

Training – modern apprenticeships

Apprenticeships have long been associated with the construction and engineering industries. The current apprenticeship scheme, however, can be used in more than 150 sectors – half of them found in areas like media, finance and IT. This scheme, which was introduced in 1994 and is run by the government-backed Learning and Skills Council, is due to be extended. When it was introduced, the scheme was designed for 16 to 25 year olds. However, trials are taking place to include older workers, over the age of 25, and younger ones (14-16).

Taking on an apprentice can be a cost-effective way of training employees while they work in the business. The Learning and Skills Council will pay a business £5,235 to meet the cost of training a 16-year-old hair and beauty apprentice, for example. Wages paid to the apprentice are determined by the employer, although the council suggests a minimum of £70 - £80 per week in the first year.

More than 1 million people have benefited from the current scheme since 1994. The scheme involves a combination of education and training. This is often provided by qualified employees. The scheme, which draws recruits from existing staff and newcomers, lasts from one to four years. It operates at two levels

- The apprenticeship scheme (equivalent to five GCSEs);
- The advanced apprenticeship scheme (equivalent to two A Levels).

One example of a business involved in the scheme is shown in Box 1 below.

Box 1 Upper Cut Hair Salon, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset

Upper Cut hair salon in Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, began recruiting apprentices to train as stylists in 1989. The salon has 15 trained stylists, 12 of whom began as apprentices. A further 12 are being trained. Apprentices take around two years to complete their training and gain an NVQ Level 2 qualification. All training takes place at the salon. On Mondays, apprentices learn theory and practise on models. John Burrows, co-owner of Upper Cut, said:

'We wouldn't be able to operate without apprentices because, this way, we get quality staff. There are not enough people in the market place to fill our needs. Everyone else is hunting for stylists while we are expanding to absorb the stylists we have.'

Source: the *Sunday Times*, 8 August 2004.

Questions

1. Explain why apprenticeships are an example of on-the-job training.
2. What are the advantages to Upper Cut of the modern apprenticeship scheme?

Sample answers

Question 1

Explain why apprenticeships are an example of on-the-job training.

Sample answer

On-the-job training involves workers being trained in their workplace. It also usually means that they are trained whilst they carry out their normal work duties. The current apprenticeship scheme is an example of on-the-job training because apprentices are trained by experienced members of staff during the working day. Apprentices at Upper Cut, for example, are trained by experienced members of staff and one day a week is spent on theory and practising on models.

Question 2

What are the advantages to Upper Cut of the modern apprenticeship scheme?

Sample answer

The current apprenticeship scheme is beneficial for small businesses like Upper Cut which are trying to attract skilled staff. One of the main advantages is the financial support Upper Cut receives from the Learning and Skills Council. For example, the Learning and Skills Council will pay a hairdressing business £5,235 to meet the cost of training a 16-year-old apprentice. Another advantage is that apprentices make a contribution to the running of the salon. Since apprentices are trained on-the-job, they are given work tasks to do during their training period. Finally, once members of staff have been trained, Upper Cut will have skilled staff who are familiar with the business's operations.