

People 1st Launches Apprenticeships Drive in Run Up To 2012 Games

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With the 2012 Olympics in sight, People 1st predicts that hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism (HLTT) employees, such as chefs, customer service teams and managers, will soon be like gold dust. Even today, in the height of a recession, the sector is already recording at least 30,000 vacancies every month*.

Brian Wisdom, chief executive of People 1st, the sector skills council for the HLTT industry, is calling for more employers to take on apprentices to bridge the employment gap in the run up to the Games.

“It’s not only Team GB that is ramping up its training,” declares Wisdom. “Wise employers have identified that apprentices are the most cost-effective way to build the loyal teams they need to win customers and generate improved profits.”

New research launched in Apprenticeship Week (23-27 February 2009) reveals that 87 per cent of employers in the leisure industry believe that Apprenticeships helped to generate higher overall productivity and 71 per cent felt that apprentices make them more competitive. Over 84 per cent felt that their apprentices resulted in greater staff retention.

“The cost of investing in apprenticeship training in the hospitality sector is modest (£4,326) in comparison to other sectors and can often be recouped more quickly – often in little over one year,” said Brian Wisdom.

“Apprentices benefit all round too; they can “earn and learn” and really grow their own skills which will stand them in good stead all of their working life. Research shows that apprentices will, on average, earn £100k more in a lifetime than other employees.”

Lewis Bebbington, a junior sous chef at Tonic, an award-winning restaurant and bar in Nottingham city centre, and who has recently completed his Advanced Level 3 Hospitality Apprenticeship (Kitchen Larder) said: “If you’re passionate about cooking, do an apprenticeship, then get stuck in at a really great restaurant.”

Earlier this year, restaurant chain McDonalds announced that in 2009 it aims to provide Apprenticeships to up to 6,000 of its 72,000 UK workforce and then up to 10,000 per year from 2010, providing staff with the opportunity to gain a valuable, nationally recognised qualification that is equivalent to five GCSEs grade A*-C. The move will make McDonald’s the UK’s largest Apprenticeship provider.

Alex Potts, who works for McDonalds in Sleaford, said: “I enjoyed everything about my apprenticeship and I now see working at McDonalds as a career rather than a job.”

Whitbread has made a commitment to over 6,000 of its team members achieving or working towards apprenticeships and/or advanced apprenticeships by 2010.

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* Average monthly vacancies at Job Centre Plus throughout 2008

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Notes to editors:

The survey was carried out by Populus throughout January 2009 and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council.

More key leisure industry findings:

- More than four in ten (45 per cent) leisure firms have increased the number of apprentices it employs this year.
- Three quarters of employers questioned (74 per cent) said employing apprentices reduced their overall training budget, while 63 per cent said this resulted in lower recruitment costs.
- Nearly 2 million people are employed in the £40.9 billion HLTT sector contributing 3.6% to the UK's economic output.

Background:

Apprenticeship Week activities will take place around the country and involve celebrities, politicians and apprentices. The week is an opportunity to promote the benefits that apprentices bring to businesses and the economy.

Apprenticeships are a blend of on and off the job training that gives the apprentice the skills they need for their chosen career whilst earning a wage.

More than 130,000 employers currently employ apprentices. There are over 180 types of apprenticeships available in more than 80 sectors of industry and commerce from engineering to boat building, veterinary nursing to accountancy.

People 1st is the sector skills council for the hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism industries focusing on transforming skills in the sector through the development of world class qualifications in management and leadership, customer service and craft skills.