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Good Practice Example

Title:	Improving timely success rates
Provider:	Span Training and Development Ltd
Type of provision:	Independent Learning Provider
Region:	South
Remit area:	Learning and skills
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Brief description:	Achievement rates have always been high, but until recently too many learners achieved late. Now more than 85% achieve on time. This example explains how this provider improved timely success rates.

Overview – the provider’s message

Span has 27 years experience in hairdressing training. “We see ourselves as the training department that small companies can’t afford to run themselves”, says Steve North, the Managing Director. “Our clients are prize-winning hairdressers who have exacting standards. They are good at training their stylists, and nearly all use in-salon assessors to accredit practical work. We act as the intermediary to make sure learners can get the rest of their qualification as well as developing first class skills.” Over the past four years, timely success rates have more than quadrupled. Steve attributes this to two key factors: better analytical tools to measure progress, and successful incentives for salons to get people through the qualification on time. “We have strong trusting partnerships with employers, but our challenge is that the assessors are not our employees,” he says. “For this to work, it has to add value for everyone.”



Steve North, Managing Director

The good practice in detail

Raising aspirations and success with better analytical tools



How do you keep track of progress and pre-empt problems when your learners are spread across 120 sites? Span has devised very good systems to provide early warnings of trouble, which means their interventions to support learners are very successful. The [inspection report](#) in January 2011 said: “Senior managers

provide good leadership and management that encourages high standards, increases achievement and raises aspirations. They make good use of management information to manage performance and take effective action when targets are not achieved."

The company needed to understand why learners were not achieving on time. Commercial databases did not record enough detailed information to identify where the slow progress was occurring. The staff had begun to capture this information on spreadsheets, but these were becoming too complex. The new database, introduced five years ago, allocates points to each activity in a qualification, and sets target scores for every review as well as an overall target score. The process records what has been achieved, but also identifies inconsistencies for managers to follow up. It supports early intervention for individuals and shows clearly which parts of the syllabus are not working so well, giving the opportunity to provide extra support. The points system motivates both learners and managers, cleverly focussing on progress to date as well as overall progress.

Inspection findings are used well to devise further improvements. Inspectors reported that review records did not show enough detail. Span accepted the issue, but did not want to increase the administration undertaken by the assessors. Further refinements to the database will replicate the manual logbook and generate detailed action plans automatically at each review, providing an automatic paperless solution to the problem.

Working in partnership with employers to motivate learners to achieve early

Employers who work with Span are keen to see their learners do well, and are committed to their training, so what can be done to reduce the time taken to achieve qualifications? Span devised a very successful scheme which quadrupled timely success rates and provided learners with additional training.



The [inspection report](#) says: "Span works productively with their partner employers to ensure they are highly committed to their learners' success. In-salon assessors receive effective coaching, guidance and support to enhance their assessment practice. Span's strong links with manufacturers and a highly respected hairdressing organisation provide learners with inspirational opportunities to attend and demonstrate their skills at national and international events. Managers and training officers ... improve success rates very effectively by intervention and action, providing support and rewarding employers whose learners achieve on time."



The problem in the past was that although learners were achieving well overall, and developing excellent skills as hairdressers, they were taking too long. This was unsatisfactory for them, and it meant that Span was supporting learners when they had used up their funding. The issue was not about high standards in the salons, most of whom are prizewinning organisations. Learners develop excellent skills which they can show off at competitions. Whilst this is important, it is also vital that they gain their qualification on time.

An agreement commits employers to have at least one in-salon assessor at every site. In return Span provides free training for the first assessor and a reduced price for any

others. Quality assurance visits by Span are intensive at the start and risk-based thereafter.

Span realised it had to raise the profile of timely achievement so that it mattered to the salons too. Now, when a learner achieves within 18 months, the salon gets a cash bonus, which is often spent on further training. This system benefits both the learner and the salon, and means that Span can use its resources much more productively to support those who really need it. As salons are very competitive, they enjoy the challenge and are keen to get learners through faster.

Stephanie, an in-salon assessor, was trained by Span. "Assessment in the salon is the best way to get our learners through", she says. "It's up to me to make sure they do their practical work. We can start from scratch and develop good standards. The girls much prefer to be assessed by someone they know well, I can do it when they are ready, and I am always there when they need help. Span takes care of the theory and gives me very good support. I enjoy exchanging ideas with other assessors at our regular meetings: everyone has different ways of teaching their apprentices, and it's useful to keep up to date with the sector and the qualifications." The early achievement bonus for the salon has been put to good use, she says. "It means we can pay for more training. We've taken them to events in London, provided courses in hair-up and colour, and run a seminar evening. We always did do a lot, but this is a very nice reward for doing well, and it means our learners get something extra."



Provider background

Span Training and Development Limited (Span) is a private training company based in Radley, near Abingdon, in Oxfordshire. It specialises in training for the hair and beauty industry and is a member of the Fellowship for British Hairdressing. Approximately 300 learners are employed in about 130 hairdressing salons across Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. Most are working towards apprenticeships or advanced apprenticeships in hairdressing, but some are following management, team leading, administration or customer service programmes. Hairdressing learners attend monthly off-the-job training at one of seven regional training centres, and management learners attend theory training at the training centre in Banbury.