

LSIS funded Improving training and related services for employers

PROVIDER END OF PROJECT REPORT

Project title: Workplace coaching and mentoring for Apprenticeships

Section 1: Introduction

(Give a brief introduction to your organisation and the project.)

Vision West Nottinghamshire College is a Beacon status, Ofsted outstanding provider who holds the largest 16-18 year old Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Apprenticeship College contract nationally. The College has an outstanding reputation for its work with employers. Each year approx 22,000 learners/employees access College programmes. Around 3,000 are full time, with the remainder studying on a variety of part time, day, evening or flexible provision. The College's work based learning provision has consistently been well above the national average for the last three years, being the top provider for achievement in the East Midlands region.

We have extensive experience of delivering Apprenticeships in the workplace. We have developed effective partnerships with employers in a range of industry sectors and with key influential stakeholders at local, regional and national levels over the past ten years. We have also supported large numbers of young people to find employment through an Apprenticeship route. This has enabled us to build beneficial relationships and support businesses to recruit the right staff; first time, every time while growing our Apprenticeship offer substantially.

In 2010-2011 the College delivered Apprenticeship frameworks to 2,139 employees aged 16-18, and 3,256 employees aged 19 and over. Going forward in 2011-2012, our overall employer responsive delivery SFA contract will amount to £20 million.

Please explain how and why the project emerged?

The challenge identified was a method of supporting apprentices in their place of work and to maintain engagement and motivation.

Research has found that dedicated support and employers' involvement with education provides a positive impact on apprentices and results in lower drop-out rates, improved attendance and the increased likelihood of completing on time. (Kemple and Snipes, 2000 cited in *The involvement of business in education: a rapid evidence assessment of the measurable impacts*, 2008)

Coaching and mentoring within business is not a new concept, but this specific model that combined transferrable coaching and mentoring skills for managers to

the unique needs of apprentices was a project that aimed to deliver multiple benefits.

What are you trying to achieve within the project?

The aim was to develop a programme that would benefit employers, other providers in the sector and our own practise.

The College is embarking on a programme of commercial business development and sought to devise a programme that would boost this, whilst also supporting the core funding programmes traditionally apparent in its offer.

The aims of the project were as follows.

- Provide employers with a commercial product to support successful Apprenticeship initiatives in their business.
- Include a coaching, mentoring and motivational programme for workplace mentors encompassing all aspects of the Apprenticeship framework, and the realities of undertaking an Apprenticeship.
- Upskill team members to provide outstanding coaching and mentoring programmes and commercially renowned motivational and goal setting initiatives.
- Allow shared best practise from the College to employers and other providers

We engaged with a key employer partner of the College (Employer A) to pilot a programme, provide feedback and an employer perspective for the offer. Employer A's particular aim was to support their managers in the needs of working with and managing young people as part of a new Apprenticeship programme across the organisation.

Section 2: Activities

Who has been involved? (Departments and/or job roles)

Employer A

- Head of Organisational Development, Senior Management Team.
- Learning and Development Manager, Operational Manager.
- Four Learning and Development Team members.
- Ten Production Managers, into whose teams new apprentices had been recruited.
- Eleven Trainee Production Management apprentices.

College

- Director. Vision Apprentices.
- Project Manager.
- Head of School: Business, Professional and Continuing Education (BPCE).
- Business Development and ILM Co-ordinator (BPCE).
- Coaching and Mentoring Tutor (BPCE).
- Placement Officer (Vision Apprentices).

What's happened so far?

Pilot

- Engaged with the employer to run the initial pilot group.
- Dedicated staff time allocated to design the product and define needs with the employer.
- Delivery to the first group.
- Evaluation of the pilot with the senior team, operational teams and managers.

Events and dissemination

- Apprenticeship week: apprentice event focussed on apprentice opportunities, employer links and coaching and mentoring.
- Employer event: Vision Apprentices Membership celebration session on the pilot project and promotion of the offer. 85 employers in attendance.
- Provider dissemination: two full partner days planned with 30-40 providers in attendance (leadership and practitioner) (May 2012).
- Promotion at employer meetings and networking events.
- Recruitment of Commercial Manager has given focus to the promotion of the commercial coaching offer.

Product Development

- Dedicated staff time to work with pilot employer and devise content.
- Evaluation of accredited course requirements. Could a qualification provide added value? Links to ILM Coaching and Mentoring.
- Continuous improvement and feedback.
- Course materials designed, printed and contextualised to meet individual employers.
- Creation of a set of templates that can be used by employers to save time and money.

What has been achieved?

- Employer identified and pilot conducted with a large employer.
- Initial pilot evaluation completed and more in progress to demonstrate behavioural changes and medium to long term impact.
- Additional employers (SME) identified as additional employer advocates.
- Ten managers achieved Level 2 ILM Coaching and Mentoring with 100 per cent success rate in pilot group: senior and departmental level management buy-in.
- Course evaluation of programme conducted with 80 per cent rating it as very good, and 20 per cent as good.
- Implementation of changed procedures at pilot employer (100 per cent have action plans in place to give structure to coaching sessions and map effectiveness of training).
- Coaching and mentoring recognised within the employer as a key management skill.
- Continued development of commercial offer and design of relevant materials, templates designed and available.
- Case study/placemat in development to promote and advise on benefits of the offer.

Section 3: Success factors and challenges

In this project what have been the critical success factors (up to three) and why?

1. Engaging employers and beginning to engage with providers on the benefits of coaching and mentoring.
2. Commitment and sponsorship of the project by the senior management team.
3. Developing a relevant and attractive commercial offer which includes the following elements.
 - To ensure the product is marketable long-term.
 - To ensure the final product offers added value and value for money.
 - Clarify that the focus be placed on the responsibilities of the mentor to their apprentice and the challenges of working with, and managing, young people to keep them motivated and enthusiastic.

What have been the key challenges? (up to three)

- *Timescales* – achieving the impact measurements in three months. Design and pilot activity has been achieved in time. However long-term benefits are still being measured and evaluated.
- *Employers working with young people* – the employer felt a key challenge was ensuring the managers understood their responsibilities as a mentor and the challenge of working with, and managing, young people to keep them motivated and enthusiastic.

And how did you overcome the challenges?

- Ensure engagement from managers at senior and operational levels.
- Focussed use of resources to research and develop the programme and continued evaluation.
- Offered managers attending the programme the added value of a qualification to accredit their learning and reward success.

Section 4: How has something changed?

What difference has the project made?

The project has allowed a focussed approach, research and development of the coaching and development offer. It has been something the College has hoped to achieve but has not had the resources to commit to. This project has allowed the idea to be developed and piloted.

Employer A recognised increased effectiveness of the apprentices in their roles and more commitment from their managers to the process. All apprentices are progressing well. The Apprenticeship is no longer something being delivered 'to' them; rather it is being delivered in partnership.

Managers are able to offer real guidance to apprentices across the framework and the vocational elements of the programme.

The employer was a strong training organisation, but had not recruited apprentices before, preferring graduates. The success of this initial cohort was central to the decision to continue with the programme and the outcome of the pilot has ensured that the Apprenticeship programme will continue for future years. In 2012-2013 a further group of young people will be given the opportunity to join a prestigious, industry leading company.

The development of a toolkit of template documents has saved the employer development time and money.

What impact has the project had so far (for learners, staff, employers) - or what impact might it have?

The managers that have undertaken the training are able to offer their apprentices a blend of technical knowledge and strong mentoring skills. This ensures that the apprentice has the best work place support possible and a line manager that understands the Apprenticeship framework. It is hoped that this would lead to increased retention rates and success rates. “[the project] ...*has given managers the opportunity to try out coaching techniques in a safe environment*” (Learning and Development Manager). They have also been able to learn and practise a disciplined approach to planning and conducting coaching and mentoring sessions, including record keeping. This is invaluable for audit and self reflection purposes.

The apprentices have been engaged with their programme of learning and are all performing well. Relationships between apprentices and mentors are strong and frequent reviews are demonstrating excellent progress. The Apprenticeship programme is due to be repeated this year, with additional young people being offered roles with the organisation.

Employer A has received added value to the Apprenticeship process, maximising the learning experience for the apprentices. Employer A also commented on additional benefits for their own learning and development team including cost savings and a reduced workload. “*The learning and development team could not have provided training in a reasonable timeframe, so [the project] has reduced workload.*” (Learning and Development Manager). In addition, delivery by the training provider added context with more knowledge of the Apprenticeship process, delivery and expectations.

Other providers have the ability to access a commercially viable product that they can utilise within their own organisation, and with their clients. Also the potential to use a toolkit of templates to reduce design and development time internally.

The College have benefitted from added opportunities to engage with employers and providers, provide a service to stakeholders and work to maximise and protect success rates and the linked provision (funding and financial implications). Internally it has enabled staff to devise a repeatable programme and commercial offer, and increase their skills in this delivery.

Going forward employers engaged in this programme will be monitored for

improvement in the success rates of apprentices, and potentially for additional Apprenticeship placements.

We will also be monitoring progression onto Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships.

How are you measuring the impact?

- Employer A has committed to continued evaluation of the project.
- End of programme evaluation with managers.
- Three month evaluation with managers and apprentices (June 2012).
- Six month evaluation to measure behavioural changes and any additional benefits (September 2012).
- Incidental impact will be mapped in the employer/apprentice 1:1 and review structure.

It is intended within a six to nine month time frame that the project will deliver a measurable revenue stream. As additional employers use the offer, impact and return on investment measurements will be conducted and reported.

Section 5: Reflections on learning

What changes did you make as you went along and why?

No real amendments to the planning were made, other than a shift in deadlines to reflect timescales. It was hoped that additional pilots would be conducted with differing sized organisations, but time did not allow for this. This will continue post-project.

What has worked well?

Delivery was excellently received by Employer A. The challenge of setting course dates and 1:1 sessions against a backdrop of differing shift patterns was overcome with effective communication between the managers, central learning and development team and the tutors. The delivered qualification was well received and appreciated. The end of course evaluation shows that 80 per cent of participants rated the training as very good, and 20 per cent as good.

What needs improving? / If you did this project again what changes might you make?

- Increased research and development to include a larger range of employers to include in the pilot. Employer interest has been generated from additional SME employers.
- Understand the manager's needs when deciding on the level of qualification to be achieved. Consider manager's experience and match qualification level.
- Internally increase the number of tutors that can deliver the programme to meet potential employer demand.

Section 6: What learning and outcomes from the project could be shared with the wider sector?

What else could be useful to capture what's coming out of the project?

- Completed case study/placemat and top tips document for promotion.
- Feedback from provider and employer dissemination events on potential expansion of provision.
- Full review of long-term impact.

What resources will be created that would be useful to share?

- Case study/placemat on website.
- Outline of provision of commercial offer.
- Offer of support on the design and delivery of similar programmes.

How could we use the learning from the project to drive forward the Further Education and Skills sector?

- Added value for employers to ensure successful and quality Apprenticeships.
- 'Coaching the managers' as a concept to increase employee engagement and motivation.
- Maintain commitment to supporting apprentices in work, as well as getting new apprentices into jobs. Understand the importance of engaging with existing employees.
- Added value to the College to boost success rates and Apprenticeship numbers.
- Staff development in coaching as added value to the Apprenticeship programme.

Section 7: Future planning

What next?

- Dissemination events to providers, sharing findings and good practise.
- Package the offer into a commercial product with template documents.
- Market offer to employers including added value to Apprenticeship programme.
- Include in Vision Apprentice membership offer.
- Continued evaluation of Employer A pilot, continued onto 2012-2013 group.

What is the legacy?

This project has provided research into how employers can add value to their Apprenticeship programmes and support the engagement and motivation of their staff. The project has:

- provided a coaching and mentoring qualification to ten managers, enabled them to practise their skills in a secure environment and reflect on the impact of their support onto the apprentices they manage;
- saved money in delivery and resource design;
- provided College tutors and employers staff with additional skills and CPD;

- enabled providers to share good practise; and
- produced a commercially viable product that can be packaged and create a revenue stream for the College.

Section 8: Further information

Please supply contact details to help people who want to know more about the project.

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