enable an efficient response to business development opportunities with employers and to record and track all transactions with them.

TQS provided the framework approach to address these development points and drive the necessary organisational change through the college. It also gave the head of business development some key evaluation measures against which to judge progress.

Organisational change development activity

Working through the TQS framework provided a structure for the college to review its employer responsive activity and identify where it could take action as part of its development plan.

The college used the Employer Responsiveness Framework (ERF) to undertake this review. The ERF is a useful starting point for those providers who are interested in assessing their readiness for the TQS. This sets out a structured process to self-assess organisational performance against key stages of the employer journey. It provides a series of questions and quality statements related to relevant TQS indicators that enable an end-to-end review of the employer and learner journey. The college can then summarise the outcomes of the review in a development plan giving a clear structure to how they would improve their employer responsiveness. (The ERF can be downloaded from the website given in the Useful Resources section at the end of this case study).

This review of current activity based on the TQS framework identified a number of areas for action. A key decision was made to have an 'Apprenticeship champion' based full time at the college. This provided an essential resource to support employer responsiveness from the outset of the change process.

Another key organisational change was made to enable more effective working with the curriculum teams. An Action for Business Award in 2008 had provided some initial funding to support employer engagement. This funding enabled additional staff resources to be allocated from the six departments most closely involved in delivering employer responsive provision. These employer responsive team leaders (ERTLs) had 30 % of their time allocated to support business development activities with employers. The central business development team effectively became a service unit for the whole college. This time allocated to the ERTLs has now become self-financing, as has the post of Apprenticeship champion.

The curriculum areas identified initially for the ERTLs were information and communications technology (ICT), business services, health and social care, child care, hairdressing, essential skills (for a Ministry of Defence contract) and later teaching and learning programmes for other providers.

The WCS support and resources around TQS provided a fresh approach and introduced the college to the potential benefits of embarking on what the college calls its 'TQS journey'. The Apprenticeship champion stressed that it is important to emphasise that right from the outset the college did not view the achievement of TQS as 'just another plaque' but as a means of providing a structured development plan for the whole organisation.

The concept of customer journey mapping led to the production of a development plan with objectives, actions and a wider cross-college employer engagement strategy. This plan included targets such as developing the use of LMI and CRM and the adoption of organisational needs analysis (ONA) and training needs analysis (TNA) by the ERTLs. The Apprenticeship champion also reviewed and developed internal quality systems for employer responsive provision, such as recording learner activity on a central database to replace the previous paper-based processes.

Up until this point, there had been no formal process for employer engagement other than the use of a TNA on an ad hoc basis. Following training, the ERTL team began to develop and use an ONA pro-forma and associated processes. Chris Herbert, head of business development, believes that the ONA processes are working well as they provide greater clarity with employers when agreeing outcomes and evaluating the future impact of learning activity.

> '**TQS is not just another standard – it can be used to review and develop services that really make a positive difference to the way we work.**'

Sarah Rowland (Apprenticeship champion)

A review and development of LMI techniques was undertaken using the TQS standard and the head of business development attended an LMI workshop. This provided the college with a clearer structure for the collection and interpretation of labour market data.

The college also addressed the CRM challenge. The information services team has adapted the existing MIS system to meet the needs of employer engagement. This development work continues as further information needs arise.

By using the available WCS resources around TQS it helped the college realise that even with the achievement of TQS part A, further work is required. The organisational change process at the college is ongoing and it still has a development plan for excellence in employer engagement. For example, the colleges wishes to achieve TQS part B in the vocational areas represented by the ERTLs, even though no timescale has yet been fixed for this due to impending budget cuts and the challenging times ahead.

Results and impact

Using the TQS framework has highlighted a number of areas where the college could undertake developments to support employer responsive provision. Identifying these actions as a priority created a different culture in the college towards employer responsiveness. Employer responsiveness and core 16 to 18 provision are recognised as equally important. Employer responsiveness has now become embedded as part of the self-assessment report (SAR) process for Ofsted. The ERTLs have also become embedded and there are plans to extend this leadership model for employer engagement into other curriculum teams as income is achieved from wider employer provision. Other actions identified by using the TQS framework are also starting to show improvements to the benefit of the college.

CRM remains a challenge in a relatively small organisation that doesn't want to introduce new technology systems that would conflict with their existing platform. The current bespoke solution works but needs further development to fully map and monitor the whole employer journey. The business development team is working closely with its information system colleagues to create an effective tracking system.

The college has undertaken a website review and shared the recommendations with the overarching employer advisory group. This group has reviewed and endorsed the analysis carried out by business development staff and recommended the full adoption of the report to the college executive. This work will ensure that search engine optimisation to promote employer services across a broad catchment area remains high on the college development agenda.

The college has developed much better proposals and tenders for working with employers. It is now able to ask better questions and agree SMART[2] objectives (though further development on return on investment is required). It is also now better at managing networks in order to identify future business and partnership opportunities.

The college is positioned and structured to have long-term relationships with employers, develop programmes which meet their needs and help develop their business. As an example, a company contacted the college for beauty and massage training, having been let down by another provider. This initial contract was extended and grew to encompass both Train to Gain and Apprenticeship provision. The college now has a partnership with that employer to develop and deliver a specialist Apprenticeship framework.

Target setting and growing the business will be the core challenge. Apprenticeship growth is predicted, but the provider market is expected to become increasingly competitive. The college has agreed an increased Apprenticeship contract for 2010/11 and has increased targets for non-funded income following a successful year of selling full-cost training and unfunded NVQs.

The college is prepared for other organisational changes as required by changes in policy and funding. Chris Herbert says, *'Nobody gets a free lunch as a training provider any longer, and we need to be positioned to meet competition from both FE and WBL providers head-on.'*

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[2] SMART is an acronym for objectives that are to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

Top tips for organisational change to achieve TQS

The TQS framework has provided both challenges and opportunities for organisational change. Some of the lessons learned at Totton College are:

- Top management buy-in is essential so get the development adopted by the executive to enable process change, resources and support;

- Bring in the key people from across the college to help make the outcomes and benefits of employer engagement clear to all staff;

- 'Don't get too hung up on the TQS process,' says Sarah Rowland. Once put into the context of people's actual jobs, TQS can provide a useful review and planning framework

- Communicate about the change process constantly – even the smallest achievements can have an impact;

- Be realistic about the goals and the timescale to achieve them in order to manage expectations effectively;

- Talk to other providers about their experiences of TQS – what to expect on the assessor visit and what documents to have ready.

Useful resources

- **Top tips – Preparing for TQS**
- **How WCS works with TQS**
- **Employer Responsiveness Framework**
- **Customer journey mapping**
- **Event pack – Using LMI for commercial advantage**

To download these resources go to
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser

- **Training Quality Standard website**
  www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk

'The service provided by Totton College has always been exemplary and the training has added real value to both our employees and business.'

Sandra Groves (HR manager, Eaton Aerospace Engineering Ltd)

Case study E: Engaging employers

Name	York College
ITP/FE college/Other	F/HE college
Location	York
Size of organisation	2008/09 enrolments: 11,537
Provider contact details (email address)	Dave Tabron (business development manager) dtabron@yorkcollege.ac.uk
Provider website	http://www.yorkcollege.ac.uk
Core areas of employer responsive support	Apprenticeships, Train to Gain, commercial short courses and bespoke provision, distance learning and work focussed training for the unemployed with Job Centre Plus

Background

York College is a large further and higher education college, based in a £60 million new building opened in 2007. Success rates on Apprenticeships in 2008/09 were high at 79%, and on Train to Gain were well above the national average at 87%. This case study outlines how this large college undertook the organisational changes necessary to maximise employer engagement opportunities and to implement effective practice in doing so.

Issues and challenges faced

In early 2009 the college undertook some restructuring to support employer engagement. It recognised that it already offered an extensive range of provision to local employers, but a more focussed and embedded business development unit was needed to lead and co-ordinate this activity. This was part of a wider restructuring at the college following the appointment of a new principal and the completion of the new build in 2007.

There were several challenges in employer engagement facing the college at that time:

- Up until this point a separate college company had responsibility for employer engagement and consequently there was a view that revenue generation was not a responsibility shared across the college;

- Individual curriculum teams had responsibility for programme delivery for employers, but this had not necessarily always been a top priority for them;

- Data collection needed to be centralised for Train to Gain and Apprenticeship provision in order to ensure efficient and accurate reporting and audit processes; and

- Outsourcing some marketing activity targeting employers to an external agency presented some management challenges to track and follow up opportunities efficiently.

Employer engagement was a key component in the college mission of 'striving towards excellence'. It needed strategies to develop a continuing journey of organisational development away from an approach of 'selling courses' and towards meeting the business aims of employers. This included providing bespoke training provision to meet employer needs. It appointed new members of staff with responsibility for business development at that time. In order to achieve this new vision for embedded employer engagement, employer services at the college needed to develop in line with sector effective practice.

Organisational change development activity

The college began with WCS consultancy support by undertaking a wide-ranging review of current employer responsive provision using the Employer Responsiveness Framework (ERF). This tool is a useful starting point setting out a structured process to self-assess organisational performance against key stages of the employer journey. (The ERF can be downloaded from the website address in the Useful Resources section at the end of this case study). This ERF review enabled the team to assess the organisational changes for employer engagement within the new college structure, vision and strategic plans.

The organisational review involved the whole business development team. Using the ERF and mapping the employer responsiveness journey proved a useful exercise not only in order to engage the new staff in this new unit, but also to provide an opportunity to work with curriculum teams to emphasise the new vision and structure for employer engagement. On the basis of this review the college was able to jointly agree and plan the changes and actions required for more effective business development and employer responsive provision.

Using WCS resources such as the CRM implementation good practice guide, the college conducted an overview of the full potential of CRM. It developed a strategy for implementing the use of CRM across the organisation to support each stage of the employer journey. The existing CRM system was already installed at the college but was not being used effectively for customer enquiry management and service delivery to employers. The CRM review enabled the head of business development to address the question 'How would a modern college use a CRM system effectively?'

Because of this renewed focus on CRM, senior managers approved a business case, which enabled an update of the existing CRM system with a new user-friendly interface. Plans are in place to further maximise the use of this CRM system.

Staff development through a series of workshops ensured that all staff involved across the college understood the desired changes to support employer engagement. The workshops covered the key principles of employer engagement, customer focus and employer priorities. Staff undertook a personal skills inventory and developed an action plan for gaining and maintaining employer involvement.

The staff support was focussed on addressing real issues arising from the employer responsiveness strategy. For example, as part of the restructuring, management of some of the assessors is through the business development unit rather than the curriculum teams. As part of the front-line contact with employers, a full exploration was required for this new role of assessors in supporting the strategy.

Members of staff from the central admissions unit were also encouraged to consider how to direct enquiries from employers to the business development team in the most professional way. The business development team now effectively responds to enquiries from employers using a dedicated phone line. A clear section for employers now features on the newly designed and relaunched website.

Tools such as the ERF helped all staff involved to see examples of effective practice from the sector and to understand the contribution that they could make. Enabling reflection and detailed review, improving communication and joint planning, the WCS programme at the college emphasised that employer engagement was more than just a management strategy. By working together effectively, staff could maximise their impact and the use of their time as well.

Results and impact

At the start of 2009, the college set out to become more responsive to employers. In addition to the structural and operational changes for employer engagement outlined above, the college has started to host regular 'employer focus groups'. These involve both larger employers and SMEs from all employment sectors in the region. High levels of attendance show a continued commitment to the college and provide an invaluable source of feedback on college provision, including areas for continued improvement.

Close collaboration with blue chip clients such as Nestlé to design bespoke full-cost provision in engineering and electronics also provides evidence that the college is meeting employer needs. Members of the college staff now have a good understanding of Nestlé's business cycles and production processes. As a result, support interventions have enabled dual-skilling in the company and more cost-effective use of maintenance staff on production lines. At a strategic level, employers are represented on the governing body of the college and their input has proved invaluable in supporting business development changes.

> 'WCS consultancy support enabled us to develop and share our vision for employer engagement in line with best practice across the skills and education sector.'

Dave Tabron (business development manager)

York College now has a higher profile for its employer engagement strategy across the whole organisation. WCS prompted a review of internal communication and helped to embed the business development team in ways that are proving valuable. One example is that assessors from the construction department are now managed by the quality assurance manager in the business development team with the benefit of significantly improved employer engagement when making workplace visits. As Dave Tabron, head of business development, states, *'Moving towards excellence in employer engagement is a journey – so we are still working on improvements.'*

With the benefit of the clear strategic vision developed through participation in WCS, the business development team, as well as other staff at the college, are better placed to see the role of the college within the community, share strategic plans with employers and stakeholders and continue towards their aspiration of becoming increasingly 'demand-led rather than supply-driven'.

Longer-term developments in employer engagement are planned which include the following:

- Ensuring that the embedding of impact measures becomes the norm. The college is working with employers to ensure that the impact of training and the return on investment can be clearly and consistently quantified;
- Continuing to extend the commitment to the use of CRM across the college and using this not only for more efficient working but to provide the data for setting SMART targets and planning the development of provision going forward; and
- Becoming the regional 'provider of choice' for employers who are seeking training and education services.

'The training model that York College has designed, in conjunction with Nestlé, for our line technicians has added value to our business by helping to significantly reduce our production change overtimes. Another outcome of this training is the engagement of the trainees, which is one of the key drives for the company. This model is now being rolled out as best practice across the rest of Nestlé UK manufacturing .'

Neil Lyon (training manager at Nestlé Confectionary)

Top tips for developing employer engagement

Based on its experiences of organisational change for employer responsiveness, York College offers the following top tips:

- Ask for feedback from employers in your area. Offer different channels to collect their views (employer focus groups, visit them, conferences, local networks such as chambers of commerce). Use this feedback as a basis for developing products and services;
- Understand that everyone in your organisation can play a positive role in employer engagement. For example, procurement departments have good communication with suppliers who should be willing to exchange information and offer assistance as appropriate within a positive partnership;
- All members of staff will interact and have access to employers through their formal and informal networks. Make it easy for staff to pass on information gained through these networks to teams specifically tasked with employer engagement;
- Develop the way that your organisation uses a CRM system, beginning by understanding what happens across the organisation at present and stating where you want to progress to;
- Try to understand how an employer may see your organisation from the outside looking in. Try to see your systems, procedures and the way you present information through t heir eyes. Focus on refining your systems to ensure that this 'customer vision' directs your business development; and
- Focus on understanding the customer journey that employers experience by working with you. This can help you identify 'hotspots' where improvements can be undertaken.

Useful resources

- **CRM implementation planning guidance**
  Included in 'Skills and Employer Responsiveness: A Toolkit for providers'
- **Employer Responsiveness Framework**
- **Customer journey mapping**

To download these resources go to
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ser

Summary

These case studies show that there are many models of organisational change for employer responsiveness. Different providers adopt varied strategies for undertaking the necessary review, planning and implementation of business development practices.

Providers will also want to focus on different priorities for employer engagement depending on their stage of development – whether strategic planning, process improvement, use of CRM and LMI or preparation for TQS submission.

This booklet will provide you with ideas and tactics that can be adopted for use in your own institution in further developing your provision to meet employer needs.

Based on the evidence of the providers sampled here, there are several top tips to bear in mind whatever the stage of developing your employer responsive provision:

- Ensure that you have senior management support and staff buy-in to the employer responsiveness agenda from across the organisation;
- Undertake an honest and wide-ranging appraisal of the current employer journey and keep this under review as more customer feedback becomes available;

- Plan for structural change and system improvements based on a clear view of the customer experience – and shifting market conditions;
- Make sure that you have systems in place to gather and analyse the necessary data for self-assessment and improvement planning;
- Set a realistic timescale for your action plans and allow for things to not go quite as planned;
- Be able to show bottom-line benefits both for employer customers and your own organisation;
- Keep all staff and stakeholders fully informed of progress and share good news stories constantly; and
- Use all available resources to provide the necessary professional development for any staff involved with employer responsive provision.