

A generation without apprenticeships Mel Holliday, MD Chiselwood Ltd



Mel Holliday, Founder and Managing Director of Lincoln's national award-winning bespoke kitchen company, Chiselwood,

discusses the need for more apprenticeship programmes and her commitment to make this happen.

Apprenticeships combine college learning with on-site experience to ensure the right balance of technical skills and practical experience. Employers and trainees both benefit from the mix of training and real experience.

There has never been a more opportune time for businesses to get involved in apprenticeships. Up and down the country more and more businesses are taking on apprentices. Apprenticeships are work-based training opportunities that could benefit both new and existing employees.

According to the National Apprenticeship Service:

- 88% of employers who employ apprentices believe that Apprenticeships lead to a more motivated and satisfied workforce;
- 83% of employers who employ apprentices rely on their Apprenticeships programme to provide the skilled workers that they need for the future;
- One in five employers are hiring more apprentices to help them through the tough economic climate.

We have tried to provide support for a number of young people here at Chiselwood over the years in an informal way. We have struggled however to get the financial and practical support.

We have had financial support from the local CITB (Construction Industry Training Board) to provide internal training for our staff in the past but have provided specific support with their apprenticeship scheme since September 2010.

My own experience with the CITB – Construction Skills is that it has proven to offer the best practical support to make everything as simple as possible for apprentices and employers. It can help with costs, advice and assistance to make your experience a successful one by assigning an adviser.

CITB – Construction Skills will arrange training at a local college, pay all college, awarding body and examination fees and help employers with paperwork to claim grants (up to £9,000 over a three year apprenticeship).

It is the largest provider of apprentices for the construction industry, across a wide range of trades. Drawing from 40 years of experience in the industry, it is helping to develop the next generation of skilled construction workers.

Over 81% of CITB-Construction Skills apprentices complete their full framework. That's 10% higher than the national average and the CITB placed more than 5,200 new apprentices with employers in 2010.

Since September 2010 I have received over 10 applications for an apprentice in the Chiselwood workshops. The high level of interest shows the demand for more apprenticeship programmes across industry and at Chiselwood we are keen to be at the forefront of the resurgence in apprenticeship schemes for young people in Lincolnshire.



Chiselwood apprentice Luke Hilton has the chance to work on top quality Chiselwood projects such as those shown here.

It is important that young people receive a standard of training that will successfully equip them for future careers. Apprenticeships have always been a key part of Britain's industrial heritage and it is significant that during these difficult economic times more employers have begun to recognise their value in building up the workforce skills-base.

A recent school-leaver who agrees is Luke Hilton who is on an apprentice scheme at Chiselwood. He is a strong advocate of the scheme and would like to see more training programmes like his own rolled out across businesses nationwide.

"I would recommend this scheme to others as I am really enjoying learning in different areas of the company whilst also being paid! So far I have been learning the different techniques and skill basis that makes cabinet making unique from joinery." "I think other businesses should bring back

apprentice schemes, because young people will have more opportunities to learn whilst in the work place, and I think it is also a clear indication of the company's commitment to its workforce", comments Luke.

Luke was thrilled to hear he had obtained an apprenticeship place with Chiselwood.



"I was looking for a career involving cabinet making skills and had completed my work experience with them, when I discovered Chiselwood had an apprenticeship scheme which included that I just had to jump at the chance."

"I am enjoying learning so much. It has an

advantage over college courses because it involves hands-on experience, which many future employers will be looking for, plus we get paid."

Luke hopes to achieve NVQ certificates at level 2 at the end of his apprenticeship course with us.