Managers urged to take control of their business by training on National Learning at Work Day

- 163,000 managers experience skills gaps
- 57 per cent of these cause an increase in work for other staff

Ahead of National Learning at Work Day tomorrow, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has urged managers across the country to take control of their business through training. According to the National Employer Skills Survey 2007, which spoke to over 79,000 employers and provides the most comprehensive analysis of skills in England, almost 163,000 managers in England alone experience a skills gap. Of these, almost three quarters lack management skills. The value of getting involved with Train to Gain, the Government’s flagship national skills service, is evident as recent learner evaluation showed that 43 per cent of people who completed their training with Train to Gain reported a pay rise, whilst 30 per cent received a promotion.

Leading business psychologist, Professor Cary Cooper, has identified a new trend increasingly affecting managers who struggle to delegate effectively, due to poor management skills. They may realise their employees lack the skills to enable delegation, but don’t know how best to solve this, meaning both they and the business are feeling the impact.

Professor Cooper commented:

"I have seen this trend in companies occurring up and down the country. It’s clear that managers and bosses aren’t getting the training they need to do their jobs effectively. Neither are they training up their staff to help alleviate their burden so everyone is losing out. This has a direct impact on their work-life balance, their workforce’s progression and the overall performance of the company as a whole.

"It is clear that increased social and interpersonal skills among managers will mean that people are managed more by praise and reward than constant fault finding, that they are given more control and autonomy over their job through delegation and are provided with manageable workloads and achievable deadlines, so that we can get the most of out them and minimise employee stress and burnout."

Employers surveyed said having managers with a skills gap can have a detrimental impact on their business. Of the employers whose managers have a skills gap, almost three in four (73 per cent) say they lack management skills. Well over half (57 per cent) of employers who say managers have a skills gap report that this creates an increased workload for other staff. One third found operating costs increased, while a similar number found it difficult to introduce new working practises (both 33 per cent). In only one in five cases (20 per cent) did employers claim that managers’ skills gaps lead to no particular problems.

Professor Cooper continued:

“Employers should take heed and ensure their managers receive relevant leadership and management training. We need to train managers to understand those social or softer skills. Investing in this will help break the cycle and benefit everyone involved. Leaders need to value the benefits of training their whole workforce.”
Sean Taggart, Group Managing Director of Albatross Travel confirms this:

“The value of strong leadership and management within businesses is undeniable and our investment over the last few years in the development of our senior and junior managers has delivered tangible bottom line benefits along with recognition of the business as one of The Sunday Times Top 100 Small Companies to Work for in the UK.

It is often particularly difficult for managers and owners within small to medium sized businesses to identify and source appropriate training and development solutions to improve the skills of their managers and that is where I believe that Train to Gain can help. The opportunity for SME owner/managers to access impartial advice at no cost, combined with specific grants that are available to develop the skills of senior managers means that this is one gift horse that businesses should not look in the mouth!”

Train to Gain provides a simple and cost effective route for employers of all sizes and in all sectors to improve the skills of their employees as a route to improving their business performance. Employers can make contact with a skills broker at no cost and receive tailored skills advice and possible funding.

Train to Gain’s budget doubled recently to over £1 billion, making skills training available for employees in every company in the country. This includes a massive increase in SME management training – from £4 million to £30 million per annum – that will support managers in around 42,000 companies over the next three years.

In addition, grants of £1,000 are available to SME owner / managers who wish to undertake training to improve their leadership or management skills. By taking advantage of the Train to Gain service, businesses can access training for their wider workforce, from customer service and basic literacy and numeracy through to specialist sector qualifications.

Skills Minister David Lammy said:

“To really succeed in an increasingly competitive climate, every business manager needs to get the best from their employees. Despite the time pressures they face, no manager can afford to cut corners on training – either for their employees, or themselves.

“This is why I have made the provision of leadership and management training a priority. In expanding Train to Gain, we’ve listened closely to the business community to ensure high quality, bespoke training is available when and where they want it. I hope that employers will respond by making full use of the opportunity to improve their staff leadership credentials, and to get their staff trained up to deliver real growth in 2008”.

One company to benefit from improved Leadership and Management skills through Train to Gain is Derbyshire-based Bi Design Architecture. Manager Darryn Buttrill, 39, has seen a 50 per cent profit increase over the past two years thanks to Train to Gain. Darryn completed a mentoring programme as well as enrolling employees in NVQs in Business Administration. He attributes the mentoring programme and his skills broker as making all the difference:

“I now feel far more confident in how I run my business and I don't feel so isolated. As a result, the business is better managed, and the investment I have made in staff training and development has really paid off with higher retention and greater output.”

To find out more about training, including leadership and management, visit traintogain.gov.uk or call 0800 015 55 45.

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Media Enquiries

For further information, interviews or case studies, please contact:
Notes to editors

National Learning at Work Day is part of NIACE’s Adult Learners Week, 17 - 23 May 2008.

Research sources
National Employer Skills Survey (NESS07) is commissioned by the LSC, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) to provide information on the extent, causes and implications of recruitment, skills gaps and training in England. Also conducted in 2003, 2004 and 2005, the report is able to show the changing pattern of skills demanded by employers. The full report is available on lsc.gov.uk

Train to Gain Learner Evaluation: Report from Wave 1 Research, May 2008. Telephone survey of 7,500 Train to Gain learners a part of ongoing employee evaluation, conducted by Ipsos MORI and the IES on behalf of the LSC.

Professor Cary Cooper
Cary is recognised as a world-leading expert on stress and is frequently asked to comment on workplace issues by the media. Cary is Director and founder of Robertson Cooper Ltd, Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health and Pro Vice Chancellor at Lancaster University.

He is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, The Royal Society of Arts, The Royal Society of Medicine, The Royal Society of Health and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians. He is also the President of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, Editor-in-Chief of the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Management and the author/editor of more than a hundred books.

Cary was also recently awarded the Lifetime Practitioner Award from the British Psychology Society in recognition of his services to the profession.

Sean Taggart
Sean Taggart is Group Managing Director of the Albatross Group of Companies, which incorporates The Albatross Travel Group, The Leisure Breaks Company and Success Tours in the UK and Albatross Travel Group Pty in Australia. He is also Chairman of the Coach Tourism Council and the British Association of Wholesale Tour Agents.

Sean also advises on issues faced by small businesses through his membership of the Government’s Ministerial Advisory Panel for Leadership & Management. Sean chairs the Business Support as Profession Advisory Group, which was established in 2005 and advises public procurement agencies and the Institute of Business Consulting with regard to the accreditation and professional development of business advisors. He also sits on the Employers Advisory Group for the National Centre for Languages.

Learning and Skills Council
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards.

Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Train to Gain
Managed by the Learning and Skills Council, Train to Gain is the Government’s flagship service to support employers in England, of all sizes and in all sectors, to improve the skills of their employees, unlock talent and drive improved business performance. An important element of Train to Gain is the skills brokerage service which offers free impartial advice, and helps find the best training solution from high quality and responsive training providers to meet business needs.

Train to Gain is important because skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness in the face of fast-growing economies. Train to Gain aims to encourage all businesses and individuals to value and realise the benefits that learning and skills can bring and to invest appropriately. It is expected that by the end of 2010, over 500,000 learners will have achieved a first full Level 2 qualification through Train to Gain.