

Skills and training – how do you make them work for you?

In the first of a series of roundtable discussions in association with **Hugh James**, we asked business leaders, training managers and experts from different sectors to tell us about the difficulties they face in skills and people development

Simon Farrington: We hear a lot these days about young people lacking basic skills. Is that something you're finding in people applying for jobs and does it cause problems with your recruitment?

Alison Love: In our recruitment at solicitor level there is now huge competition, we get hundreds of applications for a handful of jobs. I'm not sure that we find a lack of basic skills in terms of literacy and numeracy, but we do find that they have no comprehension of business and how business operates - how to write a business letter - and it's at that end that we have problems.

We have our own training programme to give those skills to people which is at an early stage.

With junior staff we have had problems recruiting but in the last couple of years that appears to have gone away.

Perhaps it's because our profile as an organisation has increased and we are attracting better applicants that we don't have the issues we had a couple of years ago.

Wendy Giles: When it comes to basic education those we take in are lacking in basic numeracy and literacy and that is a barrier to them progressing in the company. It's difficult. Because of the stigma attached to being illiterate or needing extra help, it makes tuition difficult and we'd struggle to get people to sign up to literacy classes that we'd run.

Paul Gorin: We have taken on university graduates who are quite immature, particularly from a business perspective and what they have to do discipline-wise.

So what we have done is come up with our own basic training course so they know exactly what to do, and then call in the REC which is our professional body and we put them on the REC training course.

As far as WAG is concerned, lots of businesses here can access money for funding for certain courses. These professional courses we place them on are not eligible for funding but we do it anyway.

I think that from the WAG perspective they have to be more customer-led as opposed to just putting out training courses that may or may not fit.

WHAT THEY HAVE TO REALISE IS THAT A CV IS A DISQUALIFIER

If they want to encourage people to utilise training then it has to be demand-led. At present they have no courses that we would utilise because they're not relevant to what we do.

Because we deal with permanent positions the quality of the CVs we have is appalling, and this applies to jobs paying in excess of £30,000. Because the people we deal with at that level have been working for 10 years and more and have never had to fill in a CV

before they don't know how to do it.

With the younger element what tends to happen is that because of text messaging some CVs are partly written in text.

We advise people on how to write a CV. What they have to realise is that a CV is a disqualifier. Unless you have a decent CV that points out what you are good at and why you have applied for this job, as soon as it goes in front of someone they discard it and move on to the next one.

David Brown: There is no excuse for a poorly presented CV. When you see spelling mistakes that should have been picked up on a spell-check, that shouldn't happen.

If you are applying for a management post it costs nothing to ask someone to read it through, so to me a poorly presented CV is saying something about that person and can be discarded straight away.

But in terms of presentation we see forms filled in with pencil or a biro that has run out and a different colour used for completion,

