

ADULT LEARNERS FESTIVAL

Learn @ Work

Thursday, 25 February 2010

About

There has never been a better time to maintain the ability and motivation to learn and adapt quickly to changing economic times. Learn @ Work day takes place on Thursday and is supported by a notable organisations including ICTU, SFA, NCPP and IBEC. It aims to draw attention to the importance of workplace learning and skills. Organisations are encouraged to hold fun and business-related learning activities to help their staff learn new skills that they can put into action at work. By getting involved in the biggest annual celebration of workplace learning you could discover new skills, build new partnerships and help reach your organisations targets - all at the same time!

Event & Activity Ideas

Learning Needs Noticeboard

This initiative allows those members of staff with specific areas of expertise to help others with day to day tasks.

- Put up a notice board and call it the 'Learning Needs Notice Board'. Provide a supply of cards and pens nearby
- Add a brief list of instructions including what the board is for and how to use it:

Instructions

Staff should write on a card what problem they are having. This could be related to work such as 'how to create a formula in Excel' or it could be for personal knowledge such as 'how to make a white sauce for a dinner party'. They should date the card and also include a realistic date as to when they need help by. They should also include their full name and an extension number or e-mail address.

- Encourage staff to visit the board at least once a week
- Staff who are able to help should remove the card and contact the member of staff before the deadline.

Job Swap

The purpose of job swapping or shadowing activities is to learn actively from a colleague, business partner or customer about their job. This will raise awareness of exactly what colleagues do each day, and encourage better communications between departments. It will not be practical for a complete job swap to take place at all times so it is likely that the day would be a combination of job swapping and job shadowing. Don't forget to think about practicalities in advance (for example, warning colleagues that the job shadow is taking place and getting approval if the activity being

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observed is confidential or commercially sensitive). Identify areas of your business which will benefit most from job swapping, those areas which will benefit most from allowing job shadows to take place and those areas for which neither would be practical. A mutual debrief at the end of the day is very valuable. This could focus on what has been experienced and what lessons learned.

It may be helpful to review the experience in the light of three pieces of information:

- the best bit
- the worst bit
- what will change as a result of the experience

Learning Chain

This activity is inexpensive, it can be organised using few resources and can also easily fit in around the working day using paper or electronically. Each employee answers the question "Did you know that..." in relation to a particular theme or subject. Employees can then come together at the end of the day to swap the fact! You can encourage participants to post the questions on a noticeboard and discuss what they have learned.

Here are some ideas on the themes you could use for your 'Learning Chain':

- Learning how to learn / tips on how to learn best. This could include drinking lots of water to hydrate the brain, listening to baroque music, learning in bitesize chunks, eating lots of protein, etc.
- Facts that you never knew about your workplace. These could be researched on the company website or by asking current employees and former employees.
- The history of the town where your workplace is located.
- Tips on using Outlook, Word, Powerpoint, etc.

Swap a Book in Business

Whether your business is office-based, manual or service-providing, it provides enormous potential for promoting reading and book-swapping. Use it as a way to get people talking, build relationships, gain a higher profile for your business or as an integral part of your staff development agenda. You can either create an activity that complements your aims as an organisation or use swapping as a relaxing and refreshing activity to increase creativity and productivity.

Starting points

- Place a book swap box in reception or in the canteen
- Link up with your local FE college to run a swap promoting learning opportunities
- Run a 'book dating scheme' to match up staff with others who have similar reading tastes
- Dedicate part of your noticeboard as a space where people can pin up the funniest stories from that week's magazines and papers
- Hold a book drive for a local charity or set up a volunteer 'reading buddies' scheme
- Use the company intranet to recommend or review books
- Run a 'desert island books' feature in your company newsletter
- Set up a workplace library which people can borrow from over the holidays, the weekend or just over lunchtime
- Use book-swapping to raise the profile of your work library or learning facilities

How to Remember Whatshername!?

In our increasingly knowledge-based world, there is pressure on us all to retain more information,

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and be better organised in the way we use it. Names can be particularly difficult to remember! On Learn at Work Day, why not hold an activity to enhance organisations and memory skills!

- 1) Rhyme - Sophia in her biker's gear
- 2) Association famous name - Sophia Loren
- 3) Facial / body feature - Sophia has 'S' and 'a' in her curly hair
- 4) Book or film title - Sophia's Choice - creativity needed as well as imagination!
- 5) Association with an item - Sophia on a sofa
- 6) Smell, taste, food, drink - Soapy Sophia
- 7) Nature - Sophia the Squirrel
- 8) Alliteration - Sophisticated Sophia
- 9) Music - How do you solve a problem like Sophia? - creativity again!

Make a Learning Plan

Encourage employees to make an individual learning plan on Work at Work Day. The plan is a way for employees to set personal targets and record achievements.

Instructions

To get started with your plan, think about some of the things that you have already learned and enjoyed. Write those experiences down and remind yourself why it was important to you and how has it helped you.

Making your plan

Your learning account

- Take stock of how much you have already done and achieved in your life, include all areas such as home, work, with friends or family. Jot experiences down, this will give you a record of all the important learning you have in your account.

Your wish list

- Look forward in your life and identify your goals. You will compare all you have learned and achieved already with what you hope for in the future.

Your hit list

- Set yourself some targets which will show you that you are on your way to getting what you want or where you want to be. This will provide the skeleton of your learning plan.

Your help account

- Review what or who has particularly helped, or hindered your learning. What support and guidance might you need?

Make a plan of action

- Make yourself a table, and set out what you intend to learn; how you purpose to learn it; when you plan to complete each part of it and how you will know how you have done it.

Keeping going

- Keep your plan updated, read through your steps again and see if you can add anything. Do reviews of your plan regularly, think again about your wish list, do you still have the same goals? Revise your Hit list of learning targets as well.

Working Out Your Payslip

This activity shows employees how to work out the different aspects of their pay slip and how to

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work out their net pay (after tax). Although it's quite obviously mathematical, it's something that is interesting and relevant to most employees. This activity can be completed by the employee without a leader although it is important that someone is on hand to offer support if required. Why not invite your finance team to get involved? The activity will hopefully cut down on the amount of queries they get from staff about their pay slips.

Quick Fixes

- **Hold a workshop on job seeking skills in partnership with local organisations**
- **'Meet the Tutors' Set up an information stand in your local shopping centre or canteen to attract potential adult learners**
- **Include a crossword or information on learning opportunities with staff payslips**
- **Organise a taster class or demonstration for potential learners**
- **Behind the scenes....at the museum / at the university / at the library / at the art gallery**
- **Launch adult learning research or statistics**
- **E-mail your local and national politicians about your concerns for the adult learning sector**

Useful Organisations

- ICTU Union Skills Network (www.ictu.ie)
- Small Firms Association (www.sfa.ie)
- IBEC (www.ibec.ie)
- The Irish Heart Foundation (www.irishheart.ie)

AONTAS Can Help!

We understand that it's often difficult to find the time to hold an event or run an activity so AONTAS have put a number of resources in place to make it as easy as possible for your organisation to become involved in the Adult Learners' Festival 2010.

- An Event in a Bag jam-packed with everything you need to promote your event
- A local contact in each area to share their knowledge and experience
- Activity and Event ideas on www.adultlearnersfestival.com
- Calendar of Events at www.adultlearnersfestival.com
- AONTAS staff on hand for any guidance and assistance you might need

Don't have the time to organise an event or activity from scratch? You can still be part of the Adult Learners' Festival by scheduling an existing event during the festival week.

Don't forget to keep AONTAS up to date on events or activities you have planned. Register your event at www.adultlearnersfestival.com



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