

Tresham College

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The ABITEC Group

Employer Description

The ABITEC Group, are part of the international ABF Food group, an international food, ingredients, and retail group with annual sales of £5.2bn and over 35,000 employees.

Employer Engagement strategy

Tresham have a well established process for employer engagement which incorporates the following steps:

Stage 1 - engage workplace senior management team and find out union policy (if unionised)

Stage 2 - set up steering group (with as many reps from above as possible to make it work)

Stage 3 - develop a strategy and action plan (with dates etc)

Stage 4 - raise awareness throughout company either via ULR/HR/notices team briefings etc

Stage 5 - conduct LLN needs analysis on workplace/personal issues

Stage 6 - Engage employees

Stage 7 - Produce LLN Learning Needs Report (although not all companies see this as vital)

Stage 8 - Agree a training proposal and service level agreement

Background to the Initiative

ABITEC were approached under the Employer Engagement programme funded by the Northampton Learning and Skills Council. Claire Underwood, HR Manager was interested in Tresham Institute's Communication for Team Leader courses. Initial discussion established the long term aim of improving literacy and numeracy skills for all staff. ABITEC's appraisal system had already identified a need to improve a range of communication skills among Supervisors and Team Leaders.

It was decided that starting courses with the Team Leaders would have two direct benefits, improving their own skills and raising their awareness of the benefits to be gained from improving the literacy and numeracy skills of their own teams.

Delivery of training

Time was spent adapting the programme to cover production issues as well as report writing, how to prepare for and give presentations, conducting team briefings and writing staff appraisals.

One of the first obstacles to overcome was the practicality of delivering the course to some 21 Team Leaders from sites in different towns (Corby and Northampton) as well as ensuring the production work continued.

Tresham staff devised a flexible programme of delivery with rotating sessions varying in length from 4 hours, 3 hours, and 1 hour for individual support; although this did rely on the tutor remembering at which site the sessions were being delivered! With the support of HR, department Managers ensured staff could be released from work, and a 100% attendance rate was secured on the training courses.

Learner progress and outcomes

At the first session the HR Manager outlined the purpose of the course and staff were quickly able to identify the benefits of the programme.

Through the programme staff were encouraged to think about their English and how they could improve their reports to management. Participating in the course also allowed staff to improve their IT skills; the final module involves each employee giving a PowerPoint presentation to the HR and other Managers.

At the end of the course, one employee said they were interested in leadership qualifications, but had always lacked confidence in their written skills. "I was worried about putting myself forward for a course that required me to write a case study – I left school without any qualifications, and have written anything for years, but now I know I can do it!"

Another employee said "I was worried about the course initially, but I've really enjoyed it. Before the course I would have run a mile rather than give a presentation, I'm more confident and now when I have to produce a report I know how to structure it properly, I will definitely do another course"

Four Communication for Team Leaders courses have now been completed. Some employees have gone on to take the Adult Literacy qualification, and have improved their written skills to enable progression to a DMS Supervisory Management course.

Claire Underwood, the HR Manager stated " I have had some excellent feedback from Managers about how much the Team Leaders are enjoying the programme and visibly growing in confidence, Tresham are doing a great job!"

Celebrating achievements

To celebrate the achievements ABITEC held an awards ceremony and presentation at the end of the course.

Tresham are now planning the next stage, to carry out a full training needs analysis across the workforce with the support of the Team Leaders. The focus of the training will be Get-On workshops to improve literacy and numeracy skills and offer the national qualifications.
