

## CASE STUDY: Apprenticeships

### Pat Bastille, An Assessor's View

#### Background

I am the lead internal Verifier (IV) and IV Manager for Ixion. I have been doing this job for over four years but I've been assessing ordinary NVQs for over 10 years.

When I heard that the Government's focus and funding would be directed towards Apprenticeships I was a little apprehensive. It took me back to my days as a novice assessor when I had been given twelve 16-18 year olds to assess on a programme designed for kids who had left school with no qualifications and not much interest in learning.

I worked for the then Thames Valley University who had put together their own 'Apprenticeship' scheme before anyone else had thought of it. In signing up for



this three year course, they had agreed to do a level 1 NVQ in Business and Administration in year one, a level 2 NVQ in Customer Service in year two, and year three would be a level three qualification in their chosen vocation.

These were problem kids who had had a poor experience at school and it was quite a challenge to win them over. I did win them over and it gave me the experience I needed to deal with young people who were de-motivated with learning, and set me up to take them through to their chosen vocation. A few of them fell by the wayside, but most completed the first two years with me and some went on to other professions. I've since learned that one is now a Nursing Sister at a local hospital and another is a Paramedic with the London Ambulance Service.

*"The Apprenticeship Scheme gives youngsters confidence and extra skills both in their work and in working with others as part of a team"*

#### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Today I am assessing and verifying apprentices under the new Government Scheme. I successfully completed eight in the first year and they were great. All of them really wanted to achieve their qualification and worked hard to get there. At least three of these that I know of have gone on to secure full time posts with the promise of a bright career in the future.

*"I get an immense amount of satisfaction from the looks on their faces when I say "that's it – you've completed – well done!"*

I usually look after approximately 12 apprentices at a time, helping them to complete Business and Administration Apprenticeships or Customer Service and Management Level 3 Apprenticeships.

I work directly with each apprentice, giving them hands-on support to achieve their Apprenticeship qualification. I might need to observe them in the work place, talk to their managers and colleagues to see how they are getting on, as well as support them through the different modules they need to complete.

I spend as much time as needed with each of my apprentices, which could be anything from an hour every other week to 3 hours at a time, depending on what they are working on. I am always at the end of the phone and in contact by e-mail all the time, and find that it gives them motivation and momentum to keep it going.

I have found that literacy skills can be a major obstacle when they first start on their Apprenticeship: it can be difficult to find the right words, get the spelling right and be grammatically correct. One of the tasks I often ask my apprentices to complete is a letter writing scenario, this means I can be sure they can get it right before they can pass their module.

*“I really want them to finish what they are doing and achieve their Apprenticeship, so I always try to keep it interesting”*

## WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Each Apprenticeship usually last a year which means you can build up a good relationship over this time and they all get to know me quite well. This coming year, I will hopefully see all my current apprentices successfully gain their qualification, and although it is sad to say good bye to them, I am always so proud to see them achieve their goal and move on to the next stage of their career.

Of course, with each apprentice that I say goodbye to, there are new ones coming through the door, so I am looking forward to the new challenges that these will bring.

*“Apprenticeships are a successful way of giving youngsters another shot at a career if school has failed them”*