

Introduction for Companies and Counsellors

The challenges facing companies and their staff continue to increase in today's competitive marketplace. So the numbers of young people looking for an apprenticeship increases in parallel. Similarly the skills and competence gaps of young people have also increased. The success of your business is dependant on your employees: You need good, performance orientated and qualified employees, which also applies to young people applying for apprentice positions. The recruitment of suitably skilled staff is a complex task which needs a lot of time. And the process is nearly the same for qualified employees or apprentices.

Also the skills and competence requirements for counsellors are of a high standard. It is expected that they are able to offer impartial advice and guidance for every young person and to ensure an appropriate match with an employer. At the same time they have to ensure that good quality candidates are recruited on apprenticeships in order to meet employer expectations. However, this means they have similar challenges as companies to assess young people, and their skills are in demand by both the companies and individuals themselves. They have to respect the wishes and special interests of young people whilst at the same time exploring alternative options to demonstrate to the young person the range of choices available that may better suit their individual needs.

Companies can access support, e.g. by training advisers/mentors. Another possibility for advisers and companies is to get in direct contact with schools or teachers. Teachers often know a lot of things about their students and together it is often easier to find a common best solution.

The methods mentioned above may not offer every company the support that they need. Experience shows that the recruitment of apprentices is often made more or less in an arbitrary manner. Problems with the apprentice, drop-out from training, financial and emotional strain may be the consequences. This can never be avoided completely. However, the likelihood of success can be greatly increased by the systematic recruitment of the apprentice.

The concepts and instruments developed in this tool kit provide suggestions on how to successfully recruit suitable apprentices.

They are able to be used to offer appropriate advice and guidance to the young person. Applying these tools and concepts will be more time consuming at first, but their worth will be proven in the longer term. Having the right, competent staff is at least as important as having, for example the right equipment. Good apprentices can develop into even better employees.

It is a fact that it is impossible to get the perfect apprentice. But nevertheless it is important to find the best suitable applicant for your company. And it is important to get an impression about the applicant, to know their abilities, strengths and weakness before you employ them. This prevents a mismatch between employer and apprentice expectations and companies are able to identify additional support from the beginning of the training.

The "Ability Check" can be used by companies and counsellors. The Ability Check is more extensive in comparison with the job tester and is more commercially orientated. The Ability Check is theoretically based. The test can be used for an initial assessment. But in principle it should be combined with a practical test or a work placement.

The following instruments are available for counsellors:

- A guide for the advice and guidance as well as a corresponding documentation form.

- A questionnaire to get the basic information about the applicant. The questionnaire can also be used as an interview guide when offering career guidance support.
- The so-called “Job Tester” which helps to grasp the essential strengths and weaknesses and what job a young person may be interested in, in a concise way. The instrument contains a theoretical and a practical test as well as assessment forms. The Job Tester is, less an instrument of the applicant assessment but designed to give a counsellor basic information about the young person. This information must be supplemented by the counselling process.
- A guide for tasks and organisation of a mentoring and tutoring system.
- A questionnaire to get information about the wider experiences of the young person in relation to other countries and cultures. This information should be used for counselling before the young person takes part in any foreign exchange programme or visit.

There are corresponding instruments for young people themselves on the internet page: www.leonardomentoring.org. Inform your young people who apply for an apprenticeship about these materials. They should work with the materials and you can use the results for your selection process. Talk to your new apprentice/young person about the results of your analyses and try to set aims together with the young person. It may be helpful to include external support, eg. a mentor. You can contact the mentor on the above mentioned internet page. You can also contact them if you have specific questions about the instruments, especially if you are using them for the first time.

Good luck!