Welcome to Train to Gain News

This issue features a guest editorial by newly-appointed Skills Minister David Lammy, a report on the eye-catching Train to Gain advertising campaign and details of how Train to Gain helped a North East bakery to update the skills of its employees.

**Editorial**

David Lammy MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, says Government, employers and individuals all have a part to play.

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Developing a skilled workforce is vital for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole, says the Chairman of the LSC.

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**Skills Pledge Launch**

Employers pledge to help staff develop their skills for the future.

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How the LSC’s Skills Brokerage service helped a large North East based bakery.

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Train to Gain has seen a high level of take-up by employers keen to address their skills needs.

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Editorial

David Lammy MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills, says Government, employers and individuals all have a part to play in creating a more highly-skilled workforce.

Today’s employers are demanding a more highly-skilled workforce as the UK faces increasing competition from the global economy. This is a big task – a task that involves all sizes of businesses and encompasses vocational as well as academic qualifications to ensure that employees’ individual needs are met.

Increased investment in workforce development is essential in order to raise our economic competitiveness, productivity and capability for technological progress, as well as to reduce levels of social exclusion. We require investment in skills and training by Government, employers and individuals.

Since I was appointed to my new job at the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills this summer, I’ve been impressed with the ways in which Train to Gain is helping to build the workforce we need for the future.

Train to Gain provides employers with impartial advice and easy access to quality training by identifying their business needs and matching these to a suitable choice of training providers. By ensuring that employees have the right skills to do the best job, Train to Gain helps to improve business productivity and competitiveness. Meanwhile employees benefit by increasing their skills, which leads in turn to better job prospects and a better quality of life.

Train to Gain is designed to put employers’ business and skills development needs first and marks a new and very positive way of working with employers. The service has been well received by employers since it was launched in April 2006. I am confident that it will continue to make a real difference and help employers and employees across the country get the training they need to succeed.

David Lammy MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

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“Train to Gain has a vital role to play”

Developing a skilled workforce is vital for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole, says the Chairman of the Learning and Skills Council.

If the country, its individuals and organisations are to fulfil their potential and achieve progress in this competitive marketplace, then skills levels will need to increase further and faster than before.

As Lord Leitch reminded us, over 70 per cent of our 2020 workforce has already completed compulsory education.

This means that to improve their skills to Level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs) and beyond, we need to provide opportunities via employers – and that’s why Train to Gain has a vital role to play in helping to develop a skilled and dedicated workforce, both now and in the years ahead.

The newly-launched skills campaign is going to create a real “buzz” about skills, and highlight their importance for individuals, employers and the nation as a whole.

By working with Government departments and other partners, we can amplify each others’ work and create a consistent and powerful message. We believe that this campaign will give people the confidence to take the first steps in improving the rest of their lives.

Christopher Banks
Chairman
Learning and Skills Council
“By investing in the skills of your people, you are investing in your business”

Employers pledge to help staff develop their skills for the future.

Train to Gain is having a major impact on skills levels across the country.

The LSC’s flagship service has helped thousands of employees to develop their skills and enabled employers to become more competitive in the process. Employers from all over England have said how highly they value the advice and support of Train to Gain’s independent and impartial Skills Brokers and the way they are enabling them to address their skills needs.

Thanks to Train to Gain, companies of all sizes and across all sectors can commit to the future of their business by signing the Skills Pledge - launched by the Government last month (June).

The Skills Pledge fulfils a key recommendation in the Leitch Review of Skills, which was published in December 2006 and called on the country to “raise its game” on skills at all levels.

The launch of the Skills Pledge was attended by Prime Minister Gordon Brown and other senior politicians, and hosted by Digby, Lord Jones of Birmingham, Minister of State for Trade and Investment. The occasion also marked the appointment of Sir Michael Rake as Chairman of the new UK Commission for Employment and Skills – an employer-led voice at the heart of the skills and employment agenda. Sir Michael is currently International Chairman of KPMG and Chair designate of BT.

More than 150 employers have already signed the Skills Pledge, including Sainsbury’s, BT and Data Connection. It involves employers making a public commitment to support all their employees to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills and work towards a full Level 2 qualification (equivalent to five GCSEs A* to C).

As well as training their workforce, employers also ensure that their business has the skills needed to compete in the global workplace.

Employers who register their intention to make the Skills Pledge are also able to access the support and advice of a Skills Broker through Train to Gain. For more information on the Skills Pledge, please contact Train to Gain by visiting traintogain.gov.uk.

Sir Michael Rake, Chairman of the new UK Commission for Employment and Skills, speaking at the launch of the Skills Pledge

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Train to Gain campaign goes live

The LSC’s eye-catching marketing and communications campaign encourages employers to get the training they need to succeed.

Train to Gain advertisements have gone live across the country this month, with the first being aired on TV, radio and in the national press on 16th July.

The distinctive new advertisements, launched in conjunction with the skills campaign, are aimed at employers and highlight the importance of training and the positive impact it has on the long-term future of their business.

The eye-catching and informative adverts were developed after in-depth research on how people view training and skills showed that most individuals believe they give us control over our lives and help us to succeed in a changing world.

The campaign’s creative team then came up with the distinctive strapline, “Our future. It’s in our hands” and decided to put hands at the very heart of the advertising strategy for both the skills campaign and Train to Gain.

While the skills campaign advertisements feature hands in the shape of a tulip, a swan and a mountain, the Train to Gain version depicts a lorry with a painted hand on the front speeding towards the camera.

The idea is to show how Train to Gain can help employers invest in training and set their business “on the right road.”

This is reinforced by the voiceover, which points out that even though employers are keeping their business running along smoothly by focusing on the everyday concerns, it is essential to ensure their staff have the right skills for the future.

“You might think your business is moving along quite nicely. After all, the day to day stuff is getting done,” says the voiceover. “But what about tomorrow? Will a lack of skills slow you down?”

Research highlighted that many employers acknowledge they tend to spend nearly all their time sorting the short-term, day to day aspects of running their operations without thinking about the kind of skills their staff need to acquire for the ongoing success of their business.

The Train to Gain advertisement builds on this research finding and positions the service as an impartial way of helping employers take stock of what skills their business will need for the future.

The press advertisement also uses the hands metaphor and backs up the TV and radio commercials – although it stands as an important advertising tool in its own right. It features a call to action to readers, asking them to call 0800 015 55 45 for more information.

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“Train to Gain was the perfect tool to update the skills of our workers”

Peters Cathedral Bakery employees get together and show the tasty benefits of training

How the LSC’s Skills Brokerage service helped a large bakery to develop the skills of its employees and benefited the whole business.

Peters Cathedral Bakers has a string of achievements and accolades to its name.

The family-run company – the largest independent craft bakery business in the North East – has a head office in Durham, 71 branches, 560 employees and a reputation across the region for its bread, savouries and cakes. It also won the prized Baker of the Year title at the Bakery Industry Awards 2005.

But despite successes like these, the company knows that to stay ahead of the competition it must continually train and develop its staff.

Continues...

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“Train to Gain was the perfect tool to update the skills of our workers” (continued)

That’s why it contacted Train to Gain for help – to update the skills of its employees and benefit the business as a whole.

Train to Gain’s impartial and independent Skills Brokerage service helped the bakery to find the right training for its business needs. As a result, nine hygiene operatives have now completed Level 2 NVQs in Cleaning and Support Services and three more are also progressing training for the qualification. The hygiene operatives play a key role in keeping the bakery scrupulously clean.

Most of the bakery staff work shifts so some of the training – delivered by Bishop Auckland College’s Distance Learning Department – took place in the evening.

It hasn’t all been plain sailing for the bakery though. In April 2004 a fire destroyed its plant at Durham, forcing the company to move into temporary accommodation. But instead of letting this hold them back, the company seized the opportunity to build a new £4.5 million state-of-the-art bakery and start afresh.

“Our new bakery has meant that we now have a very high-tech approach to everything that we do – so we also wanted our staff to have highly developed skills to match,” explains Human Resource Manager Joanne Carr.

“Train to Gain, through Bishop Auckland College, has given us the perfect tool to update the skills of our workers. Our hygiene operatives are now fully equipped to make an even greater contribution – whether it’s seeing how their role fits into the overall success of the business, understanding our procedures in more depth or keeping in tune with changing legislation or health and safety issues.”

Chris Roberts, Regional Director of the LSC North East, is delighted by the impact Train to Gain has had on the bakery.

“It is great to see that a company like Peters has recognised the importance of having staff with the right skills in order to help it achieve its ambitions,” he says.

“Train to Gain has given the company a flexible solution to its business needs by making sure that workers in all areas of the business can benefit from relevant and timely training.”

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Train to Gain beats its targets

Nearly 100 employees from Budget Windows celebrate their training success

The LSC’s Skills Brokerage service has seen a high level of take-up by employers keen to address their skills needs.

Train to Gain has had a fantastic first year, beating its targets and garnering praise for the way it has engaged with businesses across England.

During Train to Gain’s first 12 months, more than 36,000 employers signed up to the LSC’s free and impartial Skills Brokerage service – exceeding its original goal. Equally impressively, 69 per cent of businesses who used Train to Gain were hard to reach employers who had not traditionally thought about training – substantially more than the 50 per cent target.

Jaine Clarke, the LSC’s Director of Skills for Employers, is delighted by the way employers have responded to Train to Gain.

"The latest figures show there is a real need among businesses for advice about training," said Jaine, who is responsible for skills policy development for employers, which includes leading the development and implementation of Train to Gain.

"It is also exciting to see the high levels of take-up from smaller businesses who don’t often train staff as this is where Train to Gain can have the most impact. Seventy-one per cent of learners benefiting from Train to Gain are aged 25-49 – showing the service is really helping to improve the skills of the existing workforce."

Train to Gain continues to go from strength to strength, with the latest figures showing that more than 43,000 businesses have now used the service (71 per cent of them hard to reach employers) and 90,000 employees have gained Level 2 qualifications.

With the launch of the skills campaign earlier this month (July), those numbers look set to climb even more rapidly.

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