

HOW TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION OF APPRENTICES

Awareness, education and open communication, are positive strategies PEER apply, to ensure effective supervision of apprentices undertaking on-the-job training.

Taking on an apprentice, is quite a responsibility. Apart from supporting them as they develop as a person, there are two essential components to their training. The first of these is: trade school (or the off-the-job component), where apprentices complete their theory and practical component of their trade. When signing up an apprentice, an employer can nominate PEER as their training provider.

The second component is: 'on-the-job' or workplace training. Apprentices are required to demonstrate a range of skills through the completion of workplace tasks. This needs to be under the supervision of and verified by a qualified tradesperson. PEER use several simple methods to collect this evidence from the apprentice and their trade supervisor, so all requirements are met and qualifications can be issued.

Effective supervision is critical to the safety and successful education of every apprentice, as it results in faster development and underpins a valuable contribution to the business.

When an apprentice is training with PEER, ensuring they keep on top of their progress, is a constant focus. Allowing this to fall behind, can cause issues near the end of the apprenticeship, such as: an extension of the training contract.

"We approach supervision from all angles and ensure it's an ongoing conversation with all parties involved in an apprentice's training," said PEER WHS Advisor Caroline Neil. "We speak to employers on a regular basis about the level of supervision being given to an apprentice."

"Employers say they appreciate and value this process, so we keep encouraging and fostering open communication between PEER, apprentices and employers because it leads to better outcomes for everyone involved."

Awareness and understanding of legal obligations

An essential part of PEER's approach, is educating employers and supervisors about the specific legal requirements and guidelines, set out in the Training and Skills Development Act 2008, as administered by the Training & Skills Commission.

It's important for companies and supervisors to be fully aware of their legal obligations and professional responsibilities under the Act, including knowing the required ratios of supervisors to apprentices.

According to Caroline, this is especially important as, "A supervisor is required to put their name to the abilities of an apprentice when they sign-off on the workplace training, which is a significant responsibility. We ensure they're fully aware of what that means legally and in regard to their own professional reputation."

While supervising an apprentice may be regarded as simple and straight-forward, to do it well is more involved than many people realise.

Effective supervision of an apprentice involves the following requirements:

- **A safe and healthy workplace**, including thorough induction training.
- **Suitable qualifications** for assessing the workplace training to meet compliance requirements.
- **Sufficient time** to explain and demonstrate a task and observe the apprentice.
- **Patience** as the apprentice is just learning and will need to have information explained several times over.
- **Good verbal communication skills** to clearly explain information and provide and receive **feedback**.
- **Coaching and mentoring** to encourage the development of the apprentice's skills, knowledge and ability.
- **Helping** an apprentice if any disputes or grievances arise.

Apprentices injecting new ideas into workplaces

When an apprentice and supervisor establish a strong working relationship and have an open communication style, the foundation for success is in place.

"We find that when an apprentice is supervised by someone who instils them with confidence and skills, it creates a lot of trust on both sides," said Caroline.

"And it's not just that ability of the supervisor to communicate, we encourage apprentices to take the opportunity to provide feedback and information to their supervisor too. We're dealing with young minds experiencing new things and if they find something interesting and valuable, we want them to share that with their employer."

With an ageing workforce, employers are taking on apprentices to help move their businesses into the future. An apprentice can bring a wealth of new ideas and knowledge. It's important for them to feel comfortable, confident and supported to communicate that information, as it can add real value to a business.

Sending an apprentice to PEER and providing effective on-site supervision, will allow the next generation of trades people to enter the workplace with confidence and an ability to contribute in a meaningful way.

If you have any questions relating to how you may enhance the supervision, learning experience and development of your apprentices, please contact PEER on 8348 1200, so we can support you in this process.