LEARNING CONSULTANCY PARTNERSHIP

Partners for Performance

What business award winning companies are doing to train and develop their employees

February 2008

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Introduction

This qualitative study, undertaken from November 2007 to February 2008, investigated the views of Managing Directors, Chief Executive Officers and Human Resource representatives of companies who were finalists or winners of their local business awards between 2006 and 2007. Using a semi-structured interview, the study explored their practices and opinions on the topic of developing their employees and the impact they perceived this had on their overall business success.

Purpose and aim of the research

The purpose of this study was to provide a more in-depth analysis as a follow- up to our previous research into the learning and development activities of small and medium sized businesses in London and the South East (LCP, 2007).

The aim was to identify the patterns and commonalities across the data to provide information about what successful, award winning companies are doing to develop their employees and how important they see employee training and development to their overall business success.

General discussion

The relationship between training and performance – what the research says

Since the 1990's there has been a plethora of research trying to empirically test the relationship between training and organisational performance, particularly in smaller firms. There is a view that there is now substantial evidence showing that investment in developing people is one way organisations can improve their productivity and other business outcomes (e.g. Tamkin, 2005, Cosh et al, 2003). However, the research also acknowledges the complexity of establishing a clear and causal link between the two (e.g. Bryan, 2006).

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> **'Returns to training are difficult to validate, despite theoretical expectations...'**
>
> Bryan, 2006.

One of the difficulties researchers face is defining what is meant by the terms 'training' and 'performance'; if this is not clear it is impossible to compare results, as much of the data from smaller firms can be subjective due to the lack of a systematic approach to collecting data. To try to overcome this problem some researchers have attempted to define and measure certain aspects of training; for example, whether it is formal or informal, on-the-job or off-the-job, as well as aspects of performance. This literature review will consider the research from four aspects of performance; productivity; employee motivation and retention; growth and finally, establishment survival.

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Training and productivity

Bevan et al, (2005), in their survey of 3000 UK firms found that the top third of companies out performed the bottom two thirds by £1600 per employee, per annum. However, as Patton et al, (2000), stated "there is considerable debate about the impact of training interventions on the performance of smaller firms" and in 2004, Storey, argued that there is no satisfactory assessment of the link between SME performance and management training. The Centre of Excellence for Management and Leadership (2002), also stressed the importance of establishing stronger links between the investment in training and productivity.

> **'If greater insight into such causal effects is to be obtained, it is argued that recognition of the considerable range of variables which impinge upon the relationship between training and performance is essential'.**

Patton et al, 2000.

Although the link between productivity and training has been acknowledged as hard to measure, some studies have found a significant and positive link between the two. Barrett and O'Connoll, (1999), in their study of over 600 Irish companies, found that general training (i.e. training of skills and knowledge that is transferable to other organisations) had a statistically significant impact on productivity growth, whereas specific training (i.e. training that was specific only to the organisation) showed no such relationship. Lynch and Black (1995), found that significant and positive effects on establishment productivity were associated with investment in human capital including training, and although they found considerable differences across industry and size of business, in manufacturing, improved productivity was associated with formal, off-the-job training.

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Birley and Westhead, (1990), (cited in Patton et al, 2000), found that management development was positively associated with productivity and Holzer, (1993) and Bartel, (1994), (cited in Barrett & O'Connell, 1999), also found a direct link between training and productivity. However, Cosh et al, (2003), found no significant relationship between productivity growth and training intensity.

Because of the methodological issues of measuring and isolating causal relationships there is still considerable debate abut the influence of training on organisational productivity. There seems to be a general consensus that training does help productivity but the research shows that this relationship is complicated and training effectiveness may depend upon its type, intensity and timing. Jayawarna et al, (2007), argued that formal training is likely to be a targeted activity and therefore is more likely to significantly contribute to company performance than informal training.

Training and employee motivation/retention

Training has often been linked with employee motivation and engagement. Tamkin, (2005), argued that training attracts good quality applicants and reduces employee turnover. She also proposed that training was associated with employee morale and engagement, especially if linked to strategy.

> **'The evidence is strongly indicative that skills training and other forms of investment in people help build business success'**
>
> Tamkin, 2005.

Blanchard et al, (2006), stressed the importance of leadership development at both the strategic and operational levels, arguing that if employees have a

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positive experience and are satisfied with the organisation it will have a direct impact on retention, absenteeism, tenure and productivity.

> **'The number one reason employees leave an organisation is when they perceive that justice and fairness are not present in the organisation'**
>
> Blanchard et al, 2006.

For individuals, training can bring a variety of benefits including increased wages and promotion. Collier et al, (2003), suggested that employer training increased employee benefits through increased wages and Barrett & O'Connell, (1999), stated that training which increased an individual's wages in both their existing employer and potential employers provided a greater incentive. Bryan, (2006), argued that training is associated with a continuous learning culture which stimulates employees and helps them to cope with and manage change.

A review of the research suggests that training is a good way to motivate employees as it can lead to higher morale, improved job satisfaction, better career prospects, increased employee engagement and healthier retention rates.

Training and organisational growth

Growth is often an important goal for smaller companies and researchers have investigated the impact of training on organisational growth from a number of angles including sales growth, employee growth and turnover growth. Carter et al, (2004), in their survey of over 18,000 FSB[1] members found the most popular methods for achieving growth were sales and marketing and increasing management skills. However, only 40% of respondents reported undertaking any formal training on a regular basis and 30% reported providing no formal

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[1] Federation of Small Businesses

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training at all, suggesting that although smaller firms see management training as important for growth, it may not be happening in practice.

Cosh et al, (2003), in their survey of 2,500 UK firms found that employee growth was positively associated with training spend and Bryan, (2006), found a significant and positive relationship between sales growth and training in a study of 114 manufacturing companies in Wales. Their results also showed that employment size and external management training showed a predictive value of sales in the subsequent period, but the relationship was weak.

> **'We cautiously concluded that external management training may yield a less immediate but more persistent return to firm performance than in-house training'**
>
> Cosh et al, 2003.

Not all studies have found a positive relationship between training and company growth, for example, Kitching and Blackburn, (2002), found inconclusive data regarding the link between the provision of training and employment growth. The difficulty with establishing a causal relationship is that as with all aspects of performance, there are other variables, apart from training, which are believed to drive growth. A survey of 326 Canadian business owners (Industry Canada, 2003), found the primary drivers of organisational growth were the owners intention to grow as well as the diversity of managerial ability, which suggests that training and developing managers may be beneficial to growth.

Jayawarna et al, (2007), supported the argument that developing managers improves growth prospects, as in their research they found a statistically significant advantage in terms of both turnover and employee growth for companies that conduct formal management training compared to those that train informally.

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> **'However, while SME managers prefer an informal learning approach, this does not necessarily mean it is more effective'**
>
> Jayawarna et al, 2007.

Training and establishment survival

According to the DTI Small Business Service (Brown, 2006), 25% of VAT registered businesses do not survive past two years. Business survival is a key challenge for smaller firms and there is some evidence that training has a positive impact on company survival. Collier et al, (2003), investigated the relationship between training and commercial survival rates of British, private companies over a seven year period. The results showed a significant difference between the closure rates of establishments that provided training (13%) and those that did not (19%), providing strong evidence of a link between training and organisational survival.

Jayawarna et al, (2007), also reviewed the impact of training on business growth and survival and found that training intensity was more relevant as firms grew; again suggesting that training is an important aspect of growth and survival. In a review of the Labour Market Survey 2001, they also found a clear relationship between business failure and a lack of planning and training by SMEs. Others, such as Bryan, (2006), also conclude that training may be a contributor to an organisation's survival rate.

In summary

This literature review has covered some of the main points regarding the impact of training on organisational performance and shows that the effectiveness of training interventions seems to be mediated by a variety of interrelated variables. Storey, (2004), argued that there is a mixed picture of evidence regarding training and

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performance and the relationship between the two is difficult to analyse due to the methodological problems.

Kitching and Blackburn, (2002), suggested that smaller firms are less likely to provide formal training than larger ones and may rely more on informal methods. Although SME managers may perceive informal training to be more relevant to their needs, some studies such as Jayawarna et al, (2007), have found evidence that targeted, formal training can produce better results in terms of productivity and growth.

> **'We can confidently claim that formal training is associated with performance over and above informal training in small manufacturing firms'**
>
> Jayawarna et al, 2007.

The danger of this complex picture is highlighted by Collier et al, (2003), who suggested that because the benefits of training are so hard to measure companies may either over or under invest and therefore not get the optimal return from their investment in training. Finally, Tamkin, (2005), made a valid point when she concluded that it is not just about the development of capability that is important to organisational success but also how that capability is deployed.

> **'As it is hard to measure the impact of training, firms can either over or under invest'**
>
> Collier et al, 2003.
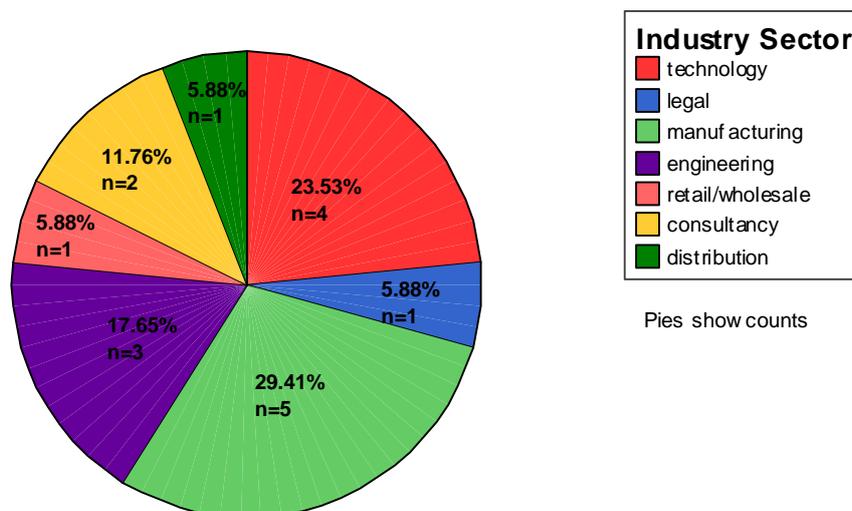
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Methodology

Design

The study used telephone and face to face interviews to explore the participants' views and practices regarding training and developing their employees. A preliminary schedule of questions was developed so that the interviews were semi- structured. (Appendix 1)

Participants

We invited 101 companies who were finalists and winners of their local business awards to take part and 17 agreed, giving just under a 17% response rate. This is nearly four times higher than our previous research (LCP, 2007) which only had a 4.5% response rate.

The respondents came from a variety of industry sectors. The majority came from manufacturing 29.5% (n=5) and technology 23.5% (n=4), with the third largest group coming from engineering (17.5%, n=3).

Industry Sector

Industry Sector
- technology
- legal
- manufacturing
- engineering
- retail/wholesale
- consultancy
- distribution

Pies show counts

23.53% n=4
5.88% n=1
29.41% n=5
17.65% n=3
5.88% n=1
11.76% n=2
5.88% n=1

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Over half (53%, n=9) of the respondents had been in business for over ten years, 29.5% had been in business for between two and five years and the remaining 17.5% had been in operation for between six and ten years.

Time in Business
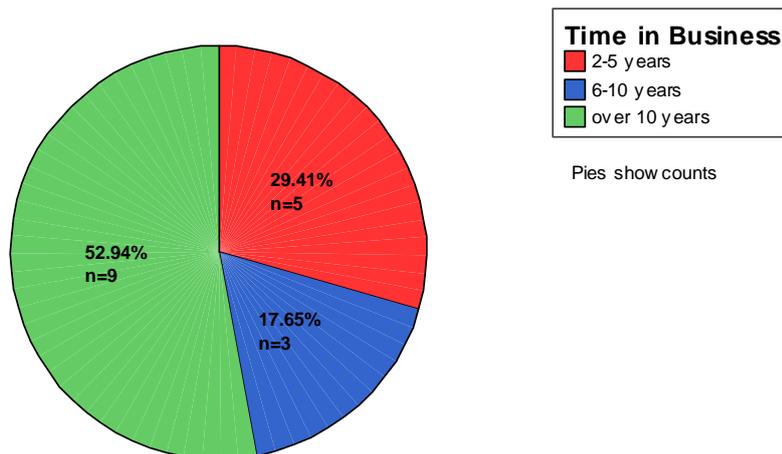
A total of 47%, (n=8) of organisations employed between 21 and 50 people, 23.5%, (n=4) employed between 51 and 100, 17.5%, (n=3) employed over 100 people and 12%, (n=2) employed less than 20

Number of Employees

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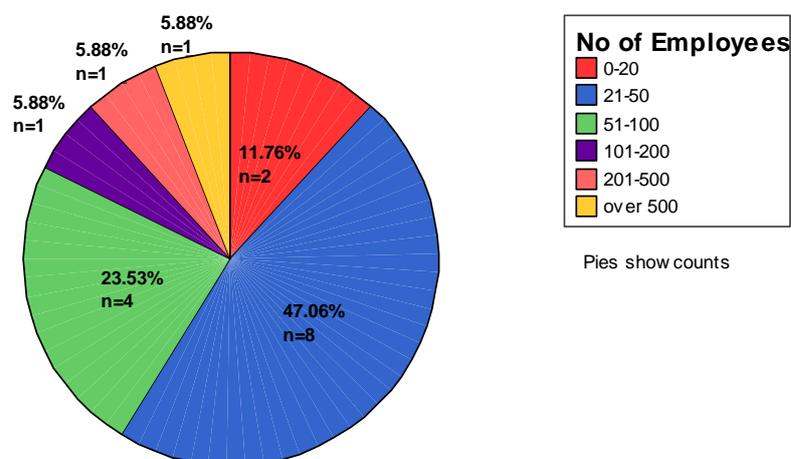
Materials

The study used a semi structured interview template (appendix 1) and the researcher took notes by hand as the interviews were not recorded.

Analysis

A thematic analysis was used to explore the data and manually code the major themes arising. The process involved the following stages:

- Reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas and categories.

- Systematically coding recurring points.

- Collating the codes into potential themes.

- Reviewing and refining the themes across the whole data set.

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Results

An analysis of the interview responses revealed eight consistent themes that kept appearing from the raw data, which were:

1) **Learning and development activity**. The actual training and development that had taken place over the previous 12 months.

2) **Business focus and operational priorities**. What the participants felt was key to their success in the coming 12 months.

3) **Employee engagement in learning and development**. How engaged and committed employees at all levels of the organisation were to training and development.

4) **Perceived importance of learning and development to success**. What impact participants felt training and development had on their overall business success?

5) **Relationships with external institutions**. The relationships participants had with outside agencies concerning learning and development.

6) **Processes and procedures**. The extent to which participants had structured processes and procedures in place.

7) **Company ethos and culture.** The part played by company culture, strong ethos and entrepreneurial leadership style.

8) **Barriers.** The main barriers to undertaking training and development.

Training and development activity

All participating organisations had undertaken some training and development over the previous 12 month period and this tended to be a mix of formal, off-the-job training and informal, on-the-job training. Some respondents employed professional staff and for those organisations continual professional development (CPD) and structured mentoring played a big part of their learning and development activities. NVQs were also mentioned frequently and there was some reference to graduate placement schemes, apprenticeship schemes and work placements. A number of participants were accredited for Investors in People (IiP) and took their responsibilities seriously.

"We encourage all our staff to do NVQ level 2 and we are looking at funding for NVQ level 3"

"You've got to get it right with people, we take IiP seriously"

For many of the companies, statutory compliance such as health and safety training was important, particularly in the higher risk environments such as manufacturing and engineering. Some participants had focussed on developing their leadership teams and activities ranged from in-house coaching and mentoring to post graduate qualifications such as MBAs.

Other activities included:

- train the trainer
- life skills e.g. literacy and numeracy
- diversity training
- lunch time seminars
- soft skills training
- sales and marketing training
- project management training

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Business focus and operational priorities

Growth was a common theme and participants were looking to grow either organically or by acquisition. Some companies were set for rapid growth which could result in them doubling their headcount in the next few years, others were looking to grow revenue and profits and some were looking to expand into different overseas markets.

Participants acknowledged the difficulties of rapid growth and commented on the need to formalise processes so they became more consistent and systematic.

"Our edge is understanding our products and making them better. We have a global outlook"

"We are looking at growth through acquisition"

"We are opening an additional office with ten additional staff"

"We are increasing our headcount both here and overseas"

"We intend to develop and double the size of the business"

"We have seen rapid growth over the last 3-4 years and are maturing as a company"

Growth was not the only business priority; some organisations stated the importance of being client focussed and having the appropriate quality procedures in place. There was a view that increasing employees' skills would lead to improved customer service resulting in improved sales. The link between employees, customers and sales has been explored by Blanchard et al (2006). They proposed the Leadership-Profit Chain which argues that strategic and operational leadership drives employee passion, which in turn drives customer loyalty and devotion resulting in improved organisational performance and economic stability.

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There was a variety of comments about customer service which included:

"We need a consistent approach to our customers, providing a high level of technical competence"

"One of our top three priorities is customer focus – delight them!"

"Our main driver of success is client service"

"We have QA procedures in place for our clients"

"We ensure training is done so our people do things in the way we want them to do it before we send them out to clients"

"Our focus is to improve customer service"

"Training is important to keep our customers happy and get the work done"

"We pick up on customer care at induction by setting clear expectations"

Employee engagement in learning and development

There were two aspects arising in terms of employee engagement in learning activities. The first was about the commitment of the senior management team and how willing they were to coach and mentor their employees. There seemed to be a fundamental belief in the importance of taking an active role in developing others. Some organisations had a very formal mentoring scheme in place with specific goals, reviews and timelines; this was typical in the case of developing professionals e.g. law or engineering. Others reported being less structured but still active in terms of offering senior management support with ongoing coaching and mentoring activities. Comments included:

"I absolutely agree about training and have a real belief about its importance"

"Our Regional Directors coach and mentor our employees to help them build their expertise"

"All of our senior management team are involved in coaching and mentoring – they are constantly reinventing themselves"

"Our Chairman gets actively involved"

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"My role is to take people on and develop them"

"One to one mentoring is vital in helping people to grow"

The other aspect of employee engagement was the employees' willingness to get involved in training and development activities and overwhelmingly it was seen as a positive intervention, particularly if it was seen as relevant to the business and the individual.

"Our people are happy and engaged in training. Our IiP process supports individual objectives as well as business ones"

"They like learning – personalise it and make it relevant"

"We offer to pay and if they think it's the right course they'll take it up"

"Employee wise they like to go on a course which they see as relevant"

"Absolutely committed, ultimately they are happy to do their jobs and are keen to progress"

"We make training attractive"

"Most will do training and are enthusiastic; a few are a bit scared but committed overall"

"Most employees welcome training – it is linked to a reward scheme"

Perceived importance of learning and development to business success

Respondents were asked how important they saw learning and development in terms of their competitive edge and overall business success, and as a group responding to a study on learning and development, it was no surprise that the comments were extremely positive.

"Learning and development is key to our long-term plan. We work in a highly technical environment which makes skills training a necessity"

"What we do differently from our competitors is do the training for real rather than just talking about it"

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"Training is very important, if our employees don't have the right skills they will damage our business"

"You have to get it right with people, they add value to the bottom line"

"The reason we have done well is because we make training available to everyone – we have an all inclusive approach"

"Although time can be a factor, we never say we can't let you do it"

"Training makes people's jobs more interesting"

"Investing in training is key to accelerated growth"

"Our work is highly technical and we have to have the right skills in place to deliver our projects and stay ahead of the game"

Although participants acknowledged the importance of learning on business success it was not always seen as the main factor.

"Learning and development is a tool, not a driver. The driver of success is rigid procedures and good project management"

Relationships with external institutions

Nearly all of the respondents had links with external agencies that helped them with their learning and development initiatives. Many had also developed links with local schools, colleges, universities and business schools and offered apprenticeships, NVQs and work placements. Some had developed close relationships with a number of universities which helped them to recruit graduates.

"We have a corporate responsibility, we have good links with schools and we have an apprentice and are looking at taking on a second one this year"

"A large bulk of our training is studying for a professional qualification"

We are offering our trainees NVQ Level 2 and we give them time off for college for two years"

"We have links with a number of universities and the senior management team are doing MBAs"

"I have a strong belief in introducing people to business as early as possible to get them interested in the sector, so we get involved with the local schools"

"We have university placements and provide them with coaching"

"It is a challenge to find qualified people so we sponsor them long-term – a five year commitment"

"We have a gap year student"

"We offer apprenticeships as good people are hard to find and it's important to invest in them"

"We encourage all to do NVQ Level 2"

As well as links with education and higher education, respondents also used government agencies such as their local Business Link, as well as external, private providers. The availability of government funding was a mixed issue with some organisations taking full advantage of initiatives like 'train to gain' and other grants, whilst others were disappointed at being either excluded or not seeing the help as relevant and beneficial to their business.

"We have used 'train to gain'"

We have contacts in the Learning Skills Council, there is help out there you just need to know where to find it"

"We get funding for 'train to gain'"

"I am critical of government agencies as they offer us no support"

"We identify special training needs and then work with a third party to meet them"

"We had a meeting with a 'train to gain' broker, it is about knowing where to look"

"We use some external providers, particularly with IT skills"

"We don't get support as we are not classified as an SME because of our parent company. We are excluded from any support or funding despite our positive involvement in the local community"

"We do get subsidies to help small businesses which is useful"

Processes and procedures

Our interview data showed that many of the respondents had formalised processes and procedures in place and the general consensus was that this was important, particularly in terms of growing the business and ensuring compliance, consistency and quality assurance. Those who recruited and developed professional staff had formal mentoring schemes in place.

"We have a mentoring programme where senior managers have a group of people from different parts of the business"

"Our staff spend five hours a month doing professional development activities for their CPD"

"We help our people to get chartered status which can take up to seven years"

"Each trainee is assigned a more senior fee earner"

"Primarily we do CPD"

"We mentor on a one to one basis"

"Every new member is assigned a member, it is fairly formal"

"We have CPD for our professional staff"

"Before they become team leaders they spend two years working with another team leader"

Participants also seemed to have fairly formal structures in place for induction training and employee appraisals and some acknowledged the need to make the processes more formalised.

"Every new joiner has a six month probationary period which may last longer if necessary"

"When they join they get a six month probation period where they are supported by a senior member"

"We have a structured appraisal process"

"Our induction needs to be more formal"

"I do regular appraisals where I take on a mentoring role"

"We have an appraisal system and 360 degree feedback"

"We do annual reviews"

"There is room for development in our processes to ensure consistency"

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"We have a review with our new starters after three months to see how they are getting on"

"We appraise our staff every six months"

"We provide a structured induction period and develop our team leaders for one year"

As well as processes and procedures for employee development, participants had a number of systems related to quality assurance and customer satisfaction.

"We have got QA procedures in place which is a key part of our project management"

"We have a business needs and skills matrix"

"We do an annual client satisfaction survey"

"We have formalised our procedures and the assurance team support the process"

"Everything is project management, cost controls and QA systems with clients"

Other comments regarding processes and procedures were more general.

"We need to get it right with the right systems in place as a core requirement"

"We have spent time organising the business so there are more professional processes and procedures in place"

"As we are growing we need to begin succession planning"

"We need to put in some measures, who does training and why"

"Our aim is to have a learning and development plan for every employee"

"We need to focus on developing our working practices, how to work more efficiently and effectively"

"We now need to move away from the charismatic approach to one that is more formalised"

"Our training needs to show a direct benefit, a return on our investment"

Company ethos and culture

As growing businesses, many of the organisations who took part were owned or part-owned by their Directors, who were often also the founders of the company; this led to some comments about strong company cultures.

"My role is to act as a change agent, igniting the enthusiasm of employees"

"We are not daunted by big challenges, there is a strong culture in the organisation and we are used to succeeding by being ambitious"

"Our culture is to have an open door policy"

"The strength of our company is we have a good name and strong brand. An important factor is our MD who is a well known entrepreneur and a strong and charismatic leader"

"Our culture is let's get on with the job"

"We have a certain presence and an ethical stance about being the best"

"We are very pragmatic and commercially minded"

"Our company culture involves constantly seeking to improve and this is embedded in the organisation"

"We are an overgrown family and enjoyment at work is a very important factor"

"Our business has a social responsibility and we will help to prepare young people for business"

"Understanding your identity is a massive requirement, service based businesses are different from product based ones"

"Our ethos is beneficial, we have never had such a high focus on staff – it all stems from people"

Barriers

The final theme was promoted by one of the questions in the interview template which asked participants about the key obstacles to providing training and development. The overwhelming number one theme was time, with cost and lack of resources also being quoted. Only one participant raised the concern of trained employees leaving to go to a competitor.

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"Time is the biggest factor"

"Time and physical resources"

"Cost and time, we don't have much spare capacity"

"Time, we always have more training to do"

"Time and knowing what courses are available. We also need to see a return on our investment"

"Money is an issue"

"If we train them intensely – will they leave?"

"It is difficult to release them, we don't always have the time to fit training around the job"

"Biggest thing is time rather than money"

"Finance"

"Time is an issue in a small business, training disrupts job planning"

"Time and commitment, people don't always turn up for training as it's not seen as a priority. Money isn't a problem"

"Time off the floor means lost revenue"

"We haven't got a lot of money to spend on external training"

"Cost and time are the biggest barriers"

Top three learning and development priorities

Finally, respondents were asked about their top three priorities for the coming 12 months and their responses are listed in the table below: Leadership and management development was quoted by 39%, (n=7) and qualifications by 28%, (n=5).

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Table 1: Top three priorities for training and development in the coming 12 months

In top three	Number	Percentage
Leadership/management development	7	39%
Qualifications e.g.NVQs, MBAs	5	28%
Customer care	3	17%
Communication	3	17%
Continual professional development	3	17%
Media skills	2	11%
Market knowledge	2	11%
IT skills	2	11%
Product knowledge	2	11%
Sales & marketing skills	1	5.5%
Delegation skills	1	5.5%
Performance reviews	1	5.5%
Time management	1	5.5%
Project management	1	5.5%
Equipment training	1	5.5%
Technical skills	1	5.5%
Induction training	1	5.5%
Soft skills training	1	5.5%

Discussion and conclusion

The eight major themes arising from an analysis of the data definitely seemed to show a genuine commitment from participating organisations to support their employees through learning and development initiatives. For some, this involved formal modes of training and development, such as studying for a professional qualification, whereas for others it was less tangible, for example, soft skills training, leadership development and mentoring.

Overall, the participants regarded learning and development as having a positive impact on their business performance, although there was not much mention of how this was measured in terms of concrete outcomes. What was mentioned was the importance of trained employees on customer satisfaction and quality processes and there appeared to be a number of quality assurance measures in place, which could be useful for evaluating the effectiveness of training interventions.

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The aim of this study was to identify common themes across the data and the eight identified are supported by a number of quotes from the raw data. Qualitative analysis is often criticised as being subjective and lacking the reliability and validity of quantitative analysis but we hope the findings from this study have provided greater insight that could not have been gained by quantitative analysis alone. Our response rate of 17% was small, but much larger than our previous research of 4.5% (LCP, 2007), perhaps suggesting that award winning organisations are more interested and engaged in learning and development than their counterparts, or it may be the case that respondents are more willing to engage in interviews than online questionnaires.

In conclusion, previous research has found that the approach and effectiveness of learning and development in small and medium sized businesses are mediated by a variety of variables including the influence of the business owner, the business sector and the size of the organisation. The findings from this study suggest that business award winning companies take the training and development of their employees very seriously and are willing to invest time and money in learning and development they see as useful and relevant.

To get the maximum benefit from their investment it is important that small and medium sized companies and their training providers, clearly define the purpose, outcomes and evaluation methods for their learning activities. This will help them to ensure that not only do they develop the capability for future growth and challenges but also that they deploy that capability appropriately, making sure they get real benefit and a good return on their investment.

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Appendix 1

Questions used in the semi-structured interview

Business sector

Number of employees

Number of years in business

Average number of days training per employee

Average learning and development spend per employee

What are your main business priorities/drivers in the coming 12 months?

How ready in terms of skill, knowledge and experience are your employees to meet these priorities?

What are the gaps?

How do you plan to address them?

How do you ensure your learning and development activities are aligned to your business imperatives?

How do you evaluate success?

What additional skills, knowledge and experience do you need to drive up the level of organisational performance

a) now?

b) in the future?

To what extent to you see learning and development activities as providing you with a competitive edge?

What are your success factors in terms of developing your employees?

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How committed are employees to learning and development activities?

What works?

What doesn't?

What do you do to encourage employees to engage in learning and development?

How well do your managers coach and develop their teams?

What do they do well?

What could they do better?

How do you communicate learning and development initiatives to your employees?

What works best?

What learning and development activities have you provided over the past 12 months?

What do you think you do differently from your competitors regarding learning and development?

What resources do you have available for learning and development?

Who provides learning and development e.g. internal/external?

What are your greatest obstacles to providing learning and development?

What are your top three learning and development priorities for the coming 12 months?

General Comments: