RECRUITING YOUNG PEOPLE: TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS
DO YOU WANT TO BRING MORE YOUNG PEOPLE INTO YOUR BUSINESS?

More than seven out of ten employers who took part in our Learning to Work survey agreed that recruiting young people brings significant benefits to their business (CIPD 2012). Are you one of these? If so, this leaflet will help you with some practical advice on how to attract, select and recruit young people into your business.

But if you are not, it’s time to think again. As an employer, younger workers have many benefits, including:

- building your talent pipeline
- bringing in new skills and fresh ideas
- improving your employer brand
- keeping the cost of buying in talent down, by growing your own.

We know that employers’ appetite to recruit more young people is increasing. We want to use our experience working with employers, young people and HR professionals to safeguard the future of your business and get more young people working.
STEP 1 – THINK ABOUT HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN HELP YOU ACHIEVE YOUR BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Experian’s decision to proactively build young people into a talent planning and management strategy was prompted by concerns around an ageing workforce and a realisation that young people are Experian’s ‘customers of the future’ and are therefore ideally placed to understand the needs of future generations. (Rob Seacombe, Head of Talent and Resourcing UK/EMEA, Experian)

Employers increasingly face new workplace challenges, such as an ageing workforce and technological change, including digitalisation.

To identify how and where young people can help meet your particular business challenges, you should start by:

- **thinking about designing roles for young people entering your organisation**, such as apprenticeships, school-leavers and graduate programmes as well as internships and work experience placements (for more information on how to do this, see ‘Other sources of support’)
- **thinking about whether the role you’re recruiting for really requires previous work experience**
- **not waiting for young people to come to you – go to them!** Engaging with local schools is a good way to let people know about your organisation and the career opportunities you can offer.

Go out to schools, careers fairs, events and clubs and interact with young people. It’s as much about providing them with the opportunity to ask questions as it is about publicising your organisation and brand. Social media is great – but sometimes we need to physically leave our offices to highlight the different options available to young people and raise awareness of what employers can do for them. (Donna Browne, Talent Manager, Boots)
STEP 2 – CONSIDER WHERE AND HOW YOU ADVERTISE

Young people don’t go about the job search in the same way as more experienced workers do. Here are our top tips for ensuring you get the right young people knocking on your door:

- Young people are much more likely to use social and professional media to find opportunities, so consider advertising on your organisation’s Facebook and LinkedIn sites.

Social media is essential for attracting young people. But it can only be successful if there are clear guidelines associated with its use, corporate support and clarity around the messages and information you want to communicate. (Catherine Schlieben, Head of Resourcing, ITV)

- Supplement informal recruitment methods with formal practices. In addition to using word of mouth and refer-a-friend schemes, employers should explore using:
  
  – Jobcentre Plus
  – National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website
  – web-based job boards (see ‘Other sources of support’ for examples)
  – recruitment agencies
  – national and local press
  – magazines and posters.

Press and national newspapers are important recruitment tools for Capgemini. We found that parents would read advertisements and pass them onto their children, which helped us reach more young people via a method the young people themselves may not have thought to use. (Anouska Ramsey, Head of Talent, Capgemini)

- Review how adverts are written. Do they need to be a certain length? Is all the information provided useful? Could you rewrite them so they are more focused on ability rather than experience?
- Keep it simple. The clearer you are, the better the applications you’ll receive.

We need to be really concise in our messages to young people. We need to be succinct about what the job is and not to provide pages and pages of job descriptions and person specifications. (Martin Hottass, UK Skills Partner, Siemens)
STEP 3 – LOOK AT YOUR SHORTLISTING AND SELECTION PROCESSES

Shortlisting and selection is the most challenging stage in the recruitment process for young jobseekers. To ensure you consider the brightest and the best young talent available, employers can try the following:

- **Consider changing your selection criteria.** Does the job require an individual with a graduate qualification, or could it be performed by a school leaver or an apprentice? Ensure your selection processes are youth-friendly and transparent.
- Be open about the recruitment process, what the stages are and the expectations during those stages.
- Develop simple, easy to use application forms.
- Be clear about the selection criteria and review it for each new job.

Some employers can search endlessly for exactly the right person for the job. Instead, they should try looking for a young person with potential, who has the right skills and motivation – they should develop them. Employers shouldn’t see young people as just another hire. You need to be a bit inventive, and it pays off. (*Dominic Gill, Apprenticeship Manager, Microsoft*)
STEP 4 – WAYS TO MAKE THE MOST OF A YOUNG PERSON DURING THE INTERVIEW STAGE

For a young person, the interview process should be a confidence-boosting experience. Equally, for the employer, increasing the confidence of the young person means they will perform better during interview. As an employer, you can:

- **Provide as much information in advance as possible.** What they should wear, who they should ask for at reception and what form the interview will take.
- **Give them a tour of the office** and introduce them to the colleagues they’d be working with.

Young people need to be brought into workplaces. To see the environments they’ll be working in. To see them; smell them; to experience them. To foster a familiarity and understand the very basics. *(Alan MacKinnon, Director of Talent Acquisition EMEA, IHS Consulting)*

- **Begin the interview with an informal chat.** This will put them at ease and encourage them to be more open with the interviewer.
- **Try strengths-based instead of competency-based interviewing with young people** (see box below).
- **Ask existing young employees and apprentices to act as ushers during the interview process** to encourage young people to ask questions they may not feel confident enough to ask the line manager.
- **Inform the young person of the date by which you expect to have made a decision.**
- **Extend good practice to your assessment centres.**

Over time, we realised our competency-based interviewing was not producing the results we were hoping for. So we switched to strengths-based interview techniques, rewrote our adverts to match this new style and tested it out with young people in the business. The results have been impressive and we have considerably improved our conversion rates. *(Jo Ward, Head of Talent and Resourcing, Nestle in UK and Ireland)*
AND FINALLY

Providing guidance and training for line managers interviewing young people is essential. Line managers are often the key decision-makers when it comes to recruiting a young person. So you need to explain to line managers why your organisation needs young people, ask them what support they need during the recruitment process and provide practical advice and tools as to how to select and interview a young person (for more information on training, advice and guidance, visit the CIPD website, www.cipd.co.uk).

We need to change the mindset of the manager population so they understand why they need to approach young people differently from older workers and help them to look beyond first impressions. (Laura Taylor, Resourcing Manager, Thames Water)
STEP 5 – PROVIDE FEEDBACK

Feedback is crucial to young people’s development.

I really think if there was one thing that employers could do to change their recruitment practices it is to provide feedback. I’ve spent time applying for a job; it’s a question of respect. Also, I would like to know what I can do better. (Vijay, young jobseeker and Steps Ahead mentee, Northampton)

By giving open, honest and constructive feedback you can directly influence young people’s behaviour in the recruitment process and help ensure their success in the future. This also applies to other applicants whatever their age or situation. You can do so in the following ways:

• Acknowledge each application with an automated email.
• List ‘common reasons’ applications have not been shortlisted in an email/letter to candidates. This can be a template document if volume is an issue.
• Provide candidates who have been unsuccessful at interview/assessment an opportunity to receive feedback. Ideally, this should be a telephone number or email address of the line manager who conducted the interview.

And finally...

• Be positive but honest!
• Don’t focus on where they went wrong, but explain why the role isn’t necessarily right for them.
OTHER SOURCES OF SUPPORT

To engage with schools:
www.inspiringthefuture.org
www.youngchamber.com
www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/business-class

For further information on engaging with young people:
www.workingforyouth.co.uk
www.Plotr.co.uk

For advice on mentoring:
www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/mentoring-steps-ahead-initiative.aspx

For further information on apprenticeships:
www.apprenticeships.org.uk
www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/apprenticeships-work.aspx
apprenticeshipvacancymatchingservice.lsc.gov.uk/navms/Forms/Candidate/Apprenticeships.aspx

For advice on how to set up and run high-quality internship placements:
www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources-guides/internships-employers-guide.aspx

For advice on work experience placements:
www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources-guides/work-experience-placements-work.aspx
www.bitc.org.uk/programmes/work-inspiration

For information on the business case for investing in young people:
www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/employer-investment-young-people.aspx

For wider information on the topic of youth unemployment:
www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/engaging-employers-youth-unemployment.aspx

This leaflet is based on research collected through around 30 employer case studies, focus groups with young jobseekers and their mentors, focus groups hosted by the Prince’s Trust and Regents College and the British Chamber of Commerce (BCC) and a number of CIPD surveys and polls with CIPD members, Jobcentre Plus advisers and employees.

For access to the full report Employers are from Mars, Young People are from Venus: Addressing the young people/jobs mismatch and references please go to:
www.cipd.co.uk/publicpolicy/policy-reports/mars-venus-jobs-mismatch.aspx

For further information about this or the CIPD’s Learning to Work programme, please contact Annie Peate on A.Peate@cipd.co.uk
This leaflet is part of the CIPD’s Learning to Work initiative, which is an action-focused programme led by the CIPD to tackle the problem of youth unemployment. The overall aim is to achieve a shift in employer engagement with young people, so that they are encouraged both to help young people prepare for the workplace and to make the labour market itself more youth-friendly, by offering a wider range of access routes into organisations and adapting recruitment methods.

cipd.co.uk/learningtowork