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Improving overall and timely success rates: Asset Training

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Brief description

Focusing on processes that have an impact on learners, Asset Training has revisited their approach to secure improvements in the effectiveness of initial assessment, progress reviews, support, and employer liaison. Coupled with this there has been extensive capacity building through enhancing staff skills in IT, literacy and numeracy.

Overview – the provider’s message



‘Our inspection in 2005 spurred us on to improve learners’ success rates. We invested in the most up-to-date electronic equipment and appropriate IT training for all delivery staff. This initiative acted as a vehicle for cultural change by signalling a new way of working that has become part of the solution to improving learners’ progress. At the same time, we harnessed the knowledge and experience of our staff in working groups, and embarked on a comprehensive self-critical analysis to answer two questions: “Why do some learners not achieve as planned?” and “What can we do to ensure that all learners stay on programme and achieve?”

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Did it work? Well we have improved many aspects of our work, particularly where it affects key stages of the learner’s journey. Our overall and timely success rates have improved considerably and contributed to our [2009 inspection report](#) grade 1 for “outcomes for learners”. The satisfaction rates of our users have also improved. We retain employers well and we have enhanced our progression rates across the provision.

Our advice for others? Don’t be frightened to be self-critical; it can be very liberating! Try new ideas and learn from your successes as well as failures. Most importantly, involve your staff at an early stage and invest in their development.’

The good practice in detail

All providers support their learners, but why has Asset Training been so successful? It's because the assessment of learners is viewed as less 'initial' and more a 'continuous' process. And the results have been impressive, with year-on-year improvements in overall and timely success rates that Ofsted judged as outstanding at the 2009 inspection. So how was this achieved?

Effective diagnosis of support needs

Learners' personal and learning support needs are identified at an early stage through the use of extensive interviews using open questioning techniques. However, this is not the end, but the beginning of a process that staff revisit throughout the learner's time on programme. Details of all work with learners are noted on a 'learning aim plan' that also records feedback from employers and assessors, actions completed since the previous meeting and agreed future activity. These plans build to a history of a learner's contact, support and progress that informs the individual learning plan (ILP) and is used by staff to inform future programme planning, including individual support.

A commitment to continuous review

Many providers, including Asset Training, use detailed learning maps to analyse the job role that learners may carry out and match it with the need to demonstrate competence. However, this is not a one-off process for Asset Training, where the process is revisited throughout the learners' journey to check that the work carried out by learners contributes effectively to programme completion. In addition, staff use feedback from employers to assess how the learner's job may change or develop in the future and the impact of such changes on possible learning and assessment opportunities.

A few simple ideas have been added to improve learners' progress reviews including a check on the impact of induction and ensuring greater employer involvement in the training programme. All learners complete a questionnaire every three months which revisits key aspects of their induction.

'SMART' targets are recorded in an electronic portfolio that can be accessed by employers and by learners. Employers are encouraged to set targets for learners that not only address on-the-job training but also prioritise personal and social development. The provider has found that targets set with employer participation are more realistic as they take into consideration specific work demands, such as future audit requirements.

A commitment to improvement

The whole team is involved in the assessment of learners' needs. Staff are encouraged to share good practice about how to deal with individual learner's needs as they progress through their programme. Meetings are held to enable staff to explore specific cases with colleagues and formulate a possible strategy to keep learners on programme. As an assessor commented, 'We don't like a learner to leave until we have exhausted all possible support; even then we will try to hang on to them!'

Significant investment in the training of all staff to level 3 Key Skills numeracy and literacy has been undertaken and development opportunities for the achievement of relevant level 2 functional skills implemented. This has enhanced staff confidence in supporting learners. However, as importantly, staff have a practical understanding of some of the challenges that learners experience during their programme. As one member of staff said, 'It made us realise how learners feel.'

Impressive support for learners

The continual identification and provision of support is a high priority. To this end, off-the-job group sessions are provided that help learners to develop an understanding of specific aspects of their programme, as well as allowing them to meet and share experiences with other apprentices. Individual coaching sessions include the consideration of topics not always directly related to the achievement of their qualification, such as improved employability skills.

Help from employers

Learners spend most of their time in the workplace, so Asset Training has implemented improvements to its work with employers. For example, a summary document, shared with learners and employers has been introduced. This includes relevant targets and dates and is updated after every meeting. The changes are transferred to the individual learning plan which ensures that it is a user-friendly working document and reflects a learner's progress to date. The process also captures clear evidence of why changes in the plan have been made. To keep it simple, a visual indicator of programme completion is used, which is popular with learners and employers.

But work with employers does not stop there. As an internal verifier said, 'We accept that not all employers are the same. Through individual discussion, we ensure that employers are clear as to their specific training role. With each employer we have a service level agreement and we check regularly that workplace supervisors understand their roles and responsibilities in helping learners to achieve'. Staff ensure that this is reinforced through regular reference to the employer handbook which takes employers through their contribution to the learning journey. Asset Training is not afraid to cease work with an employer who is not delivering to these requirements.

Provider background



Asset Training and Consultancy Limited is an independent learning provider based in Bootle, Merseyside. Founded in 1996, it became a limited company in 2004. Asset Training has one site and works with 11 subcontractors across the area to provide apprenticeship and Train to Gain programmes in health and social care, engineering, construction, information and communication technology, retail and commercial enterprises, education and training, business administration and skills for life and work.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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