

The Key to Recruitment and Retention? Skills Development in the Workplace!

No one wants to lose great employees, and workplace skill development can be your ticket to employee retention. We're pleased to announce that the Chamber has partnered with Literacy Link South Central, Fanshawe College, Thames Valley District School Board - Gateway Adult Learning, the YWCA and the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership to help businesses deliver relevant, timely training to build employee skills and help them grow within your company.



The Chamber and local adult upskilling programs will be sharing a series of articles focused on skills development and recruitment and retention, culminating in an in-person event for local employers where we will take a deeper dive into how we can support your investments in staff training.

If your business has never thought about skills development in the workplace before, now is the time. Unemployment rates are down, job applicants are in short supply, and businesses are looking for employees who are resilient, adaptable and able to multi-task. And employees are looking for more than just a decent pay cheque from their employer.

But is workplace skill development a good idea for your business? To find out, ask yourself these questions:



If you answered "yes" to any of the above, then you will want to read our upcoming series of articles about skills development in the workplace – what it looks like, how it supports retention, and how it promotes access to untapped labour markets.

Soft Skills Are the Answer

But what was the question? It could be **“how can my employees make a good impression on our customers?”** or **“how can I help my staff communicate with one another effectively?”** or **“what’s the key to getting my staff to work well as a team?”**

You may have heard about soft skills, and how they’re becoming an important element of what people look for when hiring new staff. Soft skills are known by many names – interpersonal skills, communication skills, or even common-sense skills. Whatever you call them, the range of soft skills is huge, encompassing everything from working as part of a team and having good observations skills to resolving conflict and time management.

If you haven’t been hearing about soft skills in the media and in other business publications, then you certainly will – and you may need support in helping your employees develop them. According to [Small and Medium-sized Employers \(SMEs\): Skills Gaps and Future Skills](#) (October 2020), there is “evidence that SMEs face challenges in the processes that they employ to hire, retain and train talent. They often lack the HR professionals needed to support recruitment of highly skilled workers or for training, retraining, or upskilling existing employees.”



What’s the good news? There are free local adult upskilling programs in St. Thomas/Elgin that can support employers with identifying training needs and developing solutions to support both existing and incoming employees.

Grow Your Labour Force Through Staff Training

Remember when you had a job vacancy, and you could just put out a job ad and sift through all the applications at your leisure? Those were the days, but those days are gone. Now, employers are fortunate to find job applicants at all. And they certainly want to retain the employees they do attract.



[Research](#) suggests that offering training opportunities for all employees – not just management – is an effective way to attract and retain talent. But not all employers have the skills, resources, or time to develop training and offer those upskilling opportunities to employees. This is unfortunate because according to *Canadian HR Reporter* “investment in skills development, on an ongoing basis, is a way to cultivate that trust with workers, and to say, ‘We are invested in your growth and you’re not just a worker to us.’”

Providing and promoting skills development programs for all employees demonstrates a commitment to staff that can make your company more competitive and attractive to job seekers.

The Chamber, in partnership with Literacy Link South Central, Fanshawe College, Thames Valley District School Board - Gateway Adult Learning, the YWCA and the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership can help. Be sure to watch for our upcoming in-person event for local employers where you can learn more about how we can support your investments in staff training.

Find the Talent You Need!

Finding talent can be hard. But there's a trick that can help! Consider reaching beyond traditional hiring practices and talent pools to find new the employees you need. Immigrants or newcomers may be overlooked by employers when it comes to hiring – or if not overlooked, at least not specifically sought out. Perhaps it's because of concerns that working with these potential sources of talent takes significant resources – which we all know are in short supply.

Supporting employees from these under-tapped labour pools may be more within reach than you think.

If employees need to build their basic English language abilities (reading, writing, and oral communication), local adult upskilling programs can help. These programs work with employees for whom English is not their First Language to help them build language skills focused on workplace-specific terms and processes.



Mark Your Calendars

If you'd like to find out more about how you can work with local upskilling programs to build employee skills, support retention, and maximize local talent pools, then join us for lunch on **May 9th at the CASO Station (Farley Waiting Room) from noon until 1:00 pm**. You can RSVP by contacting mail@stthomaschamber.ca.