

HGV Licence Acquisition: Apprenticeships or Skills Bootcamps?

Sourcing qualified, skilled HGV drivers remains a high priority for firms in the logistics sector. The industry has faced a looming driver shortage for years, well before Covid and Brexit tipped the deficit to eye-watering depths. Whilst shortfalls were making front-page news, employers scrambled to plug the gap, using LGV apprenticeships and then the newer Skills Bootcamp programmes to boost the numbers of qualified HGV drivers. Both these initiatives have helped replenish the workforce; however, the need for government-funded support for recruiting and training drivers still prevails.

But which training route presents the best solution? Some argue the more intensive Skills Bootcamps programme has displaced apprenticeships. But whilst the Skills Bootcamps provide a speedier result, apprenticeships remain a valuable tool for developing logistics staff. This is especially true for companies seeking to develop longer-term recruitment strategies.

Apprenticeships

The LGV Apprenticeship is a 13-month programme that offers C+E licence acquisition and professional industry skills. The Urban Driver Apprenticeship is of similar length but designed for those seeking Cat C or C1 licences. Companies can use apprenticeships to recruit new staff members or upskill existing ones.

Purely in terms of costs, large employers are better off using apprenticeships as they can use their compulsory Apprenticeship Levy to fund 100% of training costs. Government funding covers 95% of SMEs' apprenticeship costs, so firms pay between £250 and £500 per apprentice.

Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps offer a much quicker route to Cat C or C+E licence acquisition and a more condensed programme of industry skills training. The programme can be completed in as little as 16 weeks.

Cost-wise, SMEs and large employers pay nothing if they employ new candidates to put through the Skills Bootcamp. However, to upskill existing staff using this option, SMEs must pay an average of £300 per trainee, and large employers £1,100 (this varies according to licence type and other factors).

Of course, the Skills Bootcamp's shorter length appeals to many. And the fact it's free for training new recruits is a bonus for smaller employers who have to pay 5% of apprenticeship costs. Unlike apprenticeships, maths and English training aren't included in the bootcamp.

But whilst the Skills Bootcamp provides a quick fix, the apprenticeship offers a more substantial training experience. Apprentices are supported by a mentor who supervises them on live deliveries once they have passed their test. So they have had plenty of experience by the end of their course, unlike bootcampers.

Responsive training solutions: the Brakes model

If anything, the popularity of the Skills Bootcamp has taught us that the industry needs training solutions that are responsive to changing industry demands. Indeed, the RHA is pushing for the Apprenticeship Levy to be reformed into a Skills Levy where employers can choose training programmes that meet their requirements, be they apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps or other training courses.

Leading food wholesalers Brakes took matters into their own hands at a time when the funding landscape didn't offer the flexibility to meet soaring demand for drivers. Like many who employ Cat C drivers, the LGV apprenticeship ceased to suit their needs when the Cat C+E licence became mandatory on the programme. Acting quickly, they designed and financed their own award-winning Changing Gears programme to recruit and train Cat C drivers. Not only has it addressed their driver shortages, but the exemplary initiative has also proved hugely successful, boasting a 100% pass rate and playing a key role in attracting

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women into logistics. Looking forward, Brakes will use the programme as a stepping stone for progression onto higher-level apprenticeships with the support of skills provider TRS Training.

Onsite skills academies: a combined approach

There are financial and practical pros and cons to both apprenticeships and Skills Bootcamps. Many employers choose one or the other. TRS Training provides the two programmes, and its director, Kevin Birch, argues there are innovative ways to combine both. His company supports employers in setting up onsite skills academies that mix and match government-funded initiatives to maximum benefit.

“For larger companies, in particular, looking for succession planning strategies, an onsite skills academy approach provides a long-term solution to ensuring a constant supply of logistics staff. With the support of a provider such as TRS, they can design long-term career pathways for employees using a mix of Skills Bootcamps, apprenticeships and other funded courses in addition to commercial courses such as ADR and IOSH,” says Kevin.

For more information about apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps and setting up onsite skills academies, visit: www.trstrainingltd.com or call Andy on: 07719 031203

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