



Does your company invest in staff training and lifelong learning?

Rationale for question

Businesses benefit both directly and indirectly from investment in employee training and lifelong learning. A more talented workforce increases productivity and worker quality, and the attractions of a personal development plan can encourage job applicants and increase worker retention. Increased skill levels also promote social justice and fairness whilst reducing inequality.

Developments in technology, global trade and other fundamental changes to the economy mean that the skill sets needed for companies to remain competitive are constantly changing. The provision of training and skills development allows workers to have better jobs and progress in their careers whilst also benefiting businesses. In addition, skills development and lifelong learning also help a worker's employability should they ever face redundancy. Investment in training and skills is important, even in an economic downturn, because it puts business in the best position for the post-recession recovery.

According to many reports, the skills gaps represent a significant business cost. The 2006 Leitch Review of Skills report stated that the 'shortfall [in skills] will have profound implications for the UK economy and society, constraining prosperity, business ability to compete, and individual pay and job prospects'.

Many companies focus on training and skills development specific to an employee's job. For example, they may offer regular training programmes or fully/partially subsidised

external courses. However, lifelong learning is more broad, diverse, informal and flexible. It is learning that occurs continuously outside the formal structure of an educational institution or training course. Companies promoting lifelong learning have a more dynamic and diverse employee skill base, which helps them meet the ever-changing demand for skills. For example, employees undertaking community service, with the support of the company, can develop new skills, new knowledge and greater confidence that they can then bring back into the workplace. Beyond the workplace, research shows that lifelong learners are more likely to be happier, healthier, contribute more to society and live longer and more fulfilled lives.

Skills training should be offered to everyone in the workforce. In order to run a successful business, an owner or a director must also be able to access training, particularly as the business grows and more complex skills are required. Core business management skills include finance, marketing, sales, procurement and buying, administration and personnel, as well as individual skills such as IT and presentation skills. Larger companies will make new demands on managerial training since they require more complex finance, more sophisticated marketing (such as media planning), more human resource management, and often introduce new production machinery. Training the managers in business skills promotes a more successful company and ensures longer term sustainability.

Defining terms

'Lifelong learning' is a concept that refers to development activities that support the learner by continuously updating their skills, using mechanisms such as feedback, self-evaluation and guidance from peers and colleagues.

Primary and Secondary answer requirements

ANSWERING YES

Companies must:

1. confirm that they provide their staff (including managers) opportunities to gain knowledge and skills beyond initial training;
2. describe how they invest in staff skills development; and
3. indicate the average amount of time spent by an employee in training and lifelong learning.

Companies may:

1. explain whether the focus is on specialised knowledge or on basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy;
2. include any evaluation of programme impact;
3. state whether each staff member has a personal development plan that allows the individual to attain maximum levels of skills over a recognised period as part of a regular assessment; and
4. mention any affiliation that they have to any institutions or initiatives that promote worker development, such as [Investors in People](#) and the UK government '[Skills Pledge](#)'.

ANSWERING NO

Companies must:

1. explain why they do not or cannot answer YES to this question, listing the business reasons, any mitigating circumstances or other reasons that apply.

Companies may:

1. describe any initial employee training they do provide; and
2. mention any future intentions regarding this issue.

ANSWERING NOT APPLICABLE

Companies must:

1. confirm that they are made up of directors only and have no employees.

DON'T KNOW is not a permissible answer to this question.

NO ANSWER YET is only permissible under extraordinary circumstances and then for only a limited period.