



Find out how  
to get the best  
from your  
apprentice



## Managing an apprentice

7 ways to manage apprentices the  
right way

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Engaging apprentices in your business can bring huge benefits in terms of filling skills gaps, succession planning, tailoring training to your needs and addressing recruitment challenges. But training and managing apprentices comes with a cost in terms of time and effort, so it's important to ensure you are getting the best out of the scheme, and out of the individual apprentices.

Part of this is understanding how to manage your apprentices effectively. Many apprentices are very young, and lacking much/any experience of the workplace and it's important to bear that in mind and ensure managers provide them with enough (and the right type) of support.

Here are some things which can help you maximise the effectiveness of your apprenticeship programme.



## 1. Induction



You probably have some sort of induction programme, even a very informal one, for all new staff. Possibly you have a checklist of information people need, key things they need to know about procedures and processes, and important people new starters should meet.

For apprentices, particularly when they are very young, a good induction is even more important. They may have absolutely no understanding of how things work generally in the work environment, and may feel very unsure about things. Make sure they get a clear understanding of how their role fits into their team, but also lots of practical guidance.

Ensure they know how breaks and working time operate in the business, what they should wear and what happens about pay, timesheets, timing of pay and other practical details. Give them lots of information and guidance about health and safety as well, and perhaps above anything, make sure they know who they can ask if they have a question or a problem.

In fact, go further than making sure they know who to ask. Many young people new to the workplace will naturally be lacking confidence so getting their manager to proactively check whether they have questions can really make a difference as their confidence builds.

## 2. Clear expectations

Obviously clear expectations are important for any employee, but new apprentices coming in will have less of an idea about what's generally expected than more experienced new recruits. A clear understanding of exactly what tasks they are expected to carry out, at what kind of rate and to what kind of standard will improve the chances of a successful apprenticeship and help both you and your apprentice identify and address problems and issues sooner. Many will not have been in a work environment before so that's worth bearing in mind in terms of setting expectations, and which elements of working life you cover in discussions.

## 3. Review progress regularly

Get the most out of your apprentice by reviewing their progress on a regular basis. This will help make sure they are going in the right direction; that they are getting the training and support they need; and that their work is kept at a good standard. Start with reviews very frequently – you can adjust this later as things progress and their confidence builds.



## 4. Lots of feedback



Make sure your apprentice gets lots of feedback about what they are doing. They might need more reassurance than other staff that they are doing things right, and because their inbuilt knowledge of how to do things is not as developed, they might need a more frequent 'steer' where they should be doing something differently.

Feedback can take place as part of regular formal reviews, but also don't underestimate the impact of immediate informal feedback. 'Catching' them doing something well and giving them that immediate positive response can work wonders for confidence.

## 5. Give autonomy where possible/appropriate



Whilst apprentices obviously need plenty of supervision and guidance, an important part of anyone's job satisfaction is a degree of autonomy over their work. Where this is possible and appropriate, try and allow apprentices to make decisions about what they are doing and give them a sense of ownership over their work tasks.



## 6. Pastoral support

Especially where apprentices are very young, good pastoral support is really important. The transition from school or college into the workplace can be very challenging for young people and they will need a better support network and more guidance than more experienced recruits.

They may lack maturity and awareness of their behaviour and of the nuances and expectations of the workplace, and might need more support with attendance and personal issues than other staff.

Patience, a good support system and an understanding of those needs will help ensure apprentices feel supported, looked after and make a good contribution to your business.



## 7. Mentor and/or buddy

Consider having a mentor for new apprentices, and/or a buddy programme. This can provide additional guidance and support outside the traditional line management set up, and having a work 'buddy' can provide your apprentices with somewhere to go for those questions they might feel are a bit silly, or don't feel comfortable asking their line manager or mentor. Employees who have been apprentices themselves can be ideal for this role.

Following these steps can make a huge difference to the success of your apprenticeships. There is an investment involved in terms of management time, but fostering new talent and ensuring training is transferred into work performance as effectively as possible means it can really pay dividends later.

If you'd like some advice on managing apprentices effectively in your business, get in touch.





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