Small businesses back Train to Gain

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Employers around the country, even those who would not normally think about training, are seeing the results and getting behind Train to Gain. Nearly 22,000 have signed up for the free Skills Brokerage service since August 2006, which offers tailored, impartial, independent advice on training, sourcing training providers and funding to suit individual business needs.

Skills Minister Phil Hope said: “Train to Gain is an ambitious new approach to workplace skills. It is a key part of this Government’s drive to push skills high up the agenda and maintain our competitiveness. Brokers are targeting the hardest to reach employers who have not traditionally trained their staff. We are reaching out to SMEs in particular who can make use of free provision to give people the crucial platform of skills for employability.

“Of the 22,000 employers who signed up for Train to Gain last year, independent evaluation shows that 9 out of 10 were satisfied or better with the service. This is a superb start for this groundbreaking national employer training scheme designed to make sure we have a world class, skilled and productive workforce for the future.”

Train to Gain is based on listening to employers. Jaine Clarke, Director of Skills for Employers at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) said: “Current figures show 80% (16,930) of employers using the service are new to training, mainly from small businesses. Today, Train to Gain has over 75,000 learners, the majority from small businesses in sectors where low skills traditionally predominate, such as process, plant and machine operatives. The service is really helping to boost the nation’s productivity by honing the
skills of the existing workforce – 70% of employees learning through Train to Gain are aged 25-49."

Skills Brokers are a key element of Train to Gain. Working with employers to identify their training needs, Brokers source suitable courses and agree a tailored training package. Employers particularly rated the Skills Brokers’ ability to steer them through the sometimes complex sources of funding.

Trevor Jackson of Jackson’s Bakery of Brampton, Chesterfield is ensuring its staff can continue a 62 year tradition thanks to Train to Gain. Their Skills Broker helped source a supplier to teach their staff specialist skills in craft bakery. Before getting in touch with Train to Gain, the company had searched for two years to source this training.

Trevor Jackson said: "It's vital for the staff to be trained in all areas of craft bakery, which makes the job more interesting and their skills base more vast. We're training staff from 16 year old apprentices to an employee who has worked in bakeries for much of her life but is receiving formal training for the first time."

Sean Taggart, Managing Director of Albatross Travel Group and a member of the Small Business Council, says: "Train to Gain is the only truly impartial and independent Skills Brokerage service that's available to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with no upfront costs. Most small businesses don't have the money to pay for expensive consultants so the opportunity to have someone external coming in, assessing their business and training needs and giving impartial advice without simultaneously trying to sell them something is a very attractive proposition.

"But the advantage of Train to Gain is that it analyses skills on a business needs level. It links up the skills requirements of a company with its business objectives. It makes employers realise that training enables people to do their jobs better and that helps the overall strategy and performance. It also means they can deliver different, better services and make the business more profitable."
Training employees is a priority of government and business alike. Sir Digby Jones, the Government’s Skills Envoy, has pledged to encourage small businesses to take advantage of the Train to Gain programme, which provides free work-based training for businesses that would not otherwise train their staff. Sir Digby said: ‘Your business is not going to succeed if you can’t get skilled people’. 

Jaine Clarke concluded: “For all employers thinking about boosting their productivity and getting the best out of their staff, call the Train to Gain hotline to set up a meeting with an independent Skills Broker.”

For further information go to traintogain.gov.uk or call 08000 15 55 45.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Train to Gain: Train to Gain is a new service from the Learning and Skills Council, to help businesses get the training they need to succeed. The cornerstone of Train to Gain is a free Skills Brokerage service that offers independent and impartial advice, matches training needs with training providers and ensures that training is delivered to meet employer’s 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.

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.

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1 Speaking in a series of interviews after the Leitch Report’s publication, 17 January 2007. Lord Leitch’s report, published in December 2006 explores the nation’s skills, and recognises Train to Gain’s contribution.