

Why apprenticeship makes good business sense

Between 1991 and 2001, the number of people working in skilled trade occupations dropped by 3.8%. According to the Conference Board of Canada, within the next decades, Canada could experience a shortage of one million skilled workers, creating a significant impact on your ability to find skilled employees. Ensuring the availability of a strong labour force now, and in the future, is important for the sustainable growth of your business.

You require skilled and qualified workers to get the job done. Training apprentices is the best way to ensure that your employees are trained the way you want them to be, allowing you to pass on your – and your journeymen's – knowledge and experience.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) and Skills/Compétences Canada (S/CC) are pleased to provide you with this Employer Toolkit. It is designed to provide you with everything you need to know about apprenticeship – what it is, why it benefits your business, how it affects your bottom line, and how it works.

This kit has been developed as part of a national campaign entitled “**Skilled Trades: A Career You Can Build On.**” The campaign's goal is to position skilled trades as a first choice career option among youth as well as their main influencers, parents and educators. The campaign is also designed to encourage employers to hire and retain more apprentices to ensure that businesses will have a consistent supply of highly skilled workers now and in the future.

Tools and resources are readily available to get your company started on an apprenticeship program. This toolkit is meant to answer some of the most common questions about apprenticeship and includes the following information:

- Benefits of training apprentices
- How apprenticeship can improve your bottom line
- Tips to implementing a successful apprenticeship
- Valuable information on effective mentoring techniques
- Simple steps to starting a successful apprenticeship program in your business
- Lessons learned from employers who are making apprenticeship work for them
- Who to contact to obtain more information

Training. Talent. Profit. That is what apprenticeship is all about. Read on to find out more...



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Benefits of Training Apprentices



Implementing an apprenticeship training program is an investment into your company's future. Following are some of the key benefits of training apprentices:

- **Increase competitiveness**

An Alberta survey found that 77% of employers of registered apprentices say that training apprentices helps their bottom line and improves their competitive advantage. With an apprentice program, you get workers with on-the-job and in-school training, laying the foundation to improving your competitiveness now and in the future.

- **Improve productivity**

The completion of an apprenticeship program results in highly trained professionals who contribute noticeably to your bottom line and ensures a higher level of quality production and productivity. Their knowledge, skills and "hands on" experience enable them to develop a thorough understanding of your business needs and how best to meet them.

- **Improve the quality of your services and finished products**

With a thorough understanding of their occupation/trade, its tools and equipment, apprentices and journeypersons properly maintain valuable equipment and use material appropriately, ensuring a quality product and longer life expectancy of both equipment and material.

- **Improve the skills of your workforce**

A survey conducted in 2003 by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has already indicated that employers are facing difficulties in trying to find skilled workers, with 56% of respondents admitting that they were forced to hire people even though they were not suitable. Participating in an apprenticeship program ensures that you will have employees that are not only trained to industry standards, but also understand the unique values of your workplace.

- **Reduce turnover and increase employee loyalty**

Invest in your employees and they will invest in you. When you commit to training your workforce you see employee motivation and interest increase, improvements in overall work ethics and increased employee loyalty. Training young people in your business creates skilled and experienced employees, many of whom will stay with you for the long term.

- **Plan for the future**

According to the Conference Board of Canada, in 2015, 48% of the workforce will be between the ages of 45 and 65. Implementing an apprenticeship program in your business will assist you to be better able to plan and meet your future workforce needs, ensuring that you have a pool of experienced employees of different ages within your company.

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Tips to a Successful Apprenticeship



Here are some tips to consider when implementing your apprenticeship program:

- Take your time when evaluating potential apprentices. Employers with a solid record of retention conduct a thorough assessment of candidates to ensure that the apprentice will adapt successfully to their company and remain with the business.
- Explain the nature of your business, how it works and how the apprentice fits into the “bigger picture”. Apprentices are motivated when they feel they are an imperative part of a growing progressive company.
- Be mindful of the issues facing members of equity seeking groups and take care to ensure that all employees receive fair and equal treatment.
- Clearly identify your training objectives and work with the apprentice to develop a basic training plan that identifies their skill requirements, clarifies expectations and outlines a plan for monitoring the apprentice’s progress, involving both formal and informal monitoring.
- Communicate regularly with the journeyman and apprentice to ensure an appropriate level of supervision is taking place. As the apprentice progresses, he/she will develop more confidence and will require less supervision. Adjusting the level of supervision accordingly will demonstrate your trust in your apprentice’s abilities and will go a long way to encouraging him/her to perfect skills independently.
- Conduct regular performance reviews and adjust your apprentice’s level of responsibility accordingly. Offer them new challenges and vary their job routine. This will ensure that your apprentice stays interested in their work and will also increase the overall skill base of the company.
- Make sure your apprentice is released from work without penalty to attend in-class training. This will show your apprentice that you are committed to the completion of all aspects of their training program.
- Educate your staff on the value of training, and the importance of having apprentices on the job site. Fostering a positive working environment where apprentices feel appreciated by the company and their peers will increase employee retention, thereby reducing future hiring and training costs.
- Demonstrate your commitment to training by visibly displaying training certificates and providing recognition for excellent employees. Encourage supplementary training where applicable by posting information about courses/seminars and encouraging staff to update their training.

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Effective Mentors/Coaches Give Your Workplace a Training Advantage!



A Guide for Journeypersons & Front-Line Supervisors

Getting the job done right means using your head as well as your hands. But if your apprentices aren't receiving quality on-the-job training they won't become the skilled employees you need.

Mentoring/coaching training will give your workplace mentor/coach the skills needed to share their skills and knowledge more effectively with apprentices in the work place, as a complement to their regular responsibilities. Effective applied training techniques help make the apprentice become more proficient and self-reliant.

The result? Better on-the-job training, more proficient employees, happier customers and a healthier bottom line.

Quick Tips for Workplace Mentor/Coaches ...

Leadership Techniques

- Lead by example! Give credit where credit is due!
- Foster a positive and cooperative workplace climate.
- Respect different points of view, be flexible and manage conflict appropriately.
- Recognize initiative, effort and commitment; offer encouragement.

Organizational Techniques

- Remember, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail! Thus, get started by setting reasonable training goals and performance expectations!
- Create an annual training schedule for the development of prescribed apprentice skills.
- Plan jointly with your apprentice daily, weekly and monthly training activities and monitor their completion regularly.
- Organize instructional resource materials for ready access by your apprentice.
- Provide written constructive performance reviews to the apprentice upon completion of each training period.

Personal Development Techniques

- Keep an up-to-date awareness of changes and trends in your industry.
- Identify personal skill gaps and ways of accessing training.
- Strive for a mix of life-long personal growth and professional development.
- Promote wellness and growth in your work environment.

Communication Techniques

- Listen attentively – maintain eye contact and focus on what the apprentice is telling you.
- Pay attention to the apprentice's non-verbal cues (body language).
- Ask brief and clear questions; use plain language and avoid jargon.
- Have apprentices with reading problems tested for their reading comprehension skills and scheduled for upgrading at an institute of learning.



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Coaching Techniques

- Do not assume that other people learn the same way you do; find out about your apprentice's preferred learning style and tailor your instructions accordingly.
- Give step-by-step task instructions and have them repeated by your apprentice prior to doing the work.
- Give direct feedback to your apprentice as soon as possible following an action.
- Encourage apprentices who are unclear about a task to see you immediately for corrective action.
- Seek out opportunities for praising your apprentices for their correct understanding and completion of their work assignments.
- Look for coaching moments in support of the apprentice's daily work challenges to head-off problems before they materialize.

Mentoring Techniques

- Build and maintain trust relationships with your apprentices.
- Help the apprentice set realistic and measurable goals – both personal and professional.
- Commit yourself to being available and accessible to your apprentice.
- Help your apprentice navigate through the various challenges of each training period.
- Recognize when you can help your apprentice and when you need to refer them to someone better equipped to deal with the situation.

Human Relations Techniques

- Foster good interpersonal skills based on mutual respect, courtesy and enthusiasm.
- Learn about the motivational needs and long-term goals of your apprentices and provide appropriate support.
- Catch your apprentice in the act of doing "things right" and use positive reinforcement techniques to promote and recognize desirable behaviour.
- Give your apprentice opportunities for input and collaboration in regard to work related decisions.
- Identify chronic apprentice behavior problems and seek agreement with your apprentice on the specific course of action and follow-up.

Job Proficiency Techniques

- Maintain up-to-date records for relevant workplace training requirements.
- Ensure all staff receives appropriate instructions on the recommended handling procedures of hazardous materials and workplace safety.
- Identify and address work related learning requirements for all apprentices.
- Know how to access apprenticeship information in your province.




To access Workplace Mentor/Coach training, contact your local community college. You can also contact the Canadian Automotive Repair and Service (CARS) Council for more information (613) 798-0500, www.carsmentorcoach.on.ca.

CARS Council receives project funding from the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program.

Getting Started

How to implement an apprenticeship program in your business



Making apprenticeship part of your business is a lot easier than you may think. Here is a step-by-step guide to help you on your way to making apprenticeship support the success of your business:

- 1. Assess the needs of your business** – To begin, clearly define what role an apprentice could play within your business and what skills you are looking for in a new employee. It is also important to identify a journey person who is capable and committed to training new staff to meet your standards and business requirements. Check applicable regulations and legislation, and where appropriate, refer to the conditions of any collective agreement.
- 2. Find an apprentice** – When you are ready to start training a new apprentice, remember to look to promote from within. Qualified candidates can also be found with the assistance of the following organizations:
 - Local apprenticeship offices (see enclosed document for contact information)
 - Trade / Industry Associations
 - Unions and Joint Training Committees
 - Colleges and Training Institutions
 - Local Secondary Schools or School Board Offices
- 3. Contact your local apprenticeship office** – Once you have an employee on staff, contact your local apprenticeship office to find out how to register your new employee as an apprentice (see enclosed document for specific contact information). This will involve signing an agreement that outlines the responsibilities of all parties throughout the duration of the apprenticeship. Your local apprenticeship office will also be able to provide you with information on the certification and other requirements of your new apprentice's trade.
- 4. Allow and prepare for in-class portion of training** – In order for your apprentice to acquire their certification, they are also required to attend in-class training. Review your business needs each year to determine the best time for your apprentice to attend this portion of their training. It will also be important to take into consideration the availability of training being offered by local training institutions as these may vary from year to year. Work with your apprentice to develop a schedule that will work for both of you.
- 5. Monitor your apprentice's progress** – Systematically track your apprentice's hours of on-the-job training and make sure that they are developing the skills they need to meet the trade-specific standards. When apprenticeship training is complete, encourage your apprentice to prepare for and write their certification examination.

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Roles and Responsibilities



A successful apprenticeship relies on the full support and participation of the following partners: the apprentice, the employer, and the government. Below is an outline of their responsibilities.

Employer Responsibilities:

1. Provide the apprentice with on-the-job training supervised by a certified journeyperson.
2. Maintain a work environment that is conducive to learning and offers the apprentice a safe place to work with proper equipment and shop facilities.
3. Pay the apprentice's wages (usually set at a rising percentage of the journeyperson wages).
4. Arrange for the apprentice to have time for in-school technical training.
5. Keep accurate records of the on-the-job training hours and type of work – usually in an official record book or log. In some provinces/territories, the employer may also be responsible for providing a letter verifying the apprentice has completed all certification requirements.
6. Notify the local apprenticeship office if:
 - There are changes to facilities, equipment, or staffing which could affect the ability to provide on-the-job training or supervision.
 - The company relocates or changes its mailing address.
 - The apprentice leaves.

Apprentice Responsibilities:

1. Find appropriate employment.
2. Actively participate in and successfully complete the required on-the-job and in-class training.
3. Keep track of his or her progress, including the required hours and skill sets needed to complete the apprenticeship. In some provinces/territories, the apprentice may be given a log book that he or she is responsible for updating.
4. Provide honest and loyal service, showing due regard for the property of the employer.
5. Obey all lawful orders given by the employer or any person designated by the employer.
6. Work safely, not just for personal safety but for that of co-workers.

Government / Apprenticeship Authority Responsibilities:

1. Work with industry to develop and maintain occupational definitions, training and certification standards.
2. Designate training institutions that are authorized to deliver the in-school technical training portion of apprenticeship.
3. Set tuition fees and pay in-school technical training costs not covered by these fees.
4. Keep employers and apprentices informed about the system.
5. Issue certificates, monitor, and verify record books for apprentices and qualified journeypersons.
6. Develop and manage examinations for each level of the program and final qualification for certification.
7. Assist in the scheduling of in-school technical training (in most provinces & territories).



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Provincial/Territorial Apprenticeship Authorities - Contact Information



One of your key sources of information about apprenticeship are the provincial/territorial government Departments or Ministries responsible for education, training, or labour. Below you will find the direct contact information for each provincial/territorial apprenticeship authority.

Apprenticeship Authorities

Contact Information

Alberta

Apprenticeship and Industry Training
7th Floor, South Tower
Capital Health Centre
10030 – 107 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 4X7

Telephone: (780) 427-8517
Fax: (780) 422-3734
Email: aitinfo@gov.ab.ca
Web site: www.tradesecrets.org

British Columbia

Industry Training Centre
Suite 223 – 4600 Kingsway
Burnaby, BC V5H 4L9

Telephone: (604) 775-2860
Toll Free: 1-866-660-6011
Fax: (604) 775-3033
Email: info@itabc.ca
Web site: www.itabc.ca

Manitoba

Manitoba Advanced Education and Training
Apprenticeship
1010 - 401 York Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0P8

Telephone: (204) 945-3337
Toll Free: 1-877-978-7233
Fax: (204) 948-2539
Email: apprenticeship@gov.mb.ca
Web site: www.gov.mb.ca/tradecareers

New Brunswick

Department of Training and
Employment Development
Apprenticeship and Certification
P.O. Box 6000
Chestnut Complex
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1

Telephone: (506) 453-2260
Fax: (506) 453-5317
Email: aoc-acp@gnb.ca
Web site: www.aoc-acp.gnb.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Institutional and Industrial Training Division
Department of Education
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL A1B 4J6

Telephone: (709) 729-2729
Fax: (709) 729-5878
Email: info@gov.nl.ca
Web site: www.gov.nl.ca/app

Nova Scotia

Department of Education Apprenticeship
Training and Skills Development Division
PO Box 578
2021 Brunswick St.
Halifax, NS B3J 2S9

Telephone: (902) 424-5651
Toll Free: 1-800-494-5651
Email: apprenticeship@gov.ns.ca
Web site: www.apprenticeship.ednet.ns.ca



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Apprenticeship Authorities

Contact Information

Northwest Territories

Government of NWT Education,
Culture and Employment
Apprenticeship and Occupational Certification
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT X1A 2L9

Telephone: (867) 873-7357
Fax: (867) 873-0200
Email: apprenticeship@gov.nt.ca
Web site: [www.learnnet.nt.ca/
apprenticeship/index.html](http://www.learnnet.nt.ca/apprenticeship/index.html)

Nunavut

Department of Education, Apprenticeship
and Occupations

Telephone: (867) 857-3056
Fax: (867) 857-3090
Web site: www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/index.htm

Ontario

Ministry of Education
Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
Visit the website or call the toll free number for
the contact information of your local
apprenticeship authority.

Toll Free: 1-800-JOBGROW
(1-800-562-4769)
Web site: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/
apprenticeship/skills/officelocations.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/apprenticeship/skills/officelocations.html)

Prince Edward Island

Department of Education
Apprenticeship Training
3rd Floor Sullivan Building
16 Fitzroy Street
Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8

Telephone: (902) 368-4460
Fax: (902) 368-6144
Web site: www.apprenticeship.pe.ca

Québec

Emploi-Québec
Direction du Développement des
compétences en milieu de travail
800, rue du Square-Victoria
Bureau 2800
Montréal, QC H4Z 1B7

Telephone: (514) 873-1892
Toll Free: 1-888-Emploi (1-888-367-5647)
Web sites: [www.emploiquebec.net/anglais/
entreprises/index.htm](http://www.emploiquebec.net/anglais/entreprises/index.htm) or [www.emploiquebec.net/
francais/complements/cle.htm](http://www.emploiquebec.net/francais/complements/cle.htm)

Saskatchewan

Apprenticeship and Trade
Certification Commission
2140 Hamilton Street
Regina, SK S4P 2E3

Telephone: (306) 787-2444
Fax: (306) 787-5105
Toll Free: 1-877-363-0536
Email: Apprenticeship@sasked.gov.sk.ca
Web site: www.saskapprenticeship.ca

Yukon

Department of Education
Advanced Education Branch
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YK Y1A 2C6

Telephone: (867) 667-5298
Fax: (867) 667-8555
Web site: [www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/
apprenticeship](http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/apprenticeship)



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J. Timothy Flood

John Flood & Sons (1961) Ltd.



Timothy Flood, President of the oldest construction company in Canada, along with his brothers and cousin, are the fifth generation of his family to operate the company started by his ancestors in 1848. John Flood & Sons (1961) Ltd. is a successful business based out of St. John, New Brunswick, that is active in commercial, industrial, institutional and residential construction.

One of Mr. Flood's key responsibilities is to manage approximately fifty employees. Under his leadership, he has fostered an environment of excellence, with many of his staff becoming "Gold Seal Certified". Mr. Flood takes pride in his staff's qualifications, dedication to their trade, and service commitment to their customers.

Ensuring the continued success of his family business is very important to Mr. Flood and he recognizes the need to pass on important skills and craftsmanship from one generation to the next. To achieve this continuous transfer of expertise, John Flood & Sons (1961) Ltd. hire apprentices in carpentry, masonry, cement masonry, and cabinet making. In total, approximately 20 per cent of Mr. Flood's employees are apprentices.

Mr. Flood believes there are many benefits to training apprentices. First of all, he believes that hiring apprentices ensures a future generation of skilled tradepeople for his business. Without them, in years to come, his company as well as many other companies who employ skilled tradespeople will have a difficult time finding qualified employees.

"Apprentices are the future of the skilled trades; we need them. Without apprentices there will be no skilled trade workforce." - Timothy Flood

From a business perspective, by properly training his tradespeople, his staff are far more productive and can work unsupervised.

This means his company can undertake more projects, thereby generating greater profits. Mr. Flood acknowledges that hiring apprentices directly contributes to his company's overall competitive advantage.

"A properly trained apprentice leads to increased productivity, which leads to an increase in my bottom line." - Timothy Flood

Mr. Flood believes that employers have a key role to play in ensuring a sustainable workforce for generations to come. He encourages employers to participate in training programs for apprentices as a guaranteed way to transfer skills and knowledge.

Mr. Flood suggests employers contact their local apprenticeship branch for more information on starting an apprenticeship program in their company. These branches also provide details on the roles and responsibilities of apprentices and employers.

"Training an apprentice is a sure way to guarantee that your company will have highly qualified workers in the future." - Timothy Flood

Although Mr. Flood is concerned with the possibility of a decreasing skilled trade workforce in the future, he feels that apprenticeship programs can renew the supply of qualified and knowledgeable workers and restore an interest in careers in the skilled trades.



Don Strong

Concordia CARSTAR Collision



At an award ceremony in Toronto in May 2004, Don Strong was recognized by the Honorable Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for *Building Jobs & Growth* within The Ontario Apprenticeship Program. Don is Vice President, General Manager, and part owner of Concordia CARSTAR Collision Centres located in Ottawa. Concordia CARSTAR Collision is the only collision repair facility of 16 recipients to receive this award. CARSTAR is a quickly growing repair network in Canada with over 100 stores operating throughout 8 provinces. Don currently manages 35 employees within 2 locations in Ottawa.

When asked what he thinks about receiving this award, Don is quick to reinforce his strong belief in apprenticeship programs.

"The government is starting to realize the large role that employers play in the apprenticeship process. I really appreciate the recognition for our contribution to this great cause." - Don Strong

Don enjoys managing human resources and takes pride in hiring apprentices and training them to become highly skilled tradespeople. At Concordia CARSTAR, each apprentice is paired with an experienced skilled tradesperson that acts as their mentor throughout the training process. Don likes to supervise the apprentices to see what skill sets each has in order to determine where their talent will best fit in the company. There are usually a total of 7 or 8 apprentices at a time working between both CARSTAR locations in Ottawa. Don estimates that he has trained hundreds of apprentices in the past, many of which he still sees on a regular basis: half of his employees at CARSTAR Ottawa were trained there! Don is very proud of helping his employees meet their full potential and knows that it also makes good business sense to invest in his employees.



"Our business relies on the dedication of our people. It's a wonderful feeling when you have proud young people hanging their licenses on your wall." - Don Strong

According to Don, there are numerous benefits in training apprentices. First, he believes that it is easier to train an apprentice to your own standards than to retrain an experienced skilled tradesperson. Another benefit is improved business efficiency since apprentices and skilled tradespersons work together on teams rather than independently. It is more effective to repair a vehicle when there are two or three people working on each car which means better service for their clients. Finally, Don finds training apprentices financially affordable in the long-run.

"Although an employer will likely incur some expenses initially, training your own apprentices provides a long-term effective investment." - Don Strong

If an employer is interested in offering apprenticeship training, Don's advice is to seek information from provincial and federal programs. An employer can also approach local high schools to take in students on co-op placements, or call their local community college or technical training centre to see if they can be partnered with a new graduate. In addition, an employer may contact local trade associations and committees to help them with the process.

Don remembers how his opportunity to obtain hands-on training when he was young sparked his interest in the collision repair business. His father, now retired, owned his own collision repair centre where Don began helping out at an early age. Don was influenced by this experience to attend the four-year collision repair technician apprenticeship program at Algonquin College. His career path has led him to his strong belief in the importance of apprenticeships in providing the quality training that is crucial to being a skilled tradesperson.

Even though he is at the management level now, he still enjoys practicing his trade, and continues to repair some of the damaged vehicles they receive at CARSTAR.

A career in skilled trades has definitely provided Don with many opportunities.

Martin Luthi

The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel



An internationally recognized chef, with over 30 years of experience and expertise, Martin Luthi is the Executive Chef for The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel in Alberta. He oversees the hotel's culinary department, which consists of 132 chefs and a kitchen crew of 104. As Executive Chef, one of his many responsibilities includes leading the hotel's three-year culinary apprenticeship program.

Each year, fifteen apprentices (five in each year of the program) learn valuable skills in the culinary arts and log hours toward achieving journeyman status. Over 100 apprentices have graduated from the program, which has been in place at The Fairmont Banff Springs for over 20 years. Participants come from around the world and gain experience and skills in every area within the culinary department.

"Training apprentices ensures a secure supply of tradespeople and helps keep industry standards high." - Martin Luthi

Fortunately for Chef Luthi, one of the only challenges of the culinary apprenticeship program is selecting the right apprentices from the many qualified individuals who apply. According to the Chef, it is important to find someone who likes what they are doing and who is interested in working in the hotel industry.

Chef Luthi sees many benefits to employing apprentices. First of all, training new workers keeps industry standards high, as it ensures



quality of work and creates a higher skill level among employees. Secondly, hiring apprentices benefits businesses because they ensure a secure supply of talented tradespeople. Hiring an apprentice also provides an opportunity for seasoned skilled tradespeople to pass on their knowledge, skills, and expertise to a new generation.

"Our business benefits from apprentices because we are creating a higher skill level and there is a financial pay-off in that, specifically increased profits!" - Martin Luthi

Looking to the future, Chef Luthi believes The Fairmont Banff Springs' culinary apprenticeship program will continue for many more years to come. He is personally committed to maintaining the program given its success rate and the high quality of skilled tradespeople that graduate from it. Moreover, the apprenticeship program leads to permanent staff for the hotel, given that almost 100 per cent of graduates become employees of The Fairmont Banff Springs and remain there for a number of years.

"With apprentices working in your business, you create a more stable work environment, with less employee turnover." - Martin Luthi

For employers interested in offering apprenticeship training, Chef Luthi recommends contacting their local apprenticeship branch. These branches provide information on how to start an apprenticeship program and list roles and responsibilities of apprentices and employers.

Like all skilled tradespeople, Chef Luthi started his career as an apprentice. Working his way up, Chef Luthi held various head chef titles before arriving at his current position. He loves the dynamic environment and that every day is different from the next. He is pleased to be surrounded by people who share a genuine love of the kitchen.

Eric Lessard

Petro-Canada Certigard - Sainte-Foy



Eric Lessard, President and owner of the Petro-Canada Certigard in Sainte-Foy, Quebec, is no stranger to the automotive industry. His father and grandfather have both been involved in the industry for many years and Mr. Lessard has been there every step of the way - including the historical opening of the first Suzuki and Hyundai dealerships in Canada!

As the head of a small business, Mr. Lessard is responsible for a variety of functions including customer service, general administration and human resources. The favorite part of his job, however, is providing excellent service to his clients. Mr. Lessard takes pride in ensuring that his customers are satisfied and he spends time with each of them to explain the work that is being done on their vehicles in order to help them understand the nature of their mechanical problems.

Mr. Lessard relies on his skilled technicians, who he refers to as his 'top guns', to deliver quality service to his customers as well. Currently, Mr. Lessard oversees eight employees - including two full-time apprentices and one part-time apprentice. Mr. Lessard fully supports apprenticeship training since it allows him to train his employees exactly the way he wants so that they gain the technical skills needed to do the job right, as well as the soft-skills to meet his customer-service standards. And it's working - his clients keep coming back!

Many of his apprentices started out as regular employees prior to taking an apprenticeship. They had general duties such as driving clients around, sweeping the floors and conducting other small tasks around the shop. However, once they saw what the technicians did, they often became interested in the acquired skills and type of work of a certified technician. If a person demonstrates initiative, a good work ethic and strong interest in the work, Mr. Lessard considers them an excellent candidate for an apprentice.

"We can teach them the technical skills they require, but the strong work ethic, positive attitude and ambition needs to come from within the individual," states Mr. Lessard. That is why he looks for employees with "heart", who want to do well and have a willingness to learn. These are the qualities that result in productive employees and a successful company.

Mr. Lessard acknowledges that there are many advantages to training apprentices. "It's simple. Employers who train apprentices develop the employees they need with the skills they want. The more opportunities we make for youth to enter apprenticeship training, the faster they develop the skills I need, as well as the skills our industry needs."

As a small business owner, Mr. Lessard recognizes he may not be able to employ every apprentice he takes on once they are certified. He is nonetheless proud to know that he has contributed to the development of a skilled workforce. "I am not sad to see them go. They are well trained and have plenty of opportunities ahead of them." In his eight years of operation, Mr. Lessard has trained four apprentices, two of whom are currently his full time employees.

Mr. Lessard takes great pleasure in helping youth develop a career they can be proud of and believes that there has never been a greater need to train apprentices and introduce youth to all the career opportunities available in the trades. "Youth today don't get a chance to experience the trades at home. They aren't exposed to skilled trades in the same way as we once were, and deserve an opportunity to learn about their strengths and their career preferences." He takes his role in training youth very seriously and is proud of his commitment to providing apprenticeship training. He has no hesitation to encourage other employers to do the same!