

Attracting Talent for the Future: an SMEs Guide to Taking on an Apprentice



In this era of low unemployment, recruiting and retaining affordable staff with the right skills is a challenge often reported by the freight industry. Increasingly operators are choosing to hire and develop apprentices as a way of guaranteeing the long-term success of their business.

The world of apprenticeships has changed radically in the past year, opening up opportunities for small and large employers, as well as young people keen to gain real-world skills and experience. But it isn't always easy to navigate the system, find out what funding is available, or where to go for advice. Working in partnership with BIFA, director of Outsource Training and Development Nichola Hay provides a simple guide to how it works in England...

What kind of apprenticeships are there?

The freight industry is extremely diverse, with a need for many different skills at all levels. There are now over 530 apprenticeship standards approved or in development, from international freight forwarding and aviation standards, to LGV drivers, customer service agents and accountants. The Institute for Apprenticeship's website has a full list of apprenticeship standards, you can find them here:

www.instituteforapprenticeships.org

Do I have to pay an apprentice?

You must pay your apprentice at least the National Apprenticeship wage. Often companies choose to pay more than this, recognising their apprentices' value and the demand for young talent.

What funding is available for apprentices?

Apprenticeships are funded in different ways, depending on your business size.

If your company payroll size is less than

£3m
annually

then government funding of

90%
available for training and assessing apprentices.

Your business funds

10% top up.

If you take on a 16-18 year old apprentice

£1000
incentive available.



What do apprentices do?

Apprentices spend the majority of their time at work, combined with industry-related learning.

This learning might be formal classroom training, one-to-one coaching, e-learning, secondment or practical training. Training can be at your workplace, or off-site. It depends on the type of apprenticeships, and what works best for your company and your apprentice.

As the employer, you decide what they do day to day, on the understanding that the work helps them learn skills related to their apprenticeship. This includes allowing them to work alongside experienced staff.

Your apprentice will be assessed at the end of their apprenticeship, so it's important they can evidence their workplace skills gained throughout their time working with you.

How long will the apprenticeship last?

Apprenticeships vary in length, depending on their level, and how long the individual takes to gather the required skills. An intermediate apprenticeship (level 2 – operational level) might typically last 12 months, whereas degree apprenticeships could last 3-4 years. The International Freight Forwarding Specialist standard is set at a minimum of 18 months.

In England, when you employ a new recruit apprentice their initial contract must cover the length of the apprenticeship. This is usually a fixed term contract.

Having developed new talent, many businesses choose to offer their apprentice a permanent role, as they are keen to retain their skills. There's no obligation for your apprentice to stay with you after their apprenticeship, but many are keen to stay with the company that's invested in them and continue to grow.

Who decides which apprentice I get?

Apprenticeships are similar to any other job vacancy. As the employer, you get to shortlist candidates and decide who's best for your business. Approved providers offer a full apprenticeship recruitment service. This includes helping you develop a job advert, promoting your role, shortlisting candidates and giving them interview feedback. Your apprenticeship recruitment provider will then help settle your new apprentice into their learning programme.

It's important to use a provider who understands your industry, to make sure you get the right candidates.

How old does someone have to be to apply for apprenticeships?

Apprentices must be 16 or over. Typically most applicants for an entry-level role would be 16-24, but you're free to hire someone older with more experience.

And don't forget – thanks to changes in the system your existing employees can also pursue an apprenticeship these days.

Who delivers an apprentice's off-the-job training?

As the employer, you need to select a partner that is on the government's register of apprenticeship training providers (RoATP) to ensure they can deliver training related to the apprenticeship.

Some providers specialise only in certain types of apprenticeships, such as accountancy or customer service.

Larger providers like Outsource Training and Development offer a broader range of apprenticeship training, at different levels and in a variety of industry sectors.

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