New research reveals Apprenticeships significantly improve business performance

- Learning and Skills Council launches first annual Apprenticeship Week -

- 77 per cent of employers believe Apprenticeships make them more competitive
- 76 per cent say Apprenticeships provide higher overall productivity
- 80 per cent feel that Apprenticeships reduce staff turnover

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New research released today to mark the start of Apprenticeship Week 2008 highlights that employing apprentices has a hugely beneficial impact on overall business performance. In an independent survey of organisations that employ apprentices, conducted on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), over three-quarters of respondents felt their Apprenticeship programme made them more competitive, while the same number believed Apprenticeships led to higher productivity.

Moreover, the survey shows that without Apprenticeships the outlook for the country’s business looks bleak; 83 per cent of employers rely on their Apprenticeship programme to provide the skilled workers they need for the future. Two-thirds of respondents claim that they would struggle to find trained staff with the skills they need without their Apprenticeship programmes, highlighting the impact Apprenticeships are having on addressing skills shortages.

The findings also demonstrate the impact of Apprenticeships on recruitment and retention, with 80 per cent believing that the programme improves staff retention and turnover. Two-thirds of respondents believe their Apprenticeship programme helps them fill vacancies more quickly, while 88 per cent believe Apprenticeships lead to a more motivated and satisfied workforce.

Today sees the start of the first annual Apprenticeship Week, 25 - 29 February 2008, which is designed to celebrate the ongoing success of Apprenticeships and encourage more employers to get involved. The Week will raise awareness of the benefits that Apprenticeships bring to the economy and events are taking place around the country throughout the week to highlight the ongoing success of Apprenticeships.

Stephen Gardner, Director of Apprenticeships at the Learning and Skills Council commented: “These survey results confirm the significant benefits that employers achieve from Apprenticeships, from increased competitiveness and overall productivity to improved staff retention and motivation. The impressive return on employers’ investment shows that Apprenticeships are an excellent way to improve the bottom line, helping build the workforce employers need for future success. There are currently 130,000 companies reaping the benefits of Apprenticeships, and we are calling for even more employers to open their doors to apprentices.”
Stephen continued: “As a former apprentice myself, I’m delighted to launch the first annual Apprenticeship Week today and I hope that businesses across the country will join the growing ranks of employers offering Apprenticeships.”

Skills Minister David Lammy MP stated: “The global economy is evolving rapidly and the jobs of yesterday will not be the jobs of tomorrow. Apprenticeships have a vital part to play in ensuring our nation’s competitiveness, which is why the government is committing more than £1billion to increase the number of apprentice places by 2010/11.”

Other findings include:
- 59 per cent report that training apprentices is more cost effective than hiring skilled staff, with 59 per cent believing Apprenticeships lead to lower overall training costs and 53 per cent feeling they reduce recruitment costs;
- In terms of the return on investment linked to Apprenticeships, 41 per cent say their apprentices make a valuable contribution to the business during their training period, while a further third (33 per cent) report apprentices add value within their first few weeks or even from day one;
- 57 per cent report a high proportion of their apprentices going on to management positions within the company;
- Over three-quarters of respondents expect Apprenticeships to play a bigger part in their recruitment policy in the future.

Slack & Parr engineering firm has been training apprentices for 90 years since its foundation in 1917. Nearly half (48 per cent) of the company’s workforce have been apprentice trained, and one in seven (16 per cent) now hold senior positions. Apprentices currently make up over 14 per cent of the workforce, and managing director Bryan Harrison is permanently looking for ways to increase this number. This Wednesday, 27 February, Slack & Parr is attending their local Shepshed High School to offer students the opportunity to find out more about becoming an apprentice and try their hand at practical skills under the supervision of a current apprentice.

The Dinnington and High Green Dental Practices believe Apprenticeships training is the oxygen that energises all aspects of their organisation. The practice employs 37 members of staff, eight of whom are apprentices. Significantly, all their managers and deputy managers began their careers as apprentices.

Principal dentist Margaret Naylor said: “As a dental practice we try to achieve the highest standards of care for our patients. Not only should staff be adequately trained, their skills should be continuously upgraded and developed as new technology and advances in dental science arrive – Apprenticeships are a great way to do this.

“We believe that good training raises the standard of the service we offer our patients and increases the effectiveness of our workforce. Motivated and trained staff are more reliable, will take less sick leave and will be willing to take on more responsibility.”

To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit apprenticeships.org.uk or call the Apprenticeships employer helpline on 08000 150 400.

- Ends -
Independent research conducted by Populus on behalf of the LSC, of 204 respondents based in England who were responsible for Apprenticeship recruitment in their companies.

Telephone interviews were conducted between 7 January and 6 February 2008. Interviews were conducted between 7 January and 6 February 2008.

Learning and Skills Council:
The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for increasing the employability of young people and adults in England, and for ensuring that the skills they have at the age of 16 or over are relevant to the needs of employers.

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