

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are an exciting option for both apprentice and employer.

You can employ apprentices at different levels, from school leavers and university graduates, to people who want to further their careers or change career direction completely. As a company, you can hire someone new or upskill an existing employee and as an employer, you can get funding from the government to help pay for apprenticeship training.

When you employ an apprentice, there are certain conditions that need to be met. In summary, these are:

1. The apprentice must be aged 16 or over and must be working towards a recognised apprenticeship qualification
2. The training must last at least a year (they can last up to 5 years depending upon the level the apprentice is studying)
3. They must learn job specific skills and work with competent people who can guide them
4. They must get paid in their training time which must be at least 20% of their normal working hours in the week
5. They must get the same terms and conditions and benefits as other similar level regular employees (e.g. holidays, sick pay, any other company benefits)
6. You must issue them with a contract of employment, an apprenticeship agreement and a commitment statement

Choosing an Apprenticeship Programme

Firstly, decide which apprenticeship course you want them to take. You can have a look at the apprenticeship programmes on offer by using this link:

<https://findapprenticeshiptraining.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>

In general, when you are looking at levels, a level 2 is GCSE level, 3 is A-level, 4 is HND or pre graduate level, 5 is degree level and 6/7 are post graduate level (PG diploma or Masters)

Finding a Training Provider

Next, you will need to decide who will deliver the training aspect of the role. This can either be through a college or can be remotely with an assessor coming to you on-site on a regular basis. Not all the apprenticeship programmes are offered by all training providers, so once you have decided which course they will be doing, you should have a look at how they can access the learning. Will they be able to go to a local college one day a week or can you get an assessor onsite?

Advertising/Recruitment

Apprenticeships are advertised via the Government portal and you will need to ask your training provider to do this for you. A link to this is here: <https://www.gov.uk/recruit-apprentice>

Recruit as you would an employee. You will shortlist and interview the apprentices, select the one you want and then give them an employment contract, apprenticeship agreement and a statement of commitment. Links to standard templates to do this are here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-agreement-template>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-off-the-job-training>

Funding

Working on the assumption that you won't have to pay the apprenticeship levy (you pay the levy if you're an employer with a pay bill over £3 million each year).

The incentive payment is in addition to the £1,000 employers already receive for hiring an apprentice:

- Aged 16 to 18 years old
- Under 25 with an education, health and care plan or who has been in the care of their local authority

You can use the incentive payment on anything to support your organisation's costs. For example, on uniforms, your apprentice's travel, or their salary. You do not have to pay it back.

Cost of Training depends upon the age of your apprentice:

- If 16-18 the government will fully fund the training cost
- If 19+ the government will co fund the apprenticeship and you will pay 5% of the training costs. The government will pay the 95% directly to the training provider (there is a funding band maximum).

Apprentice Salary

You will need to pay the apprentice at least minimum rate, which from April 2022 is £4.81 per hour.

NB - the apprenticeship rate applies for the first year of employment. After that, if they stay with you longer or progress to a higher level apprenticeship programme, the minimum wage rate for their age will apply.

If you are looking at bringing an apprentice into your company and need a bit of assistance, then please contact amy@agilehrconsulting.com

Handbook and Contract Reviews 2022

April is the perfect time of year to step back and review your company's Contracts of Employment and Employee Handbook to ensure that you have the most up to date legislation included. It is important for you to remain compliant so your employees can access clear and detailed information on the company's policies and procedures.

If your contract or handbook was last updated in 2012, then the wording, content and legislation will be out of date and will need updating. Even if your contract or handbook was last updated in 2020, it is always worth getting them reviewed.

Sometimes it's not just legislation that needs to be updated within a Handbook or Contract. If details regarding the company have changed such as logos, operational structures, values or standards of practice, these should be updated too.

Although no recent updates in legislation have been announced this year (so far), you should still review your documents. Here are some of the key areas your contracts and handbooks should have included:

Contract of Employment:

- Principal Statement (incl. name & address of both employee and employer, job title, hours and days of work, holiday entitlements, salary and when/how payment is made, benefits, probation period etc.)
- Sick Pay & Procedures
- Other Paid Leave
- Notice Periods

Employee Handbook:

- GDPR Policy
- Auto-Enrollment Pension Scheme
- Modern Slavery Policy (only if you meet the criteria on the gov.uk website)
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Covid-19 Policies (such as 'working from home')

For a **full** review and update of your contract of employment and employee handbooks, please contact chelsey@agilehrconsulting.com.

How to Use Your Company Values

Company values are an anchor from which all stakeholders can draw strength and certitude, they define the core of what the company believes in above and beyond the normal business success metrics. In times of adversity this can make the difference in retaining an employee, customer or supplier.

Each company is unique in its commercial purpose, and this will influence the company values. Company values can be both internal and externally facing i.e. you can think about what a value means to your employees and also to your customers. Whilst these can be separate for each stakeholder, they are also inevitably entwined.

Lead by Example

The leadership team must embody and own the values of the company. Personal integrity is something that is judged instinctively by everyone you come into contact with and having a successful set of company values will only be achieved by each member of the team holding the company values in alignment with their own core values, and thus behaving with personal integrity.

The leadership team must seek out opportunities to promote and embed the company values within the business for e.g. at an away day or a Christmas party to ensure they become the foundations to the business and not a set of words on a wall!

Appraisals

Company values can be embedded within the appraisal process – in your employees' quarterly and annual reviews and in any regular 1:1s. Improving understanding and appreciation around what the values mean to the senior leadership of the company will help employees adapt and align their own core values in a manner that is consistent with championing the company values. However, it is also important to be sure that these discussions don't come across as 'do as I say, not as I do' as this will undermine both the company values and the relationship between employee and line manager.



Hiring and Retaining Talent

A company should use its values in job adverts to promote their role and to provide a degree of applicant self-selection. The company and the prospective employees will be much more effective and happier if they know they are joining a company whose company values are closely aligned with their own core values. A hiring manager can seek out candidates with similar core values to the business with a series of interview questions designed to probe a candidate's value fit.

Business Impact

Show employees how the company values have an impact on the business – whether this is retention of customers or revenue growth. If employees see how their behaviour, influenced by the values, has a direct impact on the business they will appreciate the need to align their personal values to those of the company.

For further assistance in embedding your company values into your workplace please contact david@agilehrconsulting.com