HIGHER LEVEL SKILLS
BENEFITS AND BARRIERS
BENEFITS

To effectively broker higher level skills, it is important to understand how training and development in this area can impact positively on an individual and add value to the business as a whole.

Benefits applied across the business

- Businesses can become involved in the development of training solutions to suit the needs of the business and help them to reach their objectives
- Work-based projects can develop skill sets of staff throughout the business and improve the skills base within the organisation
- Training and development enables increased portability into specific sectors
- More effective implementation of strategic plans
- HEIs can provide accreditation (or a credit system) for CPD activity which normally bears no external recognition
- Create opportunities for knowledge transfer (both within the company and bringing in new knowledge)
- Increase flexibility of workforce at all levels (eg not just management training)
- Incentivise staff through awards that link to a national framework and can encourage progression
- Employer can implement peer-to-peer learning mechanisms to disseminate the knowledge of the learner
- Promote the business as having a learning culture and therefore be a more attractive place to work
- Application of real business processes/procedures and experiences in learning (as opposed to theoretical learning)
- Attract more new staff through the offer of work related training and development opportunities
- Increase efficiency and productivity of staff
- Increase confidence and motivation in staff
- Reduce staff turnover rates
- Improve performance results
- Increase in shareholder wealth through improved sales and revenue
- Networking opportunity through business to business contacts and building a relationship with the local HEI network
- Objective analysis of business needs/situation
• More dynamic workforce with the ability to respond quickly to change (eg. internally and within the marketplace)

**Benefits for the individual**
• Improve understanding and involvement in strategic activities
• Career and educational progression
• Better understanding of own role in the business and those of colleagues
• Improve understanding of key functional and management areas
• Gain qualifications linked to a national framework
• Gain the knowledge to work independently on more complex projects
• Training in soft skills or specific technical ability to build on previous knowledge
• Feeling more valued by employer
• Improve employability and progression into other areas of work
• Training and development can be delivered flexibly to fit working schedules and personal commitments
• Increased confidence in own ability and higher self esteem
• Increased motivation
• Increased buy-in to company vision and values
BARRIERS THAT EMPLOYERS MAY RAISE

The first step is to listen to the employer and ensure that they have a real objection or whether it is simply a misunderstanding. Sometimes listening empathetically will help eradicate their concerns.

1. **Employer believes that, once an employee has acquired ‘portable’ qualifications, the employee may try to bid up wages or leave the company to work for their competitors.**

   Employees can become more motivated and have a greater loyalty to an employer if the employer is seen to value the staff member and encourage their development. This can result in greater returns for the organisation through increased productivity. The employer can also use their willingness to train as a ‘selling point’ for attracting new staff.

2. **Employer is unwilling to fund or ‘co-fund’ programmes that are not tailored to their business needs.**

   The cost of training staff whether on a tailored or non-tailored course should be looked on as an investment. The company will benefit from better trained employees who are more productive and can contribute more. Training existing staff can also reduce the recruitment cost to a company; by training up staff the employer will not need to endure a costly recruitment exercise and can save an employer paying a premium for pre-trained staff.

3. **Employers and employees are not attracted to taking up existing, ‘off-the-shelf’, higher qualifications such as Degrees, Foundation degrees and two-year diplomas.**

   Increasingly universities and Further Education Colleges (FECs) are offering bespoke training packages to the private (and public) sectors. These packages are designed with specific business needs in mind.

   Employer engagement initiatives from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), including the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder programme, are designed to assist Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to build capacity and flexibility in their provision on an employer led basis.

4. **Employer believes that universities are unresponsive or slow to respond to the needs of employers and employees.**

   Many HEIs or FECs will work with an employer to develop a training solution that will meet the specific needs of the organisation whether this is by adapting existing training programmes or developing a new bespoke course.

   There is increasing evidence of HEIs actively working with employers to develop tailored training solutions. The HEFCE initiatives mentioned in
question 3 above are facilitating greater HEI responsiveness to employer needs, including those identified through Train to Gain.

5. The employer is small and doesn’t have the volume of students to make bespoke provision cost effective.
In this instance, bespoke training may not be viable for very small numbers of employees. However, with the co-ordination of provision across regional networks or bodies, there is the opportunity to develop provision for groups of companies if there is sufficient employer demand. A good place to start to find out about co-ordinating your employer’s needs with those of other employers in your area is to contact your Higher Education Regional Association (see Accessing Resources and Provision handout for contact details). They aim to co-ordinate the activities of the regions HEIs and will be able to point you in direction of the best network.

As an alternative to developing bespoke programmes, a HEI may be able to adapt an existing programme to the needs of the employer through course work and assessments. This could be a more cost effective way to tailor training to the employer’s needs.

6. Employee only has a level 2 qualification, therefore they cannot gain entry onto a higher level skills programme (level 4+).
Increasingly “HE Access” courses provide a route to HE for adults (19 years old and above) with few if any formal qualifications. Access courses are extremely flexible and are available full-time or part-time, daytime or evenings.

Consideration may also be given to prior learning in the workplace through APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning).

7. Organisation already has their own in-house training programme, designed specifically for their business and doesn’t need further formal qualifications.
While these cases are not the main clients HEIs are trying to reach, HEIs can offer validation services for in-house provision without developing the materials. Accreditation is not necessarily an incentive for employers but is often an incentive for individual learners who value having an identifiable qualification.

8. Small employer is unwilling to let staff have time off for training as it will impact heavily on their productivity.
The business benefits of staff training should outweigh short term difficulties. However, with the development of flexible and distance learning provision, learning can be implemented around work patterns.

There have also been schemes which provide funding to “backfill” absences by outsourcing work but there are limitations on the applicability of such schemes for key workers.