

West Nottinghamshire College, working with Arriva to move forward through effective workforce development.

Background

West Nottinghamshire College has been working with employers to offer a range of programmes to improve their employee's skill levels, just one approach to this has been through work-based learning. One of the many success stories to emerge from this method of training is one of Europe's largest transportation service organisations, Arriva, which has long recognised people development as an integral part of their company profile.

This understanding led them to take the unprecedented step to expand the reach of their existing workforce development. No other bus companies within the East Midlands were encompassing the whole workforce within their development training.

Arriva established a number of learning centres at depots with the aid of the Trade Union Congress and chose West Nottinghamshire College as the learning provider, thus ensuring all their employees were able to receive programmes suitable for their individual needs. The College met Arriva's requirements by supporting the programmes with tutors at designated depots. Some fundamental basic skills issues evident from these first programmes prompted the College to suggest an initial assessment and basic skills diagnostic of the workforce to understand each person's individual skill level and training requirements.

This support and training mechanism has proven a valuable asset to employees and the company, impacting significantly on the company's bottom line and morale.

This is evident throughout the company, for example at the Derby site the annual employee turnover has dropped from 12% to 2%, similar statistics are evident in other Arriva depots. With a sense of achievement and of being valued, productivity, efficiency and confidence go hand in hand with the workforce developing together as a team.

Arriva's people development programme has expanded to include Health & Safety training, National Tests and FENTO level 2, plus programmes are being developed to help in management level roles.

Successes

One of the many success stories to come out of Arriva's employee development programme is David Hubbard.

David says his previous training was to plough a field, milk cows and drive buses. It was always thought education was reserved for other people. When Arriva wanted an assessor in 1999, David jumped at the chance, and even though he struggled with the reading and writing at times he passed the qualifications and ensured he understood what

was being taught. Through the support offered by West Nottinghamshire College, David progressed to complete his computer and basic skills programmes.

Due to Arriva's desire to develop their workforce, David has now completed his National Tests and FENTO level 2, allowing him to assess his colleagues' work. At his training centre in Leicester they now have 80 learners taking programmes based around work and/or home learning.

To David, "work is not a chore, it's an absolute pleasure."



David Hubbard

The Arriva group now have their own Learndirect hub and can provide a number of courses to their union members. However where gaps appear in Arriva's capacity to deliver, West Nottinghamshire College is able to provide support. Sample courses which West Nottinghamshire have supported include ECDL, Web Design, Sage Accounting and Beginner's French with distance learning courses in Supervisory Management, Business Management, Health & Safety, Food Hygiene and Call Centre Operations.

With the help of the team at Ashfield College (a section of West Nottinghamshire College) a number of Essential Skills Awareness days have been run for the Arriva staff, designated to promote best practices that should be adopted to promote essential skills within the workplace. Thirty staff members are already capable of screening other employees and marking the appropriate level of diagnostic test.

In conjunction with this the Skills for Life team have recently delivered the City and Guilds 9295, Adult Learners Support qualification, aimed at the Union Learner Representatives who wish to help their members in the area of literacy and/or numeracy skills. This course has taken the form of an intense, one day per week, eight-week course that is delivered by the Get On Team of West Nottinghamshire College. This course will progress next year to allow the representatives to move up to the level 3 qualification. The results of the course were excellent with a 100% passing the literacy and numeracy national test at level 2.

Another programme is being run for the Derby garage section of Arriva. This is based around basic skills provision, embedded into the staff induction programme for all new recruits to the organisation, and has been vocationalised to support the completion of 'in houses documentation'. Currently, West Nottinghamshire College is in the process of screening and diagnosing literacy and numeracy for the two hundred staff based at this site. On site programmes to up skill the staff with the intention of achieving National Tests or City & Guilds 3792 Entry Certificate is being made possible through analysis from the diagnostics. The aim is also to support the staff to complete working documents accurately to improve the skills needed within their job roles. The overall outcome is hoped to be a workforce of literate and numerate staff to turn around any current losses due to inaccurate information available, such as on insurance claim forms. Within this scheme there are a number of ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) learners who are being encouraged and supported to participate in the scheme using adapted approaches to learning.

The partnership between Arriva and West Nottinghamshire College continues to expand with the existence of: a partnering scheme, involving West Nottinghamshire College and Alison Wolf from Kings College London. The partnership runs a government project to assess the impact of essential skills improvement on a workforce (including fifteen Arriva staff, plus the 'Introduction to Mentoring', 'Fork Lift Truck RTITB' course, the reviewing of the management skills within the Arriva group, and the development of Arriva's computer systems to aid with on-line progression within the company). Both West Nottinghamshire College and Arriva feel this partnership has been extremely successful and are enthused by results to date in the continuing of development of further effective training programmes to meet the Skills for Life Agenda and the workforce needs of Arriva.

Contact details

For further information on how West Nottinghamshire College can work with your company to provide valuable work based learning, contact;

Denise Liffen, Team Leader, Learner Support, on telephone: 01623 413618.



PRESS RELEASE

Skills Elevator creates a boost to companies in North Notts.

Around one and a half thousand companies in the North Notts region are lined up with the possibility of getting help to develop their workforce for free. The launch event of the Skills Elevator project took place on Monday 21st March at Edwinstowe House.

The project aims to boost the workforce in small to medium sized businesses within North Notts through free work based training opportunities. The training required is determined by considering each company's individual needs, this is carried out by a training needs analysis. Suitable training programmes to level 1 and level 2 are then put in place, such as Health and Safety, Risk Assessment, Business Finance, Business Marketing and Information Technology.

Created in response to market needs identified by the North Nottinghamshire Life Long Learning Partnership, which demonstrated that small to medium sized enterprises (less than 250 employees) within the region, need to participate in staff training to ensure they achieve business demands within the competitive business climate which exists today. However, they also identified that many companies are unsure of what training will benefit them and often find they cannot afford the necessary programmes.

Skills Elevator project manager Graham Howe comments:

"As managers we are told in today's business climate to develop a more highly skilled workforce in order to meet market demands, but have the dilemma of how this can be achieved with daily business and commercial demands. The Skills Elevator project is the perfect solution to this and has the potential to provide a genuine benefit to companies, enabling them to increase profits and grow in an increasing competitive market."

West Nottinghamshire College in conjunction with Newark and Sherwood and North Nottinghamshire College have developed the project with funding from the Alliance SSP, Learning and Skills Council and the European Social Fund.

The open day was held as an informal drop in session, enabling local businesses to drop in at their convenience to simply pick up information or stay and have a chat with one of the Skills Elevator advisers.

Darren Heyes, Associate Director of Marketing at West Nottinghamshire College comments:

" We have been delighted at the response to this first event from businesses within the region and are looking forward to further events within Mansfield, Newark and Worksop to promote this project and the Skills Elevator Plus project, which is planned to commence in April 2005. Skills Elevator Plus will increase the project's provision to offer Level 3 and Level 4 training."

For further information about Skills Elevator and Skills Elevator Plus, contact the team on 0800 389 3795 or visit the website:
www.skillselevator.com

-Ends-

For further information please contact:
Helena Clay, Marketing
Tel: 01623 627191 ext.2237

Or
Pauline Dinnen, Marketing
Tel: 01623 627191 ext 2306

Notes to editor:
Guide to qualification levels:

Level 1 – Foundation GNVQ, NVQ 1
Level 2 – GCSE, Intermediate GNVQ, BTEC First Diploma, NVQ 2
Level 3 – A Level, AVCE, BTEC National Diploma, NVQ 3
Level 4 – HND, NVQ 4