

Apprenticeships in BT



22 October 2009

BT's Apprenticeship scheme, run in partnership with Accenture Learning Services, won the Learning and Skills Council award for best Apprenticeship Programme (Macro Employer Class) at the 2009 Learning and Skills Council Apprenticeship Awards. Many of BT's senior management started their careers as Apprentices and senior executives support the ongoing development of the BT Apprenticeship scheme and the wider Apprenticeship agenda through groups such as the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network.

As well as running its own scheme, BT works closely with the Sector Skills Council for IT and Telecoms, e-skills UK, at both a strategic and operational level to ensure that Apprenticeship Frameworks are fit for purpose. BT also works with SMEs to support them in the recruitment, development, mentoring and coaching of their Apprentices.

13 Frameworks are offered across the business and around 450 Apprentices are recruited each year. Typically, these are young people joining after completing GCSEs or A-Levels. The majority of BT Apprentices undertake an Apprenticeship at level 3 (the equivalent of 2 A-Levels), while a small minority undertake Higher Apprenticeships, whereby they receive a Foundation Degree as part of their development programme. There is a significant emphasis on technical roles.

While the underpinning elements of all Apprenticeship schemes are the same – the beneficiary undertakes technical training in their chosen field, a National Vocational Qualification that confirms their competence and training in literacy and numeracy – it is the support in terms of coaching, mentoring and support that differentiates the BT Apprenticeship scheme from others in the market. This additional support is provided by a team of around 100 BT employees.

Government research shows that 75% of the 2020 workforce has already left compulsory education. This has led to a significant shift in policy to support employers in up-skilling their workforce – particularly in sectors such as IT and Telecommunications where the speed of change of skills requirements is an inhibitor to growth. Government are looking to support employers through co-financed programmes, typically where an employer is delivering a nationally recognised qualification or Apprenticeship Framework accredited by a third party Awarding Organisation.

The benefit of delivering accredited learning goes further than simple revenue generation for the business, offering motivation to BT employees and confidence to BT customers that they are engaging with a professional workforce.

In addition to almost 700 young people engaged in the traditional Apprenticeship scheme, more than 8,200 BT employees will undertake accredited learning (with 7,200 receiving an Apprenticeship certificate) during the year to 31st July 2010. BT is arguably the provider of the greatest number of Apprenticeship Frameworks outside the public sector.

The Government is looking to large companies to support small and medium sized companies in implementing Apprenticeship schemes. We are working with small employers on Group Training Associations where BT's knowledge and experience in Apprenticeship delivery, our relationships with colleges and other providers, our experience with funding bodies etc is helping small employers to overcome some of the traditional barriers to Apprenticeship recruitment.