



Chris and Jo from Royal Sun Alliance are joined by four other customer service experts in a diploma discussion forum. Read their advice, page 2.



## Apprenticeships

How apprenticeships fit well with the diploma programme



Sir Alan Jones writes, page 3

### Introduction

Welcome to the spring issue of BEN



A FEW weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending

a discussion forum about customer service (see page two) at the Park Inn.

Five of Peterborough's most successful customer-oriented companies spoke to people involved in the diploma programme. The day was fascinating and showed that although we had diverse organisations attending, there are many similarities in the things that are important to them.

The main ones were the importance of empowering employees, how often feedback is given to employees on their customer service and respect.

Customer service is part of the diploma programme studies and the teaching materials that were developed at this event will be used across the country. And it all started in Peterborough!

Sue Addison, editor

### Business call to action

## Businesses can help to cut Peterborough's 'NEETS'

BUSINESSES in Peterborough can do a lot more to help to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training – known as 'NEETS' – according to Allison Sunley, head of the city council's 14-19 Team.

At 9.39 per cent, the proportion of 16-19 year-olds without jobs and not being educated or trained is the highest in the region. By getting involved in the diploma programme, employers can help to bring the numbers down, said Ms Sunley.

"Businesses that work with us on the diplomas, apprenticeships and foundation learning can do their bit to help with the situation in Peterborough," she said. "The benefits to being involved are enormous, from raising the quality of a workforce, saving money on recruitment to enhancing a company's social reputation.

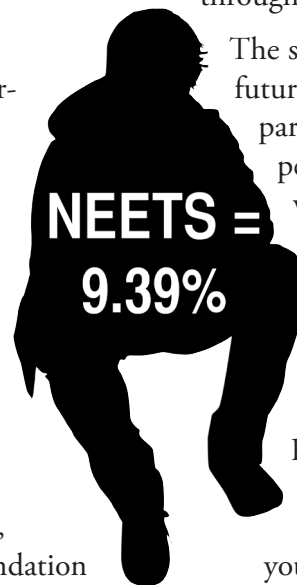
"There are many opportunities for

recognition, too. This newsletter is just one of the publications that recognises the involvement of businesses in the diploma programme and it goes out to many high-profile organisations throughout the region."

The situation will change in future by the raising of the participation age. Young people currently in Year 8 will continue in education or training to 17, and the current Year 7 (who started secondary school in September 2009) will continue until they are 18.

But diplomas and apprenticeships can only be offered to Peterborough young people if local businesses offer their support. Companies can offer work experience, advice on course content, site visits, guest lectures and pre-apprenticeship activities delivered by their experts.

Phone 01733 310670 now to find out how your business can help to improve young people's prospects.



# Great support for customer service event

Senior staff at some of Peterborough's most customer-orientated companies share their philosophies to enhance diploma learning. Sue Addison reports from the Park Inn event

CUSTOMER service champions from five of Peterborough's most successful employers met recently to share their stories with the city's diploma leaders.

The meeting was held at the Park Inn and provided a discussion forum to look at ways that customer service can be taught within the diploma framework. Customer service will be taught as part of many of the diplomas but teaching materials are being developed and pioneered by the Business Administration and Finance (BAF) diploma team here in Peterborough.

## Rawlinsons, chartered accountants

Rawlinsons employs 70 staff who could be dealing with a retired person or a large multinational company. Mark Jackson believes their needs are quite similar: "Every time the phone rings, answer it as if it is



the first call you have taken that day. There is no point in being good, unless your customers believe you are good. We want long-term relationships with a client, not a quick win."

## Crightons, car dealership

Iain Crighton (below left) is the president of the chamber of commerce, chairman of the Adult Skills Group, chairman of the Career Academy and chairman of the steering group for the BAF Diploma. Iain believes that having a customer services manager can be an abdication of responsibility, so his company doesn't have one,



everyone is responsible for customer service.

Iain quoted a successful Formula One race team's maxim: "Recruit for attitude, train for skill."

"I say to my staff, 'if you were the customer, what would you expect?'" says Iain. "Every time your

company raises its game, customer expectations are raised and you have to live up to them."

## John Lewis Partnership, retailer

Staff at John Lewis are referred to as 'partners' and share in the profits. Chris Briggs explains: "Empowerment of employees is very important.



Park Inn event photos: Sue Addison

Customer service is introduced to them on their first day. They acknowledge customers when they come onto the shop floor then use questioning skills and listening to answers to build then close the sale. Mystery shoppers visit every department up to six times a month."

## Park Inn hotels

The Park Inn company motto is 'Yes I can' and after training, staff wear a lapel pin with this on it. Ray Keogh says, "We have a 100 per cent satisfaction or your money back policy and all staff wearing the pin can implement this. Keeping loyalty of customers is very important – customers returning saves money on advertising."



## Royal Sun Alliance, insurance company

"No problem is ever a small problem to our customers," say Chris and Jo. "We have a brand beliefs document called *Treating Customers Fairly* which is at the heart of our customer strategy.

"New staff get an eight week induction and all RSA staff have annual training."



Photos, clockwise from above right: Chris Briggs, John Lewis; Ray Keogh, Park Inn; Chris Millson and Jo Porch, Royal Sun Alliance; Iain Crighton, Crightons of Peterborough; Mark Jackson, Rawlinsons chartered accountants.



## Why employers must get involved

**Sir Alan Jones, Toyota UK chairman and lead diploma employer champion, has a message for employers**

FUNCTIONAL skills are essential to all our lives, which is why they are a key part of the government's reforms of 14-19 and adult education in England, including the diploma.

Employers and universities want reassurance that, whichever learning route a young person has chosen, they will leave education with the skills to apply what they have learned. Functional skills are not simply about having knowledge in English, mathematics and ICT subjects but about knowing when and how to use skills in real life context. In its report *Working with the 3 Rs*, the CBI strongly recommended that school leavers in future should have the functional skills they need for work and daily life.

Integrating functional skills in the context of the diploma programme can be very motivating for learners as they can see the relevance of these skills and how they contribute to learning and achievement. Attainment of a full diploma represents the highest standard of achievement. It signifies that a young person has the full range of skills necessary for success and will be very well-placed in terms of understanding and having the skills that employers require. This will lead to better opportunities for those that achieve it. It is crucial that functional skills are part of the diploma and right now not enough people have the functional skills required when they leave school or college.

Education, employers, consortia, each one of us needs to continue to support our young people by ensuring that they can demonstrate and get credit for acquiring those applied skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

## Are you another Sir Alan?

SIR Alan Sugar has given a new image to apprentices but the more traditional role is making a comeback.

Apprenticeships form a core part of the modern approach to at-work training and real-world apprentices don't have to endure the TV rivalry to land a job with a bright future.

According to Phil Selwood, employer services manager at the National Apprenticeship Service, apprentices are a great way to give your company and a young worker a boost.

"An ambitious young recruit sends out a really positive message and encourages interest in training," said Mr Selwood. "And they're not

a financial burden on a company." For more information about apprenticeships visit: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)



## Diplomas offer choices



Photo: Paul Boucher

**SIXTH form students and their parents met with Team Peterborough at the Choices event on November 7 at Peterborough Regional College.**

**Schools, employers and diploma providers came together to meet students and discuss their options. Almost 1500 people attended the event, which was described by organisers as a "great success".**

**Employers included Brookfield Construction, Esporta, Kaplan Financial, NACRO, Royal Navy, NHS, the Open University, Perkins, Royal Air Force and Rawlinsons Chartered Accountants.**

EMPLOYERS stand to get a lot out of the diploma programme, especially if they are able to put something into it. Businesses around Peterborough are already lending their support and reaping the benefits. Your business could get involved too. There are many ways to get involved and many cost nothing but a little bit of your time.



## Some fast facts about the new diplomas

-  These four diplomas were offered in Peterborough from September 2009: **IT; Creative and Media; Society, Health and Development; Hair and Beauty.**
-  Three more diplomas will be offered from September 2010: **Construction and the Built Environment; Sport and Active Leisure; Business, Administration and Finance.**
-  Looking further ahead, these subjects are planned from September 2011 and the delivering organisations are looking for businesses to get involved now: **Hospitality; Retail Business; Engineering; Manufacturing and Product Design; Environmental and Land Based Studies; Public Services; Travel and Tourism.**
-  There are many ways you can help with the existing and planned diplomas, including: **offering specialist sessions** in the classroom, **setting projects** or assignments, **mentoring** a student, **teacher shadowing**, judging competitions and **work placements** (see details right).
-  If you or your organisation want to get involved with preparing young people for an exciting future, call **01733 310670** now.
-  Diplomas are new qualifications for **14-19-year-olds**. There are three levels to study at. A **Foundation Diploma** is equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D-G. The **Higher Diploma** is equivalent to seven GCSEs at grades A\*-C. An **Advanced Diploma** is equivalent to 3.5 A levels.

## Work placement FAQs answered

### What role does work experience play in the diplomas?

At least ten days of work experience form part of the diploma, giving students an insight into what work is really like in a particular sector without committing to a career in it.

### How does it help?

It provides students with an opportunity to learn about the skills and personal qualities, careers, roles and structures that they would expect to find in a workplace or company, as well as understanding the different functions of people in that industry. Students can also see how their classroom learning fits in with working life. They may also get an idea about enterprise and entrepreneurial ability.

### OK, what do I have to do?

Just tell us what you can offer. We support the students and employer before and during the placements; to ensure that maximum benefit is drawn from the experience and to minimise the workload for the employer.

If you would like to be involved in the diploma programme, contact Sue Addison on: **01733 310670** or email: **info@winning-leaders.co.uk.**

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