

Notes and news

Santander to offer more than 400 apprenticeships

Santander will offer more than 400 apprenticeships across Britain in 2017-2018. As well as apprenticeships based in branches, the bank is offering degree-level apprenticeship programs, including opportunities in digital and technology and a new finance apprenticeship.

Santander will also launch a new traineeship scheme, aiming to offer more than 140 places in Bootle, Merseyside and Bradford, West Yorkshire, England. This eight-week program is designed to help young people to develop their employability skills and move on to one of the bank's apprenticeship schemes.

Vicky Wallis, the HR Director at Santander UK, said: "It is important for us to reflect the diverse communities we serve. Part of that is recognizing that not everyone follows the same path into a career. Apprenticeships are vital in providing an opportunity for people to earn and learn, offering professional development and a nationally recognized qualification."

The apprenticeships are offered to anyone over 18 years, with traineeships for those aged 16 or over.

Meanwhile, telecom giant BT is creating 1,700 new apprenticeship and graduate jobs as it continues to equip young people with the skills and training needed to meet the challenges of the evolving jobs market.

This year's apprentice and graduate recruitment drive will see the new BT employees work in roles ranging from cyber security and traditional engineering to production at BT Sport.

In the past two years, BT has recruited nearly 2,500 apprentices and graduates, and this year's recruitment drive builds on that. The company employs 81,000 people in the UK.

The company also funds and runs Barefoot Computing, a project that helps primary-school teachers to get confident with teaching computer science. One million children have already been reached through the program, which sees primary-school teachers provided with resources and training. BT plans to reach five million children by 2020.

The new roles, which include those with EE and Plusnet, are at locations including London, Glasgow, Belfast, Sheffield, Nottingham, Cardiff, Leeds and Newcastle upon Tyne. Openreach, BT's local-access network business, will launch its own recruitment drive in due course.

A number of the recruits will be based at BT's Adastral Park laboratories, near Ipswich, Suffolk. This research center is involved in developing communications networks, including ultrafast broadband and 5G.

The Apprenticeships and Skills Minister, Robert Halfon, said: "By committing to injecting 1,700 new graduate and apprentice jobs into the UK, BT is offering a real chance to be trained by some of the best in their field."

Gavin Patterson, the BT Chief Executive, said: "Young people today need three basic skills – reading, writing and technological know-how. BT is investing in the next generation, helping to train primary-school teachers to teach computer science and recruiting large numbers of apprentices and graduates. This is the right thing for us to do if the UK is to remain a digital leader. It is an exciting time to join BT as it continues to invest in ultrafast broadband, 4G, television and sport. We are also preparing for future technologies, including 5G, and so we want to recruit the very best. Our apprenticeship and graduate roles will offer people the hands-on experience they need to succeed."

Young people lack soft skills, say business owners

Young people are entering the workforce lacking basic soft skills – according to the UK employers – with inappropriate mobile-phone usage cited as a top annoyance.

A survey of more than 200 business owners by the charity Central YMCA revealed that half of employers (49 percent) believe the young people they recruit need to scrub up on the basic life skills needed to be a good employee.

Over a quarter of respondents said young people failed to understand appropriate mobile-telephone and information-technology usage in the workplace, while 23 percent said effective timekeeping and punctuality were lacking.

Other skills reported as below the required standard by employers were: commitment to the job (22 percent); an ability to manage their personal finances (20 percent); and the ability to listen effectively (15 percent).

The charity is hailing good-quality apprenticeships as a key factor for change, with Rosi Prescott, the Chief Executive of Central YMCA, saying: “Young people will make up the next generation of our workforce, so it is essential that they are equipped with the skills to ensure they are work-ready. Good-quality apprenticeships can really drive change here – a means of arming young people with the soft skills that traditional education sometimes may fail to address. Of course, that does not mean that employers do not have a responsibility to help in solving the problem. They must be more upfront about the skills their business needs in order to grow, and better interact with young people and education providers to make this known.”

The research also revealed that what is currently being taught in education is not what employers want from employees – with those skills that have a high emphasis in schools, such as vocational and IT skills, at the bottom of employers’ lists of requirements.

Rosi Prescott continued: “We are now facing a robotic revolution in which 35 percent of existing jobs are due to be automated by 2036 – meaning future skill requirements are becoming less and less clear. We are currently engaging with ministers, employers and schools to figure out how we can meet employers’ needs in this new age.”

The study also revealed that more than half of employers believe young people are eager to learn and develop their skills, and more than a third said that they bring enthusiasm and passion into the workforce.

Gibbs signs up to connect with work

International technology and digital-workforce business enterprise Gibbs has signed up to the Barclays employability program, Connect with Work, which connects people seeking employment with recruiting businesses.

The program aims to support people aged over 16 with the aptitude and attitude to enter the workplace, but who face barriers to doing so. It helps to increase the skills of these individuals, as well as helping them to connect with businesses who are recruiting. The program additionally supports high-growth businesses and entrepreneurs, including clients and suppliers, to create entry-level jobs.

Gibbs Hybrid Workforce Solutions pioneered a solution that sees investments plowed back into the community to enrich young people’s lives by working closely with apprentice business Catch 22 to give apprentices the start in life they need. The initiative offers real experience and integration into a team, allowing apprentices to flourish and make a real difference to the business, while supporting them to gain a nationally recognized qualification.

Farida Gibbs, Gibbs Chief Executive, commented: “Innovation is a core part of who we are. We asked ourselves how we could support Barclays’ shared-growth ambition, part of which is to help people to get back into work as well as benefiting the wider community. It made sense to me to find a way of reviewing investments to help Barclays to achieve its citizenship program aims and aspirations.”

Since the launch, Gibbs has managed to hire several apprentices from the Catch 22 program who are now embedded into the business and are receiving the support and mentoring required to ensure that they have a good start with their careers.

Meghan Sheehan, the Head of Investing, UK citizenship, Barclays citizenship and reputation, commented: "The commitment, leadership and willingness to collaborate that Gibbs has shown mean we are now in a position to focus on setting up the tools and processes to scale up the program. Our hope is to have more than 1,000 individuals matched to jobs with our clients and suppliers. Gibbs has been pivotal in our successful launch of Connect with Work and I hope that more suppliers will follow the lead."

Barclays' Connect with Work is a key element of Barclays' citizenship strategy, the shared-growth ambition. Barclays' shared-growth ambition is focused on creating and growing a collection of products, services and partnerships which address a social need, improving the lives of the people in the communities Barclays serves, as well as creating commercial returns. A key strand of this includes supporting access to employment.

SHL teams up on training

Scandinavian Health Limited has selected NetDimensions Learning to replace paper-based processes and enhance training-plan management for the consistent implementation of standards and regulatory requirements across SHL companies worldwide.

"We are pleased to partner the SHL Group to help to improve and streamline its training and employee-development programs which are critical to the company's branding initiatives and employee retention," noted Jay Shaw, the Managing Director and Chief Executive at NetDimensions.

To keep pace with the speed of growth of its business and employee numbers, as well as to improve the efficiency and quality of administrative processes and management of training records, SHL Group needed a robust, centralized solution for training and employee development.

SHL selected NetDimensions Learning because of its usability, availability of data exchange interfaces requiring no customization, scalability and ease of integration with existing IT, as well as the support and consultancy of the NetDimensions team.

Lillian Yao, the HR Director at SHL Taiwan, said: "The NetDimensions consulting team provided great support during the system-requirements gathering process. It also digs into various possible solution scenarios to support all the operational and organizational needs of SHL's learning management."

SHL Group is a designer, developer and manufacturer of advanced drug delivery devices such as auto injectors and pen injectors. The company has more than 3,000 staff globally, with primary design centers in the USA and Sweden, and manufacturing centers in Asia.

Marriott keeps up the tradition of HR innovation

Global hospitality company Marriott International has embarked on an initiative with the career-advancement start-up, Amavitaē.

Launched last year, Amavitaē's career-advancement platform addresses the skills and opportunity gaps of a new generation of jobseekers and helps them to find a suitable career.

Amavitaē recently launched its latest platform evolution which incorporates Marriott's open jobs in the USA. The initiative includes the creation of a proprietary internal version that maps users – including current Marriott employees – to careers and resources.

"The partnership represents another chapter in human-resource innovation for Marriott," said Carey Goldberg, the Global Learning and Development Officer, Marriott International. "By serving as Amavitaē's collaborator and start-up incubator, we are able to provide an innovative platform to further develop our existing employees and help them to align their interests and skills. Amavitaē's next generation career-planning tool underscores Marriott's commitment to advancing our workforce."

Amavitaē helps people to discover a career they will thrive in, understand what careers are growing in demand and pay well, as well as provides access to up-to-date skills.

“Marriott has a long track record of being a truly great place to work,” said Deborah Ramo, the founder and Chief Executive of Amavitaē. “Marriott is a leader in talent innovation with a legacy of putting people first. We share the belief that when people love what they do, they are more engaged, more productive and likely to stay with their employers.”

Evidence-based training (EBT) takes off at Malaysia airlines

Malaysia Airlines Berhad (MAB), the national airline of Malaysia, is set to embark on an EBT journey. The airline has selected Peak Pacific to provide its product, named Clear, to drive the initiative.

MAB’s Chief Operations Officer, Izham Ismail, said: “Malaysia Airlines has been looking for an EBT solution as part of its new strategy for pilot training. Peak Pacific is the right fit as it has systems built specifically for EBT [...] The EBT is a new training program that the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has been promoting in recent years.”

Peak Pacific founder and Chief Executive, Kishor Mistry, said: “The MAB team has put great emphasis on getting it right, by starting with an EBT change-managed program for trainers, administrators and management, plus a train-the-trainer program to ensure that there is quality and consistency throughout the team and the project long term. The MAB project will include digital (encrypted) certificates to satisfy Malaysian government requirements.”

He continued: “The solution will include integration with existing MAB systems such as its human-resources-management system, learning-management system and rostering and scheduling system, to create an integrated technology-driven training environment.”

Training boosts productivity at Goldlcon

UK direct-marketing firm Goldlcon (correct) Enterprise reports a substantial increase in productivity as a result of implementing continued training strategies across the company.

By motivating contractors to find innovative ways to develop personally and setting action plans which help them to stay focused and on track, the Managing Director Dwayne Foster has noticed that motivation has improved among the workforce.

“I truly believe in the importance of continued investment in personal development as I have seen the results in both a personal and professional aspect,” he revealed.

He credits strategies such as creating timelines, which enable team members to visualize every step of each process, then actioning tasks promptly and consequently achieving overall goals in a more accurate, time-efficient fashion, as drivers of the firm’s success.

“Offering ongoing education is imperative to how we approach our business practice, and having a personal-development plan in place allows everyone at Goldlcon to stay on track. This means they can focus their energy, time and brainpower on tasks which deserve the most attention and will have the biggest impact in the long-run.”

Dwayne Foster recently had one-on-one time with a top industry mentor. He explained that entrepreneurs can often become lost in their journey to become successful business owners. As the challenges faced become increasingly advanced, it is easy to lose confidence and make costly mistakes. Goldlcon Enterprise believes every professional can benefit from a mentor.

He commented: “Having a mentor helps to avoid the common pitfalls of business. Finding an experienced mentor allows up-and-coming entrepreneurs access to well-sourced information on overcoming or avoiding obstacles. In any industry, succumbing to setbacks can prove costly to time, resources and reputation. An experienced mentor can offer valuable foresight into big decisions, allowing an entrepreneur to evade any hindrances to success before they happen. What’s more, having a mentor helps aspiring entrepreneurs to be more connected; forging a

relationship with an experienced business person can connect one indirectly to his or her extensive address book.”

He continued: “An expansive network is one sure-fire way to create new opportunities that may not necessarily have been possible without the connecting mentor. An entrepreneur’s success is determined by his or her ability to forge business relationships and act as an effective leader. Mentors offer different perspectives on leadership that can help to diversify company culture and increase profitability.”

Dwayne Foster found his most recent discussion with his mentor particularly inspiring. “He talked to me about mastering the game, developing people with different skills and always setting bigger goals,” he explained.

GoldIcon Enterprise offers an open-door mentoring policy to its managerial team, for clients and contractors alike. By creating easy access to knowledge, support and experience, the firm hopes to accelerate personal development throughout the business.

Privilege Promotions plans team-building activity

Sales and marketing firm Privilege Promotions has organized a team activity to boost motivation for productivity and introduce new skills to the group.

A fun paintballing activity and trip will take place for the firm’s independent contractors. Privilege Promotions believes that in the lead-up to the event, it will see higher motivation and productivity as people strive to achieve leadership status.

Privilege believes the event will also introduce new skills, such as working collectively toward a common goal, to the firm. Sales can often be seen as an independent, isolating and competitive role. However, Privilege Promotions feels it is important to develop a strong network and be able to work as a team in order to make good business decisions and reach new levels.

Privilege Promotions often encourages independent goal setting and advocates pursuing entrepreneurial success, but the firm also feels it should work toward goals as a business. The paintballing activity is set to help the firm to master new skills in order to do this successfully.

Privilege Promotions is an outsourced sales and marketing firm based in Birmingham, West Midlands. The firm specialises in a personalized form of direct marketing which enables it to connect with consumers through marketing campaigns. By rolling these campaigns out directly to consumers, the firm is able to connect with those interested in their clients’ products or services on a face-to-face basis. This drives long-lasting and personal business relationships between brand and consumer which, in turn, often leads to increased customer acquisition, brand awareness and brand loyalty for their clients.

Havoc takes to the road in the name of employee development

UK-based sales and marketing firm Havoc has highlighted the reasons travel and networking can lead all business people to success.

The agency recently organized several trips around the UK. They included a road trip to Wales, run by the firm’s leading sales contractors, where they connected with consumers to improve results for their clients. A trip to London included an industry meeting for the firm’s top performers.

Havoc regularly encourages travel opportunities because the firm believes it is important to broaden horizons and that traveling helps business people to master new skills. Havoc states that traveling is less about the actual location and more about the benefits that are gained from the different situations that arise, and how one develops strategies to cope, which can be used in business.

An important part of traveling and attending events in different regions and cities is the chance to network that comes with it. The firm believes networking to be crucial to success and shares how it is important to spend time with the right people and individuals to learn from them and progress.

The firm runs regular workshops to ensure that its contractors have the skills and confidence to network at events and in new places. Havoc states that networking is an essential activity for personal growth and business development because the relationships that are built through networking are catalysts for success with networking providing the most productive, most proficient and most enduring tactic to building long-lasting, business relationships.

Based in Manchester, UK, and founded by the Managing Director James Sweetland, Havoc is an outsourced sales and marketing firm that specializes in personalized and face-to-face interactions with consumers.

E-learning course helps retailers to improve customer service

With the high street facing greater competition than ever from online shops, an e-learning specialist has launched courses aimed at helping retailers to fight back by showing how to improve their customer service.

The online training from Learning Heroes aims to make “retail staff heroes at the till, divas in the fitting rooms and make customers feel like Hollywood A-listers.”

The e-learning specialist has produced four customer-service modules: service at the till; service in the fitting room; how to meet and greet; and how to connect with the customer.

Learning Heroes, which counts Specsavers, Matalan and Sainsbury’s among its clients, says this is an important time to improve people skills. Research from the Ombudsman Services shows the retail sector in 2016 accounted for nearly a quarter of all complaints for its customer service – almost double the grievances aimed at the next worst performing sector, telecoms.

Danielle Kennedy, of Learning Heroes, said: “Enhancing the customer experience is more important than ever, as many operators are facing increased competition from online providers. We have worked with top industry specialists to deliver effective insights in an easy-to-understand and engaging way.”

She continued: “A poor retail experience can easily break a customer relationship, damage brand reputation and hit a retailer’s bottom line. With many shoppers going online to vent their displeasure, the voice of the customer has never been louder. Great customer service is no longer an option and these courses give staff the selling and service skills to make every customer feel special.”