



LEARNING CONSULTANCY
PARTNERSHIP

Partners for Performance

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

Summary of key findings

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Summary

This study used a semi-structured interview to investigate the views of Managing Directors, Chief Executive Officers and Human Resource representatives who were winners or finalists of their local business awards between 2006 and 2007.

Seventeen companies participated; almost 30% came from manufacturing, 23.5% from information technology and 17.5% from engineering. Over half 53%, have been in business for over ten years, 29.5% have been in business for between two and five years and 17.5% between six and ten years.

Nearly half, 47% employed between 21 and 50 people, 23.5% employed between 51 and 100 people, 17.5% employed over 100 people and 12% employed less than 20 people.

Findings

A qualitative analysis was used to identify patterns across the data to provide an insight into 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.

The analysis revealed the following eight themes:

Learning and development activity

The actual training and development that had taken place over the previous 12 months.

- All award winning companies are committed to training and there was a mix of formal, off-the-job training and informal, on-the-job training.
- Many respondents had structured learning and development activities as part of their professional development and mentoring was common.
- NVQs were mentioned frequently and there was also reference to graduate placement schemes, apprenticeships and work placements.
- Statutory training such as health and safety was important, particularly in the higher risk environments such as manufacturing and engineering.
- A range of skills training was also mentioned including customer care and project management.

Business focus and operational priorities

What participants felt was key to their success in the coming 12 months.

- Many had plans to grow the business either organically or by acquisition.
- Some organisations were looking to expand into new overseas markets.
- Improving client service was also seen as an important business priority.

Employee engagement in learning and development

How engaged and committed employees at all levels of the organisation were to training and development.

- Senior managers demonstrated their belief in the importance of training by taking an active role in developing others.
- Some had formal mentoring schemes in place, whereas others reported providing less formal coaching.
- Employees were reported as committed to training and willing to get involved in development activities, particularly if they were seen as relevant to the individual and the business.

Perceived importance of learning and development to success

What impact participants felt training and development had on their overall business success.

- Respondents saw learning and development as an important factor to their overall success.
- For some, training and development formed part of their long term planning process.
- Skills training was seen as providing respondents with a competitive advantage.
- Although learning and development was acknowledged as important, other factors such as rigid project management were also quoted as a positive influence on organisational success.

Relationships with external institutions

The relationships with external agencies concerning learning and development.

- Many had links with local schools, colleges, universities and business schools.
- Some used universities to help them to recruit graduates.



- There were mixed views on government initiatives, some respondents found the support and funding such as 'train to gain' helpful, whilst others felt disappointed at being excluded from funding.

Processes and procedures

The extent to which participants had structured processes and procedures in place.

- The general consensus was that it was important to have structured processes and procedures to ensure consistency.
- Formal induction and appraisal processes were common.
- Many had formal systems in place for quality assurance and customer care, including satisfaction surveys and project management methodologies.
- Some identified a need to work on current processes and procedures to improve efficiency.

Company ethos and culture

The part played by company culture, strong ethos and entrepreneurial leadership style.

- Many of the organisations were owned or part owned by the directors.
- Some directors were also the business founders.

- Having a strong culture and leader were seen as beneficial to business performance.
- Social responsibility was also seen as important as was developing links with the local community.

Barriers

The main barriers to undertaking training and development.

- The top barrier was time, as respondents did not have much spare capacity to allow time off for training and development.
- Cost was mentioned as an issue for some but not for others.
- Not having dedicated training resources was also cited as a barrier by some respondents.
- Only one participant raised the concern that trained employees may leave to go to a competitor.

Top three learning and development priorities

Finally, respondents were asked about their top three priorities for the coming year and 39% quoted leadership and management development as one of their top three and 28% cited qualifications as a priority. Other priorities included customer care training, continual professional development and communication skills.

Conclusion

The findings show a genuine commitment from award winning organisations to support their employees through learning and development initiatives.

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 on concrete outcomes.

The findings from this study suggest that business award winning companies are taking the training and development of their employees very seriously and are willing to invest time and money in learning and development activities they see as relevant and useful.

It is important that small and medium-sized companies clearly define the purpose, outcomes and evaluation methods for their learning activities to ensure they are developing and deploying the right capabilities to get real organisational benefits and a return on their investment.

Further Information

The full report is available and can be acquired by contacting Learning Consultancy Partnership at:

enquiries@lcp.org.uk.

