

Category: Innovation

Organisation: Sainsbury's Supermarkets

Date: October 2007

EFA overview

Sainsbury's Bakery Apprenticeship programme is seen as a key driver in raising capability in in-store bakeries and ensuring that Sainsbury's continues to be "a great place to work". Bakery is a key area for business development and crucial to the customer experience and the Sainsbury's scheme is open to all irrespective of age. Availability of external funding is not used to limit entry and apprentices are recruited based on their capability to do the job and their ability to learn as they work.

Initiative

A Bakery Apprenticeship programme open to all (irrespective of age) designed to improve the core skills and competencies of recruits in in-store bakeries and to tackle an industry shortfall in skilled bakers.

Aims and purpose

- To improve retention, skill and capability in Sainsbury's in-store bakeries through accreditation and inspirational training.
- To have no age bar against those wishing to complete the Bakery Apprenticeship.

Business drivers

Bakery is a key destination department for customers and a key development area for the business. Sainsbury's needed to:

- Redress difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled bakers in a tight and restricted market where is a lack of people entering employment in this sector
- Develop a qualification which gave Retail and Customer Service skills in addition to a skilled craft
- Develop employees through formal qualifications which had not previously been offered
- Deliver a qualification through an internal training offer to ensure consistency of delivery with no duplication in learning
- To enable an improved skilled workforce to drive bakery sales

Approach taken

Sainsbury's worked with EDI (Awarding Body) and Skillsmart Retail (Sector Skills Council).

Craft specific units were developed and brought into the Retail Apprenticeship framework and elements of technical and behavioural training were incorporated to help individual learners improve their communication skills.

The Bakery Apprenticeship programme launched in May 2006, consists of an NVQ Level 2 and includes specialist bakery units, a technical certificate and key skills. In addition to providing a qualification over and above those offered by competitors, all learners now complete an additional unit taken from NVQ Level 3 in Retail Skills; this promotes continuous improvement and allows them to develop their skills at a higher level.

The programme allows colleagues to develop practical skills from their first day in the bakery. It also allows them to gain a qualification, without the need to build a traditional portfolio where they previously may not have had academic success.

For those wishing to retrain with a new skill but unable to qualify for Government funding, Sainsbury's provides resource (Government funding doesn't permit individuals to gain a second Level 2 qualification).

To ensure that the scheme welcomes participants regardless of age, the cost of completion of the programme is covered if government funding, which discriminates against learners on the basis of age, is not available.

Sainsbury's developed a special recruitment site for the programme designed to attract colleagues irrespective of age - www.wholesomecareers.co.uk.

Sainsbury's as a business has made a further commitment on training by recently signing the Skills Pledge (Leitch report), which will facilitate further expansion of the qualifications offered to all colleagues across the business, irrespective of funding or age.

Barriers

In developing and delivering the scheme, Sainsbury's faced challenges in:

- Resource: Identifying adult LSC funding for those over 23 years of age, and identifying budget for participants on the programme who don't qualify for the available funding stream(s). The business has had to understand the budgetary requirements and develop a system to control numbers to meet funding and budgetary requirements whilst ensuring access to all.
- Dispelling the myth that apprenticeships are for young people, and instead promoting the programme to all as a route to gain invaluable skills.
- Engaging colleagues, particularly where previous NVQs offered in store had had limited success. This requires selling the changes in the way Bakery training was designed and the standard of learning provided
- Engaging key stakeholders, including Bakery trading team and HR colleagues, in the deployment of the programme in stores and how this would be supported.
- Ensuring that the programme met the key objective i.e. making Sainsbury's 'a great place to work' and could demonstrate actual business benefit through training
- Ensuring that the qualification was quality driven. Third party expertise was enlisted to ensure this. Bells Assessors and Verifiers are responsible for quality assuring the programme from an external perspective, using occupationally competent assessors and verifiers.

Impact

Sainsbury's has identified both internal and external benefits, including:

- Improvement in Mystery Shopper scores for bakeries with apprentices
- Improved adherence to ready to trade procedures and awareness of the need to follow procedures when producing bread and confectionery
- Improvement in the overall skills level of bakers in store, and awareness amongst bakery managers of the need to coach and support apprentices
- The programme has ensured that Sainsbury's has a quality product on offer to employees, which promotes and coaches colleagues to deliver excellent customer service to customers. Confidence in the quality of delivery of the programme has been achieved through mapping occupational standards.
- A number of apprentices have now progressed onto management training, whilst still on the programme, this represents a huge achievement for them individually but also for Sainsbury's as it demonstrates the scheme is successfully developing staff for the future
- 6% of the current apprentices are aged over 25
- The success of the programme has led to the design of a similar Meat and Fish apprenticeship.

In addition:

- The programme has highlighted the business need to support all employees irrespective of funding or age in achieving basic skills in literacy and numeracy
- The scheme has widened the employment base to attract new colleagues, including mothers returning to work and the long term unemployed
- Opening the programme to all has given a large number of colleagues an opportunity to gain and develop a craft skill.

Monitoring

Sainsbury's monitors:

- The background and age group of those recruited onto the programme
- Individual learning records by age of colleagues wishing to or entering the programme.
- Engagement of Personnel and Training Managers (PTM) and Bakery Managers to ensure they understand the programme and are accountable

In addition:

- Each learner is supported in store by their line manager (Bakery Manager or CTS) in completing their foundation and intermediate Bakery "Steps to Success" programme, through coaching, training and observation sign off to complete tasks. Learners work through workbooks and activity logs with line manager to learn and develop competencies.
- Each apprentice is assigned a mentor within their store from a different area other than Bakery. This mentor is there to support the learner with any problems they encounter and to offer impartial advice.

- Store PTM and Regional Human Resources Partner (RHRP) are responsible for the monitoring learners' progress and completion of foundation and intermediate training.
 - Third party suppliers (Bells Training Services and JHP) externally assess the qualification, providing quality assurance.
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