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Flourishing apprenticeships



AS THE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME OF THE AUTOMATED MATERIAL HANDLING SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION PREPARES FOR ITS NEXT INTAKE OF APPRENTICES, **DAVE BERRIDGE**, AMHSA SECRETARY, INTERVIEWS THE KEY PLAYERS IN ITS SUCCESS.

▲▲ **The apprentices not only learn the practical skills we need them to have, but they also acquire invaluable soft skills such as effective communication, teamwork and problem solving** ▲▲



The latest recruits to the AMHSA apprenticeship scheme will shortly be making their way to Derbyshire to begin their four-year programme of work and study. Now entering its third year, the AMHSA scheme is operated in partnership with Toyota UK through its dedicated Apprentice Development Centre at the car manufacturer's state-of-the-art factory in Burnaston.

The success of the scheme rests on the mutually beneficial relationship between the parties involved: the provider (Toyota Manufacturing UK/Burton and South Derbyshire College), the employer (the participating AMHSA member) and the apprentice.

THE PROVIDER

Toyota UK/Burton and South Derbyshire College (BSDC) currently has over 80 young people in training and has successfully engaged more than 20 partner employers in its apprenticeship programme. What is behind this success?

"It's the quality of the training, which is designed to suit industry's requirements," says Kelvin Sanders, senior specialist in HR at Toyota UK. "We operate our programme in partnership with BSDC, so all our young people achieve nationally recognised qualifications. Lecturers from the college are permanently based at our Apprentice Development Centre, and, alongside industry specialists from Toyota, they deliver the education that underpins the programme."

The first two years of the apprenticeship are undertaken at Toyota, with a number of placement weeks spent at the AMHSA member company.

"During these two years, the apprentice will learn a very wide range of hands-on engineering skills," explains Kelvin. "For example, the foundation year involves topics such as Basic Electricity, Mechanical Hand

Skills and Engineering Principles. In the second year, apprentices progress to study at level 3 with subjects including Pneumatics, Hydraulics, Welding and Electronics. Years three and four involve extended placement with the AMHSA member. At the end of the fourth year, apprentices achieve the NVQ Diploma (level 3) in Maintenance Engineering."

THE EMPLOYER

What are the benefits to the employer of participating in the AMHSA scheme?

"The whole process is just so much simpler," says Garry Archer, production manager of George Utz Ltd. "With the programme being set up to deliver the engineering skills that we need in our new recruits, there is a huge saving in management time compared to doing it all ourselves. Even the assessment process is taken care of – although we also subsequently interview the candidates – by people who are specialists in the selection of young people who are really passionate about engineering and have the drive to succeed."

To date, George Utz has taken on six young people for apprenticeship training – four through the AMHSA/Toyota scheme and two in-house.

"What is really fantastic about the Toyota programme," continues Garry, "is that the apprentices not only learn the practical skills we need them to have, but they also undertake a significant amount of personal development. They acquire invaluable soft skills such as effective communication, teamwork and problem solving. Their confidence also increases dramatically."

What impact the government's new apprenticeship levy will have is yet unclear. With all employers that have a pay bill of £3m or more required to pay the levy, much of the cost of funding apprenticeships will shift from the state to employers. As organisations that pay the levy are to

be offered vouchers to the same value to spend on training from registered providers, the government believes that the levy will encourage employers to train more apprentices.

THE APPRENTICE

For young people, apprenticeships are something of a 'no-brainer'. "We get to earn while we learn," explains Kane McDaniel, apprentice with George Utz Ltd. "Many people of my age are either starting low-paid jobs with few prospects or beginning to rack up huge amounts of student debt at university. I'm getting paid a wage and have the opportunity to kick-start my career with a successful company, provided I achieve my qualifications."

Apprentices for the AMHSA/Toyota scheme require a minimum of four GCSEs at 'C' grade or above including Maths, English and Science. "That's the easy part, though," explains Kane. "With a limited number of places available, they are hotly contested. There was a really rigorous assessment day before I was selected for an interview with George Utz. It was worth the effort, though, because the training has been really interesting."

"I've especially enjoyed the welding, pneumatics and hydraulics. We also went on a week's trip to an outdoor pursuits centre as part of the team-building process, and that was really fun. The other great thing is that you are treated as an adult from day one; you are expected to act as an ambassador for your employer and you are responsible for your own success. If you want to and you have the ability, you can even go on to study for Level 4 qualifications or an engineering degree."

Discover more about this scheme at AMHSA's special 'walk-through apprenticeship experience' in the Future Skills Zone between halls 8 and 9 at IMHX. ■

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