

**This document has been archived
because it is no longer current.**

Good employer engagement: ATG Training

URN: 50580

Date published: 29 March 2011

Reference: 130119

Brief description

This example demonstrates the effective involvement of employers in learners' programmes including tailored schemes of work and bespoke modules.

Overview – the provider's message



'It is vital to listen to employers and be able to adapt to their business needs. Commercial timescales can be unforgiving, so training programmes need to match them. The company needs to respond quickly when new opportunities present themselves, but it mustn't sacrifice quality to get the business. However, it's not enough to have responsive programmes. You must make sure that employers know what you are doing and are included in the success of their employees.'

Our advice for others? 'We used to assume that if we did a good job, businesses would use our training again. Stay in constant touch if you want repeat business.'

Ian Harper, Chief Executive

The good practice in detail

The recent [inspection report](#) praised ATG for its flexibility and responsiveness: 'Programmes are flexible and effectively tailored to employers' requirements. Cycle maintenance has excellent industrial links to major manufacturers, distributors, retail employers, and the awarding body, which provide learners with state-of-the-art materials and techniques and relevant, flexible qualifications. Childcare, retail and warehousing assessors accommodate

shift patterns and business pressures well.' The 'Employer Journey' provides a good overview of the company's approach to employer engagement.

Providing accreditation for cycle mechanics with state-of-the-art equipment

The 'CYTECH' programme was started by the Association of Cycle Traders, to provide a licence to practice for cycle mechanics. When they needed a partner to roll out the programme nationally, ATG worked with them to integrate the certificate into a bespoke National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) framework, providing funded accreditation and recognition for hundreds of otherwise-excluded learners all over the country.



Martin works in a specialist cycle shop in Salisbury and has a passion for bikes. 'ATG has really good equipment and the staff are very knowledgeable. I'm sure the CYTECH qualification and the NVQ will help my career,' he says. 'I've learned such a lot on this course, and I'm determined to go on to Level 3 next.'

'The equipment is right up to date,' says Matt, a cycle maintenance apprentice. 'It's great to learn how to do things right and use the tools safely.' Matt accepted an offer to upgrade his Saturday job selling bikes to a full-time post. Now he is deputy manager. He says his course with ATG has contributed to this: 'The staff know what they're talking about and they really explain it well. I learn about a technique and then I go back to the shop and train others. My CYTECH qualification is great too, and with an apprenticeship behind me I have a second chance to carry on with my education.'



As the Business Development and Engagement Consultant for the Buckinghamshire Education Business Partnership, Vanessa King knows ATG well. She is impressed by their responsiveness and flexibility. 'They listen to employers and adapt programmes to fit their needs,' she says. 'They're very flexible. Traditionally, when employers have asked us about apprenticeships, we have directed them to ATG because we know, from experience, that ATG will lead them through the process with clear explanations and minimum disruption. They make it easy for employees to gain a qualification.'

Training cycle mechanics for Tesco

Organising courses is straightforward when you control the timescale, but major employers like Tesco work to tight deadlines. ATG's unique position within the cycle industry made it the first choice for Tesco when they needed training to start specialist cycle shops in their larger stores. So, how did ATG change their way of working to meet Tesco's needs?



'At Tesco, we are always looking for ways to serve our customers better,' says Vicky Wellings, the Technical Manager (Leisure). 'The only choice we could offer for those purchasing a bike was a self-assembly option. We

realised we needed to extend this offer, so we approached ATG to help us to train our staff to assemble bikes to the required safety standards. ATG staff are extremely flexible, helpful and friendly. They provided invaluable technical advice about setting up the courses which are delivered on our site. That is very important as our staff often have family responsibilities which would prevent them from staying away on a residential course. Sometimes our timescales are unpredictable and ATG changes schedules to suit our commercial pressures. The staff enjoy their training and it's enabled us to start our rolling programme to set up bike areas in some stores and separate bike shops in others. We now have a great choice for customers; self-assembly or assembly at our bike shops by fully trained staff.'

David Aimson manages the sales team at ATG. He is the link between Tesco and the cycle trainers. 'Our bike team had plenty of experience of training people working in the bike industry, but this was different,' he says. 'We had to start from scratch when no bike shops existed in Tesco. Previously they had sold boxed bikes, so our team had to advise on tools as well as training. ATG already had bike courses planned with students enrolled. Our staff were brilliant and with slight schedule changes and some overtime we met Tesco's demand without detriment to any other customers.'"

Flexible programmes that integrate employers' specialist training

Apprenticeship models can seem rigid. It takes skill to make them fit for purpose for a specialist business. In 2007, a global manufacturer of medical electronics recruited the first cohort of engineering apprentices through ATG.

The company's second cohort has just begun an engineering apprenticeship with ATG. 'ATG is so approachable, friendly and flexible', says their training manager. 'When I visit the



Future Centre I'm welcomed as if I was part of the company. We enjoy visiting school careers days to get youngsters interested in the equipment. We know about our product, but we aren't educationalists. In the past, most of our recruits were experienced adults. We needed a partner to help us to recruit, select and train young people, and ATG has made it easy for us.' Planning the programme was a learning curve for both partners. ATG added some key elements to the package, such as training in computer network systems, to ensure that

learners got the right technical background. They also spoke to the awarding body to propose revisions to the framework to match current working practices.

The employer is particularly pleased about how the corporate training is integrated into the scheme of work. 'We come into the centre every Friday to deliver specialist courses, such as bespoke Health and Safety, which means that apprentices can go out on site with their mentors as soon as they finish their six-week block.' He is proud of the new employees. 'They have a fresh outlook and they've learned excellent skills. We had 160 applicants for 10 places this time, and we're sure that ATG has selected the "cream of the crop" for us!'

Extending the model to a wider remit

It can be challenging to tackle new subject areas, but this approach translates well into other provision. While apprenticeships are mandatory for engineers, retail workers often have poor access to training. ATG's new partnership with 'Performance through People'

(PTP) provides opportunities for local supermarket workers. The inspection report recognised a strength in the way that the retail programme met the employer's needs: 'ATG meets employers' needs very well. Mid Counties Co-operative is closely involved in developing the training programme. The employer chooses the units for the qualification and added tailored questions to ensure that learners have a thorough understanding of the company's own policies and procedures. Assessors meet learners' needs well, with flexible visits to cover different shift patterns.'

Anne Snell manages the business services team, offering childcare, retail, warehousing, ICT and business administration.

'We had not previously offered retail, and we were pleased to extend the remit', she says. 'The Co-op wanted a single scheme to up-skill all their staff. PTP covered the Midlands, but had no staff in the south, so we agreed to split the contract and work as partners.' The Co-op has its own framework of training modules, which have been carefully integrated into the scheme of work. Anne says that good communication is vital to providing an effective service to the employer and the learners. 'We must be sure that we all have the same information, and a shared approach. We were new to the employer and to the subject, so we had to learn fast. Our regular three-way meetings are good but not enough. Now our assessors and internal verifiers have joint standardisation meetings with PTP, improving everyone's practice and ensuring consistency.' This strategy was a key recommendation in the inspection report and has already benefited the programme. Her team have brought in new ideas. 'Our success with business administration e-portfolios convinced us they could be used here too, so now the learners are enhancing their computer skills as well as gaining a retail qualification.'

Provider background



ATG Training, previously Aylesbury Training Group, is a national provider, established in 1967 to train engineering apprentices. Member companies elect a Board of Directors which appoints the chief executive to run the company. In summer 2008, ATG moved into the Future Centre, in Aylesbury, where most provision is located. It also has a site in Manchester. Provision is offered in child care, animal care, engineering (foundation and cycle maintenance), construction, ICT, retail and commercial enterprise,

business administration and customer service.

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](#).

To view other good practice examples, go to:
www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/goodpractice