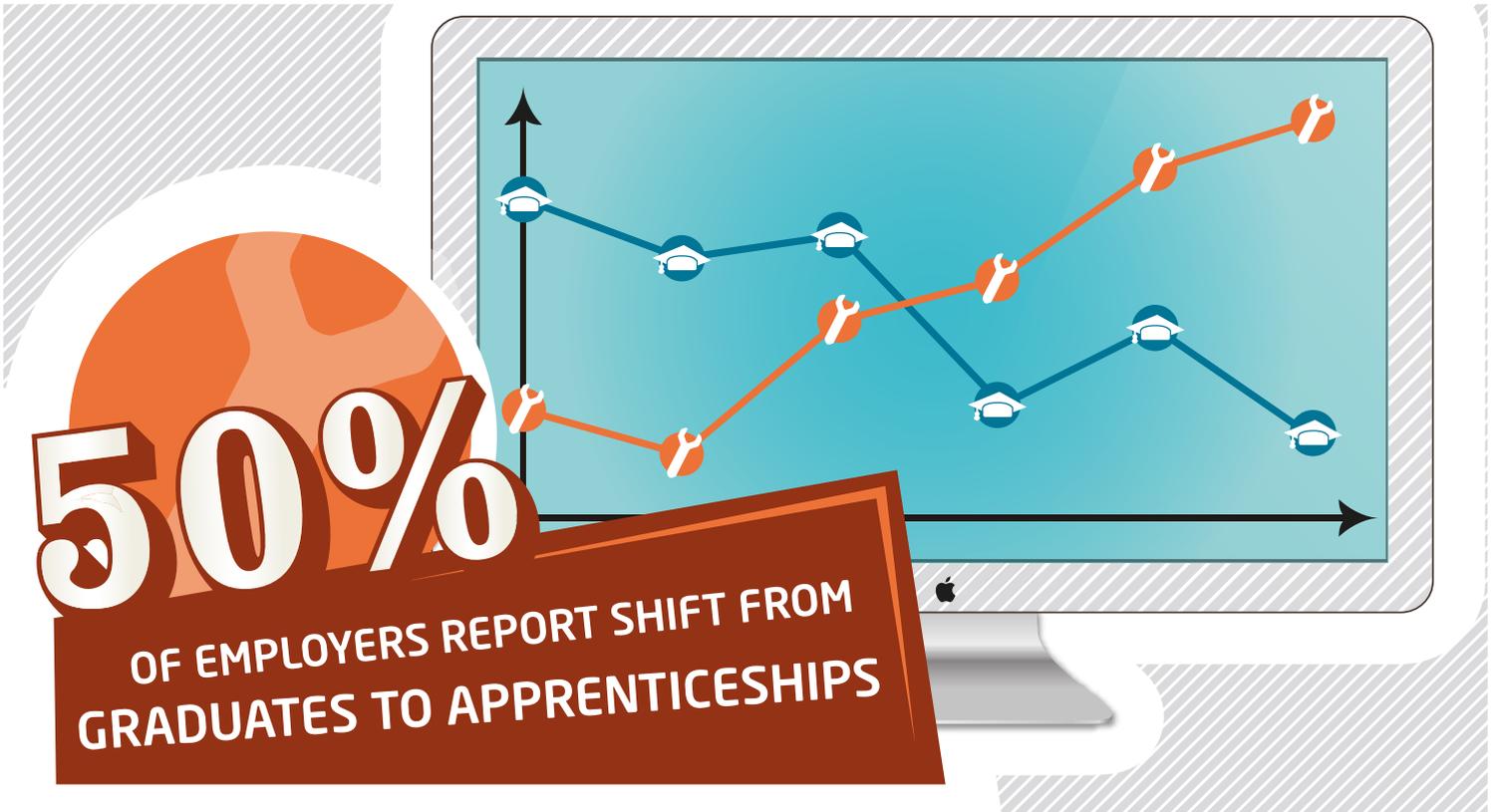


APPRENTICESHIPS



HOW DO I TURN GOOD POTENTIAL INTO RECOGNISABLE PERFORMANCE?

From Potential to Performance

The aim of apprenticeship recruitment is to find potential. The real power, though, lies in an organization's ability to turn that potential into recognizable performance, ensuring a steady flow of talent. Essential to this is a supportive culture and a well-defined structure which will allow the apprentice to work effectively and flourish in the organization.

The effective pipeline of performance through to potential must start with initial recruitment mechanisms that enable employers to identify the best candidates. Aptitude assessments specifically tailored to apprentice level are a reliable way to facilitate the recruitment process as they reveal which candidates are most likely to perform well in the workplace. A focus on candidate strengths can further provide a positive start to the first steps in the development of a skilled worker.

Formalized apprenticeship schemes tend to be well-structured as they must adhere to rigorous skill level guidelines. Parallel to this, organizations need to provide apprentices with the right training and support. The practical skills for progress need to be balanced alongside formal qualifications. With many graduate applicants facing criticism that they are falling short of the standard required, due to a disproportionate emphasis being placed on qualifications over skills, there is a call for degrees to be more appropriate to the world of work; qualifications gained while working can easily be the answer. A young person immersed into a customer service ethos at the age of 16 is likely to be far more skilled at handling customer objections at the age of 21 than

the average graduate. Accomplishment of skills which reflect levels of emotional maturity should also be given recognition. For some organizations this may require the development of age-appropriate reward systems to ensure motivation levels remain high.

Businesses can use the rigid structure of apprenticeship skills and levels to their advantage by clearly aligning skills to appropriate roles and formulating personal development plans that will not only cover the apprenticeship guidelines, but also help with retention by allowing the individual to see how the skills they are learning translate into tangible career paths. The aim is to avoid the typical 'earn while you learn' status, and give the apprentice the opportunity to know their strengths while providing guidance as to where they are best suited. Apprentices need support and room to grow. Well-placed mentors can assist by increasing levels of motivation and helping to ensure the best performers are retained.

Culturally, the ethos of training future talent needs to be accepted. Those that are highly skilled need to be willing and able to transfer skills to the future generations. Older workers may feel that they are being ousted by younger workers if the process is not managed and communicated effectively. Also worth noting is that it may not always be the case that those who are best at the job naturally make the best teachers. To fully utilize a transfer of skills culture, it is essential to take the time to plan out how best practical skills can be taught and by whom. Embedding apprentices as part of the team and overall culture is especially important when investing in higher level apprentices and will add to levels of general motivation and job satisfaction. Investment in efficient performance at stage one, will serve to improve skills at all levels over time, thus creating a more professionally qualified workforce.

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