



# ...PROOF THAT TRAINING PAYS

*A software-based appraisal system at the heart of Air Conditioning Economics (ACE) Ltd's staff development programme makes assessment of training needs straightforward. Managing Director Ian Adams explains more...*

### **This is what we do...**

Our staff development ethos is underpinned by the formal commitment we made to the national Skills Pledge in 2007. We were already dedicated to our training programmes but saw the pledge as a formal declaration of our ongoing intentions.

Apprentices are integrated into the company's day-to-day work, which means they gain valuable experience while at the same time contributing to our projects. We also have a structured career path for those not on a traditional apprenticeship by developing mates into improvers and then onto engineers after they have gained their NVQ.

To ensure we continually monitor workforce needs, ACE has a software-based appraisal system that creates a training and development plan for every employee, from apprentice to senior staff member. After each appraisal session, training needs identified through the appraisal system are budgeted for and addressed. The outcomes are typically a mix of technical and managerial training, for example at the moment we're paying for three installation improvers to gain their NVQ2 qualification,



and recently some staff have undertaken Institute of Leadership and Management qualifications.

### **Training works for us. Here's why...**

We're proud of our high staff morale and low turnover. We believe in respecting our staff and treating them well. This means people want to stay with ACE – which in turn leads to excellent client relationships.

Our staff turnover last year was only 2.9% and 90% of our work is from repeat business. Any new clients that we secure are usually won through word of mouth recommendations from existing customers. One specific example is a prestigious contract we won for Leicestershire NHS – without proof of our excellent staff development and

### **The case in point**

We are sticking to our staff development philosophy even when the going gets tough. At the end of a particularly busy year growing the business and acquiring new subsidiaries, teamed with the added challenge of the credit crunch, training is as high on our agenda as it was before.

We hope to live through any bad times and know that by continuing our high levels of training we'll be primed to move quickly once the industry ramps up again, while others may struggle.

Health and Safety record we may have lost the work to a competitor.

### **Our advice to others...**

Look at our staff turnover figures! In our opinion it's clear that taking the time to understand employee needs and working with them to nurture their skills pays dividends.

For the appraisal structure in particular, implementing a clear process for assessing needs means everyone knows where they stand and it's easier for the company to act on skills development. It's often hard to find a chance to break away from normal work on a day-to-day basis, but by assigning a dedicated slot you create an open forum that works well for both the individual and the employer.



### **What a Good Day means to us...**

Winning a contract, because if we get repeat business it's due to the good job we've done before. But it's also when we receive positive client feedback, as we pass it on to the team to give them a boost.

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