

How do young people and employers view each other?

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Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2. Methodology..... | 3 |
| 3. Survey findings | 3 |
| 3.1 Demographics of respondents | 3 |
| 3.2 Survey results | 4 |
| 4. Discussion | 7 |
| 4.1 The panel..... | 7 |
| 4.2 Key points..... | 7 |
| 5. Further Information..... | 8 |

1. Introduction

Find a Future (the organisation which delivers The Skills Show) working alongside Activate Enterprise (a national apprenticeship and training provider) conducted a short survey at The Skills Show 2015 to better understand the differences between how young people and employers view each other in relation young people entering employment. The survey findings were presented and debated at an open session that took place at The Skills Show on 21 November 2015. This report summarises the findings and discussion points.

2. Methodology

The survey, based on a short set of common questions, was drawn up for use with both young people and employers. Young people aged 16 – 24 and businesses that were engaged with The Skills Show completed this on 19 November.

Additionally, the survey was completed by apprentices within the Activate Enterprise apprentice programme, in advance of The Skills Show, to gather views of young people who are employed, as distinct from the majority of young people attending The Skills Show, who had limited experience of working environments and employment.

The results of the survey are set out below in section 3. These were presented and debated at The Skills Show by a panel of professionals and young people along with a varied audience including parents, young people, apprentices, employers and teachers.

3. Survey findings

3.1 Demographics of respondents

43 businesses

- 74% medium or large organisations and 16% small organisations
- 88% offer apprenticeships to young people

43 young people

- All aged 16 – 24 years old, 60% male and 40% female
- 14% at school, 65% at college, 20% employed
- 80% would consider an apprenticeship as a route into a career or job

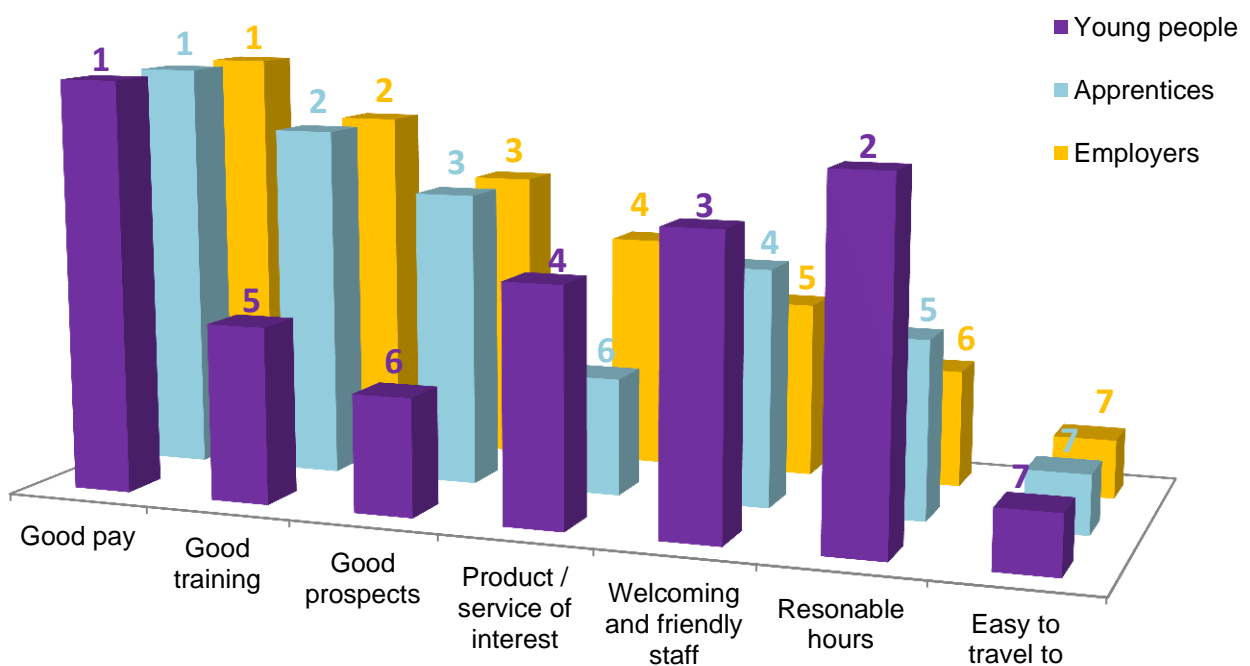
34 apprentices

- All aged 17 – 24 years old (69% 19-24)
- 97 % male

3.2 Survey results

Question one: What are the priorities for first jobs?

- **To young people:** What do you prioritise in a job?
- **To employers:** What do think young people prioritise in a job?

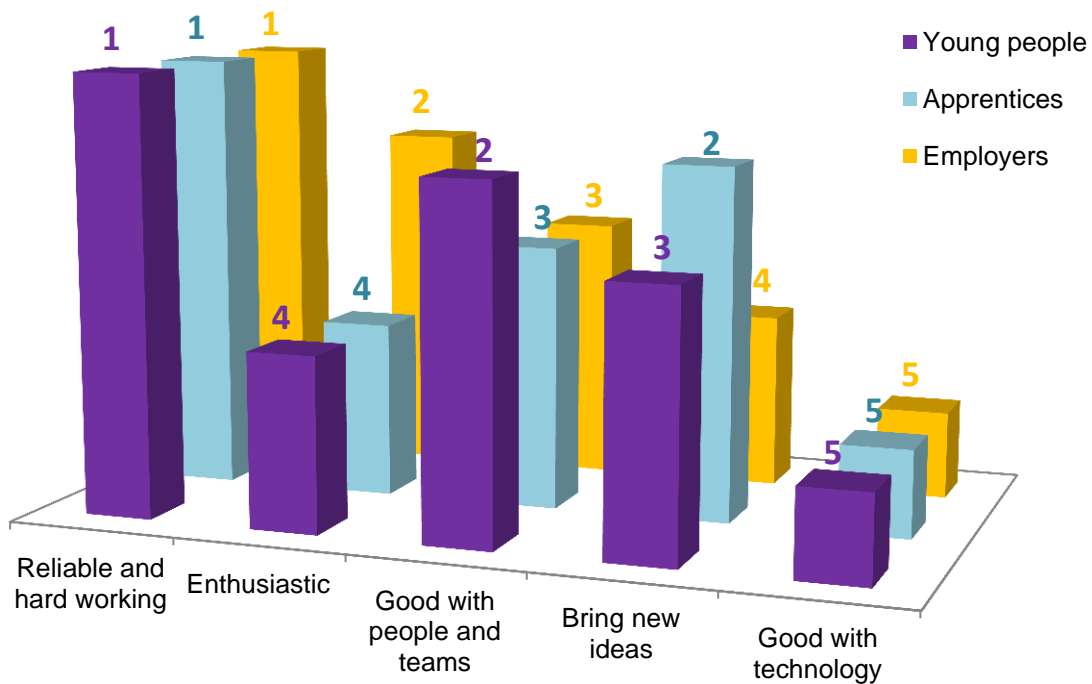


While all young people and apprentices rated good pay as their top priority and a place which is easy to travel to as their lowest priority, apprentices differed from other young people by also identifying good training and good prospects as other top priorities. Apprentice's views are more in line with what employers believe young people will prioritise.

Young people rated welcoming and friendly staff and reasonable hours more highly than either employers or apprentices when considering jobs.

Question two: What employers expect of young people?

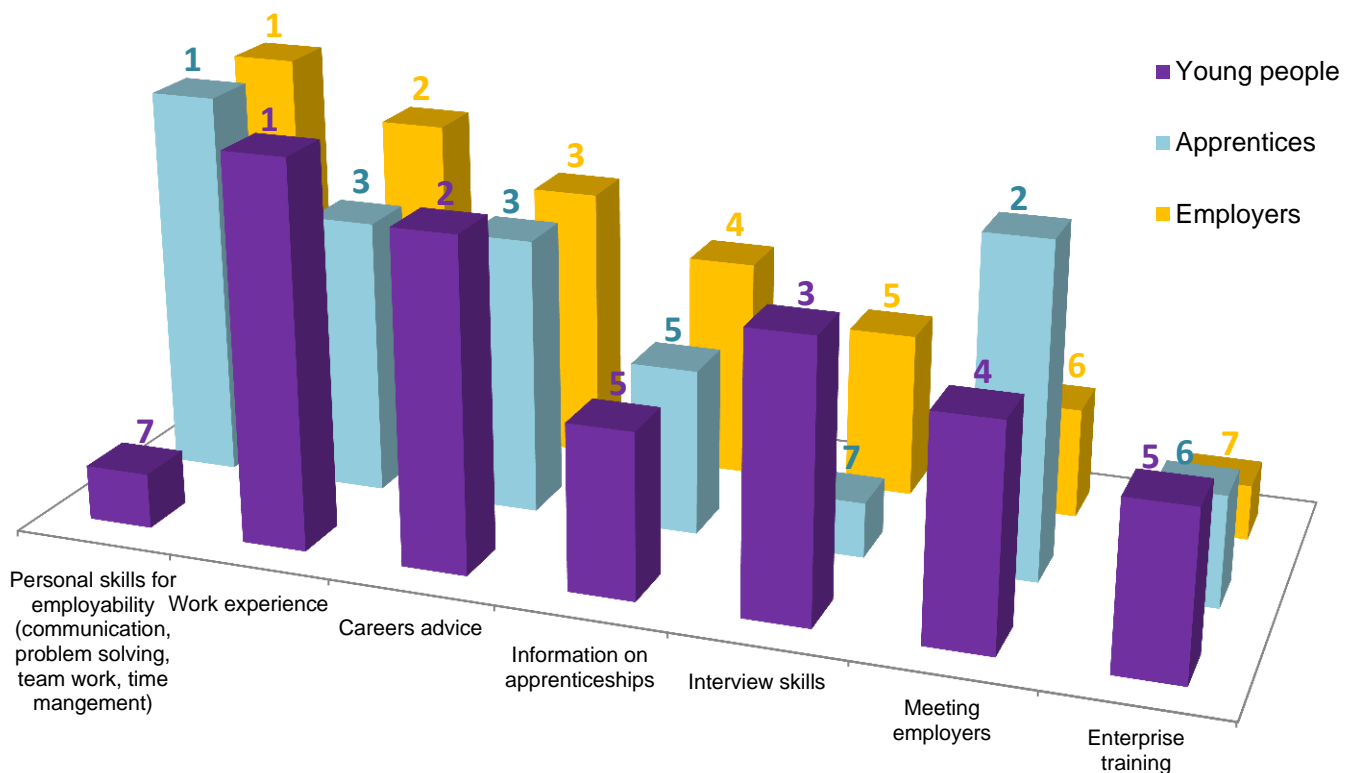
- **To young people:** After ability to do the job and qualifications, what do you think an employer expects of you?
- **To employers:** After ability to do the job and qualifications, what do you expect of young people?



Apprentices and other young people both believe employers want them to be hard working and reliable. Employers place least expectations on technology skills, which match with young people and apprentices beliefs about employers' expectations.

Question three: What more could school and college do to prepare young people for employment?

- **To young people and employers:** Which areas could schools or colleges improve to better prepare young people for employment



In contrast to young people at The Skills Show, both apprentices and employers felt schools could most improve personal skills for employability (communication, problem solving, team work, time management) in preparing young people for employment. Work experience was similarly identified by all respondents as high on the list of areas schools and colleges could improve. Notably, apprentices think schools need to do more to introduce young people to employers.

4. Discussion

4.1 The panel

A panel discussion was held in The Staff Room of The Skills Show on 21 November 2015. The panel was chaired by Pablo Lloyd, Chief Executive of Activate Enterprise and a board member of Find a Future. The findings were presented by Mark Eighteen, Commercial Director of Activate Enterprise.

The findings were discussed by a panel of professionals and young experts in their skill areas. The panel included Huw Davis, Technology Programme Manager for the BBC, Kelvin Sanders, Group Leader Senior for Toyota and two Skills Champions who represented the UK at WorldSkills Sao Paulo 2015; Jasmin Field, Visual Merchandising competitor and Andy Smith, Mechatronics competitor.

The research findings were presented and discussed by the panel and the audience. The audience, made up of teachers, parents, young people, apprentices and school/ college pupils, debated the findings along with their own experiences and those of the panel members.

4.2 Key points

- The education system is over-focused on exam results, with insufficient regard to the development of employability skills, such as team work, communication, problem solving and time management, amongst young people.
- Schools and colleges need to improve their contribution to developing young peoples' personal and employability skills.
- Apprenticeships are increasingly a strong option to university in certain sectors. Taking a higher level apprenticeship route can give a young person a lead in employment of four or five years when compared with a recent graduate of the same age.
- Parents, employers and careers events, such as The Skills Show, have a key part to play in bringing education and business closer together and supporting young people in finding out about their strengths and their options.

Key quotes from experts during the discussion:

'This research reinforces something we regularly hear from our clients: the UK's skills shortage is not just about qualifications, but about the attitude and social skills of school leavers. Everyone involved in training and education needs to move this up their priorities'

Pablo Lloyd, Chief Executive, Activate Enterprise



'..... as an employer, we look for a good balance of both academic and communication skills. We place a strong emphasis on providing a high level of training offering good future prospects. We aim for reliable, hardworking, enthusiastic and dedicated individuals to help build our future'

Kelvin Sanders, Group Leader Senior, Toyota

'School had not prepared me for the workplace. However once I got into the job as a visual merchandiser and realised I really enjoyed it, the training became a lot more important than the hours I'd work per week.'

*Jasmin Field, WorldSkills UK Skills Competition
Visual Merchandising competitor and Skills Champion*

My advance is.....talk to industry experts and take every opportunity to attend relevant recruitment fairs and corporate open days. Also don't discredit any part time work you undertake. There are transferable skills that you can gain from any job. Be resilient and accept that hard work always pays off but you should never expect immediate financial reward.'

*Huw Davies, Engineering Programme Manager,
Broadcast Engineering Apprentices & Trainee
Schemes, BBC*

'As an apprentice, I find being enthusiastic is one of the best tools to help me learn my trade. Most people are willing to help you learn if they can see that you're interested and doing your best.'

'During my apprenticeship, I quickly learned that having good personal skills is just as important as having good technical skills. This is something that was never mentioned to me in school.'

*Andy Smith, WorldSkills UK Skills Competition
Mechatronics competitor and Skills Champion*

5. Further Information

Activate Enterprise - <http://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/enterprise>

Find a Future – <http://www.findafuture.org.uk/>

Apprenticeships - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

Association of Colleges – <https://www.aoc.co.uk/>

Association of Employment and Learning Programmes - <http://www.aelp.org.uk/>