



THE TIMES 100

BUSINESS CASE STUDIES

Training and Development

Sheffield Forgemasters International Ltd

Sheffield Forgemasters International Ltd (SFIL) is a steel producer and engineering company. It supplies businesses in many industrial sectors, with customers in the defence, nuclear, oil and gas exploration, power generation, marine and construction industries. Engineering is a highly skilled and specialised profession so SFIL needs well-trained employees. SFIL offers industry-leading training courses that are tailored to its own needs. It has been running a highly acclaimed apprenticeship programme since 2005.

The company invests £1 million a year into this programme. It allows the company to supply its next generation of skilled workers, trained to its own high standards. Training is the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. It ensures that workers are better able to perform their jobs. The objectives of training include:

- “ increasing productivity by introducing more effective ways of working
- “ educating employees in the use of new equipment and new methods
- “ making employees more adaptable by providing them with the skills to carry out a variety of tasks
- “ increasing job satisfaction and producing a motivated workforce.

Apprentices at SFIL benefit from both on-the-job and off-the-job training. On-the-job training takes place at SFIL's premises. Trainees receive support and instruction as they carry out their allocated job roles. Off-the-job training takes place at a college or another learning centre. Dan spends one day a week at college studying the theory of metallurgy. During the four days of the week he is working, he puts this theory into practice. He has, for example, been trained to use ultrasonics to scan for cracks in the metals and he has now qualified to work on this unsupervised. Rebecca, a 23-year-old business and administration apprentice, is supported by other models of training:

'I undertake formal training for my NVQ and I get to apply what I learn in the workplace. My training takes place mostly on site. I receive project work set by my tutor, which I complete and have assessed by email. The tutor visits on a regular basis to carry out appraisals of my work.'

In the longer term, each apprentice will aim to gain further qualifications and secure their future at SFIL. As well as benefiting the apprentices, the apprenticeship programme generates clear business benefits. As well as addressing serious skills challenges, it also helps to:

- “ increase productivity
- “ reduce staff turnover
- “ create loyal employees
- “ produce efficiency gains.

By increasing the skills and knowledge base of apprentices, SFIL is able to handle increasingly complex projects, resulting in stronger order books. Apprentice experiences are varied, but all help to build a stronger business. Dan, for example, can now be entrusted with really important aspects of SFIL work, looking for cracks in the metal. If any are found, he is part of the team identifying how to correct the problem. This is a really important aspect of SFIL's work. It involves working with equipment and materials that cost millions of pounds and are used in critical sectors like the nuclear industry. Products need to be of the highest quality to meet the customers' standards and to ensure operational safety.



Questions

1. What is on-the-job training?

2. Give examples of on-the-job training and off-the-job training used by SFIL.

3. Explain why effective training programmes can lead to a more satisfied and motivated workforce.

4. Analyse why training is so important for organisations like SFIL.

Task

Pick two different organisations you are familiar with. Preferably the organisations should be in very different industries and of different sizes e.g. your local garage and Heathrow Airport. Compare and contrast the training needs for the two businesses, making suggestions as to the type of training that would be most appropriate in each case.

What have you learned?

60 second challenge. Work with a partner and decide who is going to go first. This person then has to speak for 60 seconds, without pausing, about what they have learned about training and development. Then, the second person has to talk for 30 seconds about what they have learned, without repeating anything the first person has said.