

Ufi + Employers: Working together to get adults learning

Ufi VocTech Trust calls on employers to ensure all staff are benefitting from training throughout their working lives so the UK has the skills it needs, now and in the future.

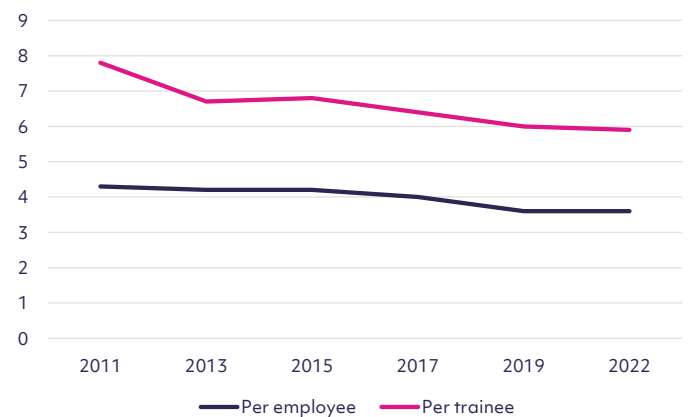
- To tackle the acute skills shortages that UK employers face, we need to encourage and support people who are least likely to engage in training, so everyone can get the skills they need.
- We cannot create the flexible and resilient economy and labour market that the UK needs unless we ensure everyone has the opportunity to improve their skills so they can get into, or progress in, work.
- Employers have a central role to play in making that happen and the right digital tech, developed well and used wisely, will enable the UK to get the skills it needs.

The problem

There are not enough people with the skills the UK needs for the future of work. 82% of businesses identify qualifications and skills as the reason they struggle to recruit, and recruiting skilled staff is the second biggest barrier to SMEs growing their businesses.¹

Despite the skills challenge, rates of adult participation in learning are at rock bottom levels, with nearly 30% of people not having learnt since leaving school.² Business investment in training and skills is high, but the proportion of employers offering training remains low as resources are focused on those with high-level skills.³

Training days per employee and trainee
2011-22



Source: DfE, [Employer Skills Survey](#), 2022

Staff shortages

Recruitment shortages and staff retention challenges are the worst they have been since 1989. The twin impacts of Brexit and Covid are resulting in businesses not being able to secure the staff they need.⁴

Too few employers recognise the full value of training and reskilling, despite them being among the most effective tools for recruiting and retaining staff.⁵

Investment in training

UK employers invest more than the EU or US in training, but the proportion of employers offering training and the amount of training being completed is declining.⁶

There is a clear economic case for upskilling staff. In 75% of cases it pays to invest in staff, but not enough businesses take the time to support people who could benefit the most from training.⁷

Untapped labour

Despite staff shortages, 21% of people in the UK are economically inactive.⁸ Reaching people who are not well served by mainstream learning provision through targeted recruitment and training opportunities can deliver significant benefit.⁹

Groups like ex-offenders offer enormous benefits to employers who put in the extra effort in recruitment.¹⁰

¹ FSB, [Scaling up Skills](#), 2022

² L&W, [Adult Participation in Learning](#), 2022

³ L&W, [Learning at Work](#), 2021

⁴ PWC, [Annual Manufacturing Report](#), 2020

⁵ KPMG, [Managing retention and recruitment](#), 2022

⁶ L&W, [Learning at Work](#), 2021

⁷ McKinsey, [Economic case for reskilling](#), 2020

⁸ ONS, [Employment in the UK](#), 2023

⁹ KCL, [Engaging the Hard to Reach](#), 2021

¹⁰ Samtaler, [Employing ex-offenders helps your business](#), 2021

What do we want to see?

We want employers to think about how technology can help them to ensure that all employees are supported and encouraged to learn throughout their working lives.

1. Digitally enabled training

Technology developed and deployed as a core part of skills training can provide the capacity to respond to the challenges of rapidly changing business models, an increasing need to adapt to the forces of the global economy, and greater demands for new and emerging skills.

2. Reskill

UK businesses clearly understand that it is in their interest to invest in reskilling their staff. However, not enough time is dedicated and there is not enough effort focused on reskilling existing staff. Reskilling, particularly those who have not done much learning since leaving school, is likely to reduce the pressures of skills shortages.

3. Upskill

Businesses should think more broadly about who they hire, considering how they could upskill new staff with the right training. This would reduce labour market pressures while providing businesses with exactly the skills they require and demonstrate the power of learning, creating new positive associations with training.

Ufi's experience and expertise

- **VocTech Challenge Skills for an Economy in Transition:** Our research showed up the flaws in the current skills system and our White Paper has set out a number of ways we will take action.
- **Resolution Foundation Strategic Partnership:** We are working with Resolution Foundation to support the development of tech to help low-paid workers get the most out of work.
- **Learning and Work Institute Strategic Partnership:** We are working with L&W to champion and understand the role of tech in helping more people in the UK engage in learning for work.



Ufi Ventures portfolio company **AutonoMe** uses mobile technology to help people with learning disabilities and autism develop skills for independent living and employment.

Through using the app employees develop skills and overcome barriers to gain and sustain paid employment. At the same time, employers benefit from expert support to increase the abilities of their workforce.



Ufi-supported **First Step Trust** works with adults who are long-term unemployed to provide a safe learning space that will enable them to develop confidence and demonstrate skills and competence in a workplace environment.

They use VR tools to build on practical learning and develop key skills that support learners into motor vehicle and catering apprenticeships.



Career Matters' Ufi-supported project Thrive is developing guided support for lived experience communities through a new vocational skills platform.

They offer layers of support to young people in care, care leavers, and people with lived experience of criminal justice so they can be connected to employers offering vocational training and employment opportunities.

Ufi VocTech Trust is an independent charity that champions the power of technology to improve skills for work and deliver better outcomes for all. We provide funding and expertise to organisations across the UK that are developing digital technologies to support skills for work. Follow [#GetAdultsLearning](https://twitter.com/GetAdultsLearning).

Stay in touch - Ufi wants to support businesses to better understand and adopt digital tools to improve access to skills. Stay in touch with us by contacting josh.smith@ufi.co.uk.

Find out more

