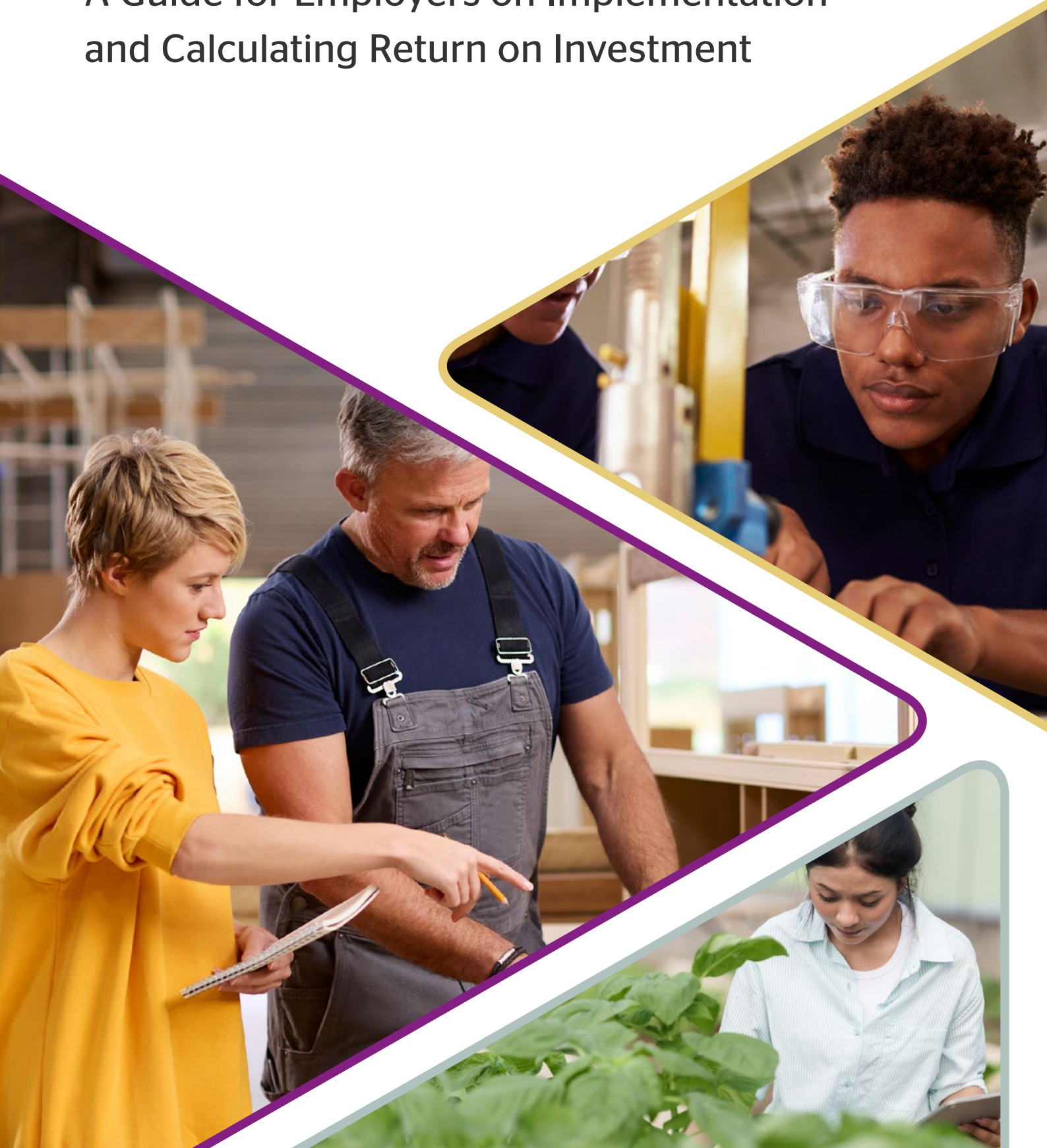


GAN GLOBAL

Shaping Workforces
of the Future

Quality Apprenticeships in Action:

A Guide for Employers on Implementation
and Calculating Return on Investment



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1. Quality Apprenticeships in Action





Overview

This guide equips companies with tools to design, implement, evaluate, and scale apprenticeships that benefit both businesses and young people with the skills needed to navigate the future of work.

Employers consistently report that apprenticeship programs improve productivity and profitability by developing a reliable pipeline of skilled workers and reducing recruitment and training costs over time.¹ Beyond direct cost savings, companies benefit from higher retention and loyalty among apprentices, with studies showing significant reductions in employee turnover relative to traditional hires.²

» *The benefits of apprenticeship programs go far beyond company borders.* »

The benefits of apprenticeship programs go far beyond company borders. For young people and society, quality apprenticeships bridge the school-to-work transition. Apprentices receive paid, hands-on experience, industry-recognized qualifications, and a clear route to skilled employment. On a societal level, apprenticeships fill skills gaps, boost local economies, increase social mobility, and reduce unemployment, especially for youth – a triple win for individuals, businesses, and society alike.

The case studies highlighted in this guide feature companies that have created sustainable pipelines, improved retention rates, future-proofed workforces, and added value to communities through strong apprenticeship programs in several countries. While we recognize the need to adapt programs depending on the individual country context and industry, this guide provides a standardized approach to implementation, the selection of success metrics, and a recommended system for data collection – key components to capture the business case and return on investment (ROI) of apprenticeship programs across markets and countries.

¹ [What are the benefits of apprenticeships for employers?](#), Apprenticeship USA

² [Beyond Productivity: How Employers Gain More from Apprenticeship](#), Abt Associates



Quality Apprenticeships

This guide defines apprenticeship in alignment with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Quality Apprenticeships **Recommendation (R208)**. Adopted at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2023 by workers, governments, and employers, R208 is the first global definition of an apprenticeship.

It recommends that quality apprenticeship programs contain the following elements. They should:

- be governed by formal written agreements.
- combine structured on-the-job and off-the-job learning.
- guarantee fair remuneration.
- culminate in a recognized qualification for the apprentice.

» *Apprenticeship systems should be supported by social dialogue and robust regulatory frameworks.* »

It further emphasizes that apprenticeship systems should be supported by social dialogue and robust regulatory frameworks to safeguard apprentices' rights and promote equity, diversity, and non-discrimination in access and treatment.³ In this context, the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN), a business-driven multi-sector alliance, mobilizes companies, employer organizations, and international partners to promote ILO R208 through private sector engagement.



³ **R208 - Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)**, International Labour Organization



The Business case

Apprenticeships have spanned several centuries for a reason. Originally established as a model to impart skills to young people in specific trades, today, apprenticeships have evolved to reflect the complexities and interconnectedness of a globalized world. With technological advances, apprenticeships can open a world of possibilities and new skills for employers.

» *Apprenticeship programs will usually involve partnerships with educational and training institutes.* »

The ‘earn-while-you-learn’ and ‘on-the-job’ aspects of apprenticeship have continued throughout time; however, certain aspects of the model have evolved. For employers, depending on the country's context, apprenticeship programs will usually involve partnerships with educational and training institutes. Support through government funding or working with intermediaries or nonprofits may be an option for some employers, while others may opt to create their own apprenticeship programs.⁴ Some of our GAN members surveyed for this guide have been leveraging the model as part of their talent acquisition and workforce development strategies over several generations. These are but a few of the highlights that our member companies reported on why they continue to invest, support, and advocate for apprenticeships:

- Improved productivity, innovation, and company culture
- Stronger adherence to occupational safety and health standards
- Higher completion and retention rates
- Lower recruitment and onboarding costs
- Supports diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility goals
- Bridges skills gaps
- Enhanced company reputation and employer branding
- Supports compliance with statutory obligations (in some country contexts)

⁴ [Apprenticeships: Using an old model to recruit fresh talent](#), SAP

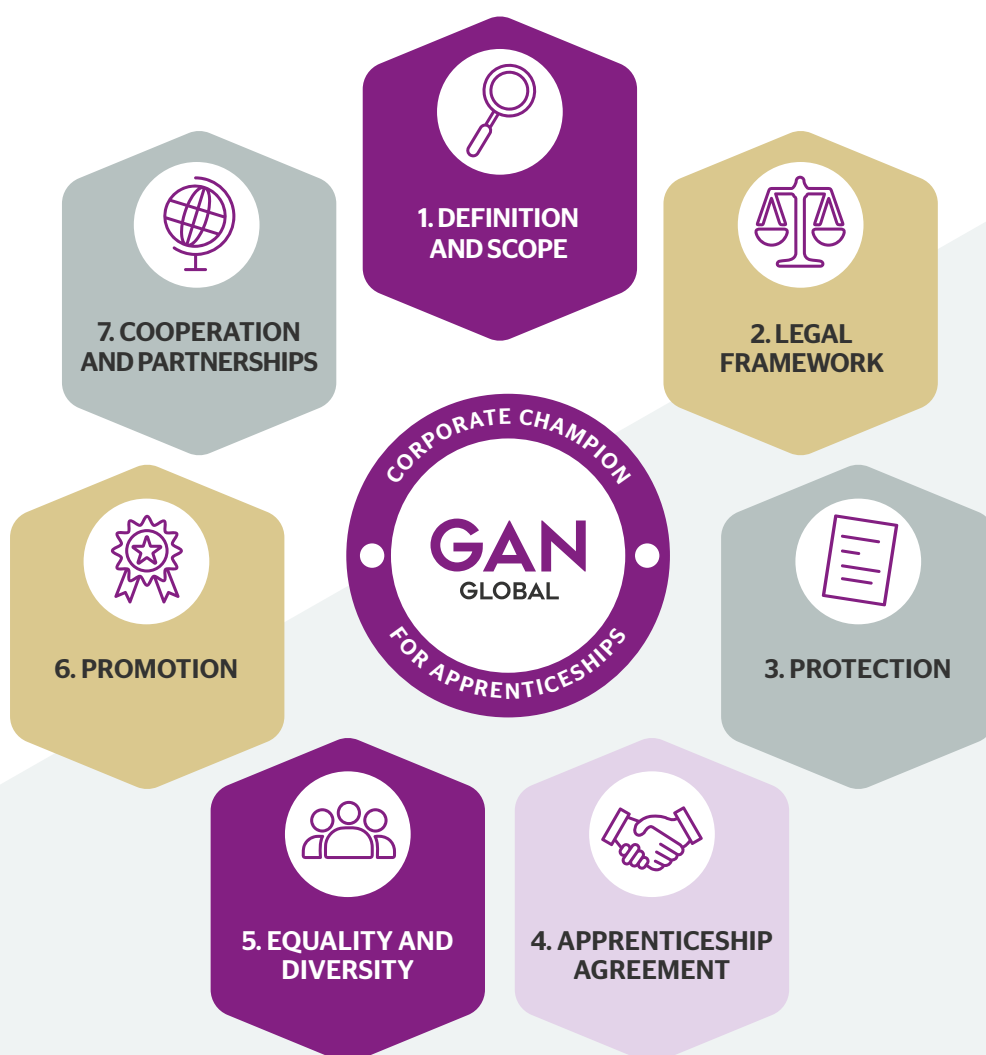


How to Use

This guide lays out a practical roadmap for translating R208's principles into company policies. It details the elements needed to structure remuneration, contracts, training pathways, and assessment mechanisms in line with ILO standards, with actionable steps for employers.

It also highlights the business case for apprenticeships. It provides guidance for company Human Resource (HR) managers, trainers, and/or executive leaders on the business case and ROI.

In 2024, following the adoption of ILO R208, GAN Global developed an Employer Roadmap to help translate R208 into the following implementable steps for companies. These are the basic building blocks that GAN recommends ensuring quality standards for apprenticeship programs:





Quality Apprenticeships in Action

The phases in this guide expand on the roadmap by including the business case for quality apprenticeships through case studies that highlight the value for companies, a step-by-step implementation guide, and guidelines for companies on calculating ROI. It highlights the corporate initiatives and engagement strategies from [GAN Global members](#), demonstrating tangible returns – financial, operational, and social – that accrue to businesses investing in earn-and-learn models. Considering that traditional metrics on the ROI of apprenticeship may not fully capture the entire picture, this guide also contains narratives, case studies, and examples of how programs have positively impacted businesses, individuals, and society.

At GAN Global, we are convinced that apprenticeship and work-based learning (WBL) programs need to be driven by businesses and in collaboration with partners. Our work involves driving action for companies to increase the uptake of quality apprenticeships through a multi-stakeholder approach, involving the private sector and policymakers.

This guide is our collective effort to encourage companies to adopt apprenticeship programs by providing practical guidance, real-life case studies in various industries, and ROI insights to convince executives of the business case and the transformative value that apprenticeships can yield for current and future workforce needs.





Key Drivers

In many countries across the world, apprenticeships have been gaining steam in a variety of sectors as an attractive way to future-proof workforces, close skills gaps, and attract and retain talent.

Alongside this trend, there is a shift toward environmental, social, and governance (ESG) targets and decarbonization, demanding green skills in sectors including renewable energy and sustainable construction. Nearly half of employers cite climate action as a driver of transformation.⁵

Additionally, the tech-driven shifts towards automation and artificial intelligence (AI) have created a surge in demand for new technical competencies, with employers recognizing the need to upskill their workforces significantly. With 63% of employers identifying skills gaps and mismatches as the main barriers to adapting to these transformations, apprenticeships can serve as a solution to fill skills gaps in critical areas such as frontier roles in cybersecurity, AI, the trades, and green technologies.⁶

» *AI and green job postings have increasingly prioritized skills over formal degrees.* »

Macroeconomic challenges, including rising living and production costs and inflation, have positioned apprenticeships as a cost-effective, dual-benefit training model for both companies and individuals. A UK-based study shows that between 2018 and 2024, AI and green job postings have increasingly prioritized skills over formal degrees, further highlighting the relevance of apprenticeship pathways.⁷ With this in mind, employer-led reskilling and upskilling are growing, with almost 50% of workers having received on-the-job training, an increase from 41% in 2023.⁸

5 [1. Drivers of labour-market transformation, The Future of Jobs Report 2025](#), World Economic Forum

6 [The Future of Jobs Report 2025: Digest](#), World Economic Forum

7 [Skills or Degree? The Rise of Skill-Based Hiring for AI and Green Jobs](#), Cornell University

8 [3. Skills outlook, The Future of Jobs Report 2025](#), World Economic Forum



Collaborative upskilling efforts, such as those between training institutions and industry bodies, are becoming more common. Additionally, national bodies are increasingly coordinating efforts to bridge the gap between employers, training providers, and regulators in many countries. Many governments also offer financial incentives, grants, or other forms of support. In Europe, for instance, around 70% of countries have policy-driven measures and initiatives to boost apprenticeship uptake.⁹

» *Leveraging country policies can help their industries retain a competitive edge by tailoring apprenticeships to emerging technologies and sustainability goals.* »

For companies, leveraging country policies can help their industries retain a competitive edge by tailoring apprenticeships to emerging technologies and sustainability goals, which in turn can also support reputational gain. Employers who cite apprenticeships as the training model of choice will usually refer to obvious benefits, such as the need to fill specific job roles or reduce recruiting costs. However, other reasons include an aging workforce leading to brain drain in leadership positions, the need to attract younger generations to traditional yet essential fields in manufacturing, healthcare, crafts, or the trades, and the need to fill vacant positions quickly. Employers have been facing increased turnover since the pandemic.¹⁰



⁹ [Engaging employers in quality apprenticeships - making it happen locally](#), OECD

¹⁰ [Apprenticeships: Using an old model to recruit fresh talent](#), SAP



2. Implementing Quality Apprenticeships





Effective apprenticeship implementation can unfold in a multitude of ways depending on your industry, country context, and company size. Through research and private sector consultations, and in line with ILO R208, GAN Global has developed **five critical phases with actionable steps to help you get started:**

Phase 1

Conduct a thorough needs assessment to identify workforce skills gaps and capacity. This phase ensures that the program aligns with real business needs.

Phase 2

Design a program structure that weaves together formal training, on-the-job learning, mentorship, and evaluation. Thoughtful design balances learning and productivity and links back to business needs.

Phase 3

Forge strategic partnerships, including with educational institutions, and engage key stakeholders. Partnerships can help secure resources, complement training and compliance, and develop links to local communities.

Phase 4

Recruit a diverse cohort through inclusive strategies, while ensuring accessibility. Inclusive recruitment and ensuring program accessibility maximizes talent pool and supports social justice.

Phase 5

Establish long-term impact and evaluation mechanisms to measure key performance indicators (KPIs), ensure continuous improvement, and communicate success.

Rigorous evaluation drives long-term sustainability and growth and allows for continuous improvement, while communicating success ensures buy-in across departments and from key stakeholders and leaders.



Phase 1: Needs Assessment

Before developing an apprenticeship or expanding into a different business line or market, companies should conduct a systematic skills-gap analysis to determine where critical shortages lie and which roles are most ‘apprenticeable’.

This involves “an occupation in which an apprenticeship has been officially approved, usually through legislation,” then mapping against future business priorities and identifying the talent needed in each area. Such an assessment ensures that apprenticeships will address genuine labor needs rather than creating artificial roles. It also provides a clear foundation for estimating cohort size, skills, and curriculum needs, duration, and budget.¹¹

» *Consider whether the apprenticeship program will translate into long-term roles.* »

Internal needs such as budget, technology, learning materials, tracking platforms, and leadership support should also be factored in Phase 1. Consider whether the apprenticeship program will translate into long-term roles for your company and how many apprentices in your department can absorb once they complete their training. Below you will find a checklist with some of the elements that should be considered when determining your ability and incentive to undertake apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship Capacity and Feasibility Checklist:

- Number of positions expected to open in the next 12 to 24 months through growth or turnover
- Number of employees that have the capacity to supervise and train apprentices
- Number of apprentices each mentor/supervisor can effectively guide at one time
- Budget capacity per apprentice (training cost, wages, materials cost vs available funding)
- Proportion of apprentices you aim to retain as permanent employees

¹¹ [TVETipedia Glossary](#), UNEVOC UNESCO



Step 1: Engage stakeholders

Conduct 30- to 60-minute interviews with senior leaders, line managers, and HR to capture strategic goals, workforce plans, talent needs, and operational pain-points. Use a standardized question set (e.g., “What roles face chronic vacancies?” and “Which skills are most critical to your department?”, etc.). This dialogue can reveal which functions are most critical and what future capabilities the business must build. Companies where buy-in for apprenticeship programs are at senior leadership levels can ensure longer-term commitments, support, and resources.

As part of this process, consider exploring insights from both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, check with departments that may already run work-based learning programs or youth employment initiatives. Externally, research similar programs in your sector and beyond, connect with other companies that are successfully tapping into underutilized labor, and engage with industry groups, chambers of commerce, or workforce development networks. Partnering with local educational institutions, including schools or vocational training providers, can reveal ready-made and tested curricula or candidate pipelines.

Additionally, consider researching and reviewing government support schemes or incentives that can be utilized as cost-saving or sharing opportunities. A thorough review of your local system and what support might already be offered, coupled with insights into your own internal needs, can help solidify your argument when justifying your apprenticeship program to senior leadership and peers. Early involvement of key stakeholders ensures alignment of goals and objectives, which secures ownership over the design and implementation of your apprenticeship program.

Step 2: Audit current and future roles

Apprenticeship roles should aim to fill real skills needs in the organization while being flexible enough to incorporate a training pathway to proficiency. Map existing jobs, competencies, performance data, and turnover rates to identify positions with high vacancies or turnover, as well as skills needs. Use retention and recruitment data to quantify where apprenticeships could deliver the greatest return on investment.

This may also lead to a reexamination of requirements for entry-level positions, especially regarding higher education. Research has shown that today’s job market is suffering from degree inflation, where employers demand higher education for jobs that have not previously required it. This trend cuts employers off from a large talent pool and incurs hidden costs.¹²

¹² Dismissed by Degrees, Accenture, Grads of Life, Harvard Business School



Some employers have been lauded in recent years for their skills-based hiring practices, particularly due to rapid technological advancement, as soft skills outpace the relevance of technical skills.¹³ The ability to navigate the landscape where technical skills need adaptation with essential soft skills will help companies become more agile and anticipate future job roles.

Step 3: Forecast skills needs

Combine market-trend research (e.g., digitalization and green technologies) with scenario planning to predict which skills will be scarce in three to five years. A simple matrix of impact vs urgency can help rank and prioritize the top five skills and areas of business that the apprenticeship program should aim to address. Link this to national occupational standards where available.

The table below provides examples of roles and specific skills needs within functions and apprenticeship tracks that could be considered to bridge this gap. Note that this is not a comprehensive list but aims to help companies determine their own apprentice tracks.

Table 1. Skills taxonomy and apprenticeship pathways

Skills Needs	Possible Apprenticeship Tracks
Engineering and Manufacturing	
• Integration of automation and robotics • Application of digital design tools • Maintenance of advanced machinery and operations • Digital and IT skills • Automation and digitalization • Data literacy • Process and quality management • Soft skills, leadership, and personal development	• Mechatronics Maintenance Technician • Engineering Design • Welders, Fitters, and Turners • Boilermakers
Digital and IT	
• Proficiency in cloud computing, cybersecurity, platform engineering, and software development • Adaptability to evolving technologies	• Software Development Technician • Cyber Security Technologist • Cloud Support Specialist
Business and Administration	
• Data-driven decision-making • Project and operations management • Strategic planning and leadership • Administration	• Business Administrator • Operations or Departmental Coordinator/Lead • Junior Analyst

¹³ [Skills-based hiring can help us recruit for jobs that don't exist yet](#), World Economic Forum

**Skills Needs****Possible Apprenticeship Tracks****Health and Social Care**

- Patient-centered care
- Understanding of health regulations
- Effective communication skills

- Healthcare Support Worker
- Assistant Practitioner
- Healthcare Administrator

Science and Research

- Organic synthesis, analytical chemistry, biotechnology, or material science, lab analysis
- Food technology
- Operations, automation
- Soft skills: teamwork, curiosity, communication, reliability, sense of responsibility
- Language skills
- Digital skills

- Laboratory Technician
- Food Technologists

Legal, Finance, and Accounting

- Regulatory compliance
- Risk assessment
- Financial reporting and ethical practices

- Assistant Accountant
- Compliance and Risk Officer
- Financial Advisor

Creative and Design

- Proficiency in software design and AI
- Understanding of design principles
- Collaboration on creative projects

- Engineering Design
- Graphic Designer
- Mediamaticians

Transport and Logistics

- Vehicle diagnostics
- Maintenance procedures
- Adherence to safety standards
- Technical reporting

- Heavy Vehicle Service
- Maintenance Technician

Technical Trades

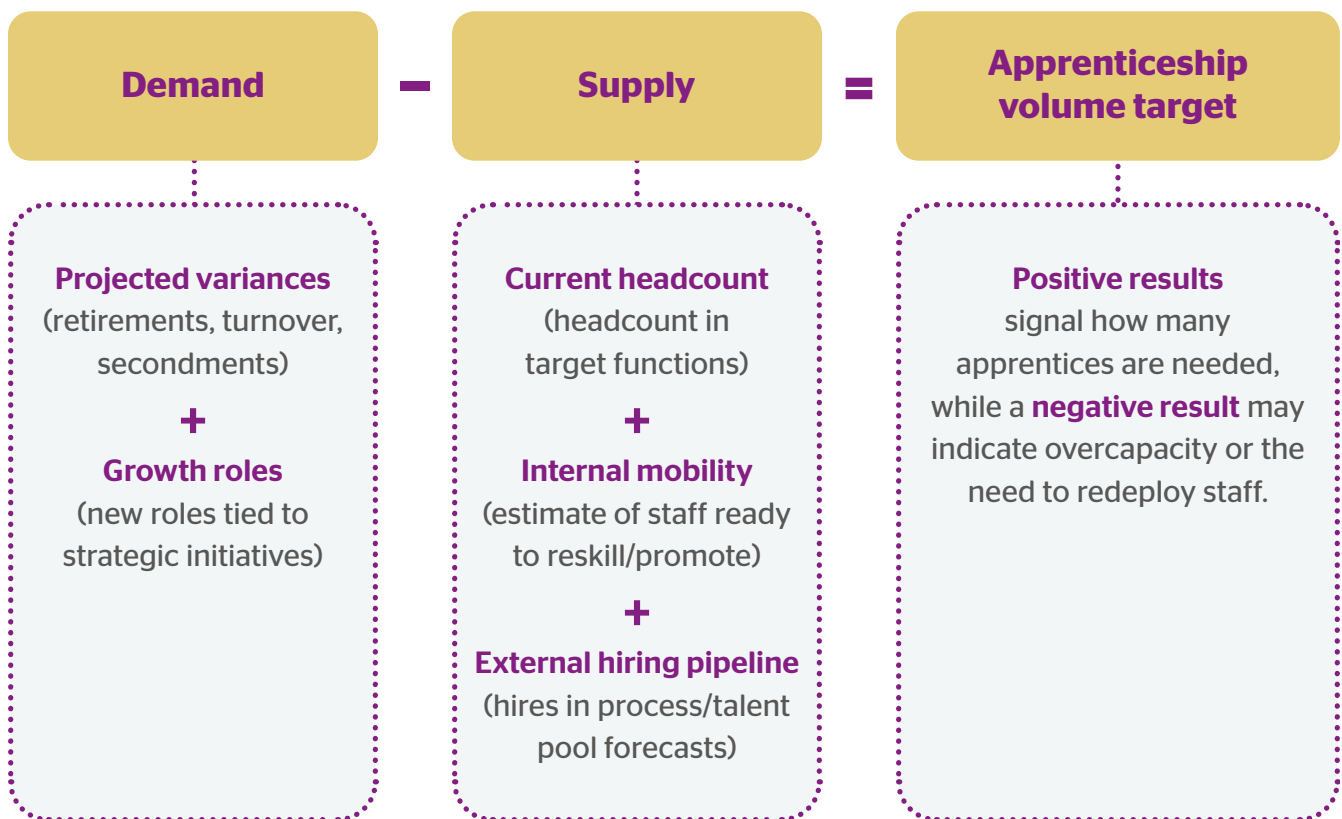
- IT, basic programming, automation, robotics
- Proficiency in Occupational Health and Safety Standards, problem solving, root cause analysis, continuous improvement mindset, etc.
- Conveyor systems, heating, baking technology, mechatronics, hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, automation and control, telecommunications, electrical installations, industrial maintenance, mechanical/fitter maintenance, electrical troubleshooting, Electromechanics
- Maintenance, such as electrical installations, machinery troubleshooting, use of technical manuals and safety procedures, boiler operations, etc.

- Mechanical Tradesperson
- Plumber
- Electrician
- Production/Engineering Technician
- Production Artisan Millwright
- Instrument Mechanicians
- Fitter and Turner
- Machine operators
- Automatician



Step 4: Quantify the gap

Build a simple model to identify your apprenticeship volume target (see example below). Effective planning requires aligning talent supply with anticipated demand and then filling the gap through apprenticeships. Layer on a business-case analysis by estimating unit costs for related classroom training, mentor time, and on-the-job training hours.



According to a study by the US Department of Commerce and Case Western Reserve University, a company can “hire apprentices as long as the benefits of having one more apprentice are greater than the additional cost of that apprentice.” Recognizing the challenges in calculations, the study identifies four factors to consider when determining how many apprentices to onboard: future labor needs, probability of completion, cohort effects, and time horizon.¹⁴

¹⁴ [The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective](#), Case Western Reserve University, US Department of Commerce



Nestlé Good food, Good life

Member Spotlight: Nestlé

At Nestlé, the number of apprentices onboarded is identified on a factory-by-factory basis. When implementing these programs, factory teams perform a deep dive analysis of future workforce gaps and then determine how many apprentices would be needed at each factory location to ensure a strong talent pipeline.¹⁵ In Switzerland, around 90 apprentices complete their program each year, with an estimated additional 100 onboarded annually, helping ease the burden of 30% of its factory workforce retiring by 2030.

¹⁵ *Jobs Now: Swiss-Style Vocational Education and Training, Voices from Companies, Governors and CEOs*, Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce, GAN, Accenture and ETH Zürich / KOF



Member Spotlight: Bühler

Bühler's apprenticeship model demonstrates how a data-driven skills assessment can translate into sustainable talent pipelines. By mapping future workforce needs across its production, maintenance, and engineering divisions, Bühler identifies 'apprenticeable' roles directly tied to long-term business strategy. Apprenticeships are not created in isolation; they are instead built around the company's operational forecasts and automation goals.

This approach allows Bühler to design training programs that address genuine labor market gaps while enabling apprentices to gain skills relevant to advanced manufacturing and digitalization. The result is a workforce ready to adapt as technology evolves, ensuring business continuity and innovation.



Checklist for Phase 1

1. Engage stakeholders

- Consult senior leadership, line managers, and HR to identify chronic vacancies and future skills needs.
- Secure buy-in at leadership level for sustainability.
- Engage internal departments already running youth training and WBL initiatives to avoid duplication.
- Reach out externally to industry associations, chambers, and peer companies to learn best practices.
- Explore partnerships with local schools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, or universities for candidate pipelines and curriculum development.
- Identify available government incentives, subsidies, or grants that reduce costs.

2. Audit current and future roles

- Map high-turnover or hard-to-fill positions.
- Assess competency requirements and performance data for each role.
- Reconsider degree requirements and shift toward skills-based hiring when appropriate.
- Identify roles where structured training-to-proficiency through apprenticeships is feasible.

3. Forecast skills needs

- Conduct market-trend analysis.
- Identify the top five critical skills for the next three to five years.
- Use a prioritization matrix (impact vs urgency) to decide focus areas.
- Link apprenticeship roles to national occupational standards where available.

4. Quantify the gap

- Calculate realistic apprenticeship intake.
- Ensure that intake aligns with the company's absorption capacity for training and post-program employment.

5. Assess internal capacity

- Confirm budget allocations for training, mentoring, and program admin.
- Review availability of tools, learning platforms, and safe training environments.
- Identify managers or mentors who will dedicate time to apprentices.
- Check compliance with statutory obligations and safety requirements.



Additional resources

- **Developing and running an establishment skills survey - Guide to anticipating and matching skills and jobs Vol. 5:** European Training Foundation (ETF), the International Labour Office, and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) detailed methodology and sample questionnaire for conducting a skills survey, which can be adapted as a skills-matrix template by mapping responses against required competency levels.
- Occupational profiles, such as **European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) and O*NET OnLine**, can be used as resources to identify the skills needed in different industries and jobs.
- **Skills needs assessment and anticipation:** The ILO skills needs assessment toolkit offers guidance on assessing and anticipating skills demand to match labor market needs and apprenticeships.
- **Mapping duty-based apprenticeship standards to SFIA:** Tool mapping apprenticeship standards to the global SFIA digital skills framework for structured role alignment.
- **Cedefop Skill forecast:** This Cedefop tool can offer a quantitative forecast of employment by sector and occupation.
- **Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective:** A US Department of Commerce Guide
- **Bridging The Gap Between Talent and Opportunity:** A Chicago Apprenticeship Network Playbook for companies on apprenticeships in the US, starting and evolving a program to scale in various regions of the US.
- **Empowering the Workforce in the Context of a Skills-First Approach:** An OECD report on the emergence of skills-first approaches in labor markets and the challenges and opportunities that they bring.



Phase 2: Program Design

With needs defined, the next step is to design a learning program integrating off-the-job learning, on-the-job practice, and structured mentorship.

Drawing from your takeaways in Phase 1, Phase 2 will focus on designing an in-company, earn-and-learn apprenticeship pathway. The following steps will help you specify the model, design, or source curricula, equip trainers and mentors, allocate resources, and set up a monitoring, evaluation, and progression structure that meets both business needs and regulatory standards.

Step 1: Outline the apprenticeship structure in alignment with national frameworks

Based on national context, regulatory frameworks, and operational needs, choose a model (full-time and company-led, co-op/dual and shared with an educational institution, hybrid, or competency vs time-based) and map its phases (e.g., bootcamp rotations, capstone, final assessment, etc.). Define both on and off-the-job hours, duration, job description, as well as competency milestones upfront.¹⁶ Other considerations, including expectations from managers and apprentices, coordination between HR, business leaders, and operations, timing and program cycles, and flexibility in working and learning hours, should be taken into account during the early planning phase.

» *The apprenticeship program should be clearly linked to a talent need.* »

The apprenticeship program should be clearly linked to a talent need and a long-lasting career opportunity within the company. This ensures that the apprenticeship is more attractive to candidates and that internally, there is clear ROI when the program is connected to the overall business strategy of the company. When developing your training curriculum, start with a training plan that blends formal instruction, experiential learning, and social support. According to the OECD, in most countries, apprentices will spend more than half of their program in the workplace.¹⁷

¹⁶ *ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships, Volume 2: Guide for Practitioners, For developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating apprenticeship programmes*, ILO

¹⁷ *Seven Questions about Apprenticeships: Answers from International Experience*, OECD



One approach is the 70-20-10 model, whereby learners receive 70% of their learning through on-the-job experience, 20% through coaching and mentoring, and 10% through formal classroom or e-learning specific to the requirements of the occupation or industry. Another approach used by one of our member companies is an educational model that combines 20% theory and 80% hands-on practice. The academic curriculum is tailored to meet company needs, helping to develop students in a well-rounded and practical way. The program can last six, 12, or up to 18 months.

» *For delivery, consider a blended approach that combines on-the-job rotations through multiple business areas to broaden skills and knowledge.* »

For delivery, consider a blended approach that combines on-the-job rotations through multiple business areas to broaden skills and knowledge. Examples of training delivery can be online academies created by your company, self-paced, instructor-led, cohort-based with other apprentices, stackable, off-site classroom/virtual modules for technical theory and compliance training, and project-based assignments that apply learning to real business challenges. Choosing the right program delivery for your business will ensure that apprentice learning and manager training will be seamless with everyday operations.

Once the training structure is decided, break formal learning into modular blocks (technical, professional, and company-specific introduction), aligning outcomes to national qualification frameworks or industry-recognized micro- or portable-credentials. Leverage national standards (e.g., Australian Qualifications Framework levels in Australia, Cedefop's European Quality Framework for Apprenticeships) or partner curricula (community colleges, universities, registered training organizations, etc.). Use occupational profiles to help define learning outcomes and on- and off-the-job activities.



Step 2: Develop an onboarding and training plan

Apprentice onboarding should mirror the approach used for other employees, ensuring access to basic company information, policies, training, and induction materials. Successful programs point to early integration, strong relationships with mentors and trainers, as well as continuous training as key drivers for retention and performance. Trainers, coaches, mentors, and a network, such as apprentice alumni, should be clearly identified and readily available.

The required coaching that goes hand in hand with apprenticeship programs can be optimized by creating an online academy, which reduces the cost per apprentice/trainee by avoiding repeated training for employees. Additionally, creating peer networks can help apprentices and mentors share success stories and challenges, and can serve as a platform to motivate and support one another.

Step 3: Define the mentorship model

Select experienced mentors using clear criteria (e.g., technical knowledge, coaching aptitude, years of experience, level of interest), provide them with capacity-building training, and set a mentor-apprentice ratio (ideally 1:3 to 1:5 according to the ILO). OECD research shows that structured mentorship correlates with 20-30% higher completion rates in high-quality programs.¹⁸ Create a mentorship handbook that clearly outlines the responsibilities of mentors/trainers, including onboarding, regular check-ins, guided shadowing, and formal feedback.

Step 4: Plan implementation and resources

Create a detailed timetable that balances classroom days, virtual workshops, and on-site project work. List required resources: recruitment, compensation, trainers, seats, software licenses, learning materials, etc. Allocate training budgets, schedule trainer/mentor availability, and secure learning venues or e-learning platforms.

In addition, internal buy-in is crucial to allocate the resources you'll need for the program's long-term success. Identify the key leaders and advocates for apprenticeships in your company, whether at the C-suite level, directors, HR, or talent acquisition. Make sure that they understand the value of your program and how it links to the overall business strategy.

¹⁸ [Seven Questions about Apprenticeships: Answers from International Experience](#), OECD



Step 5: Monitor, evaluate, and track progress

Build an assessment framework that lists the skills to achieve at each phase, including a competency rubric with three levels across key skills: foundation, intermediate, and advanced. Plan regular assessments (quarterly reviews, mid-point tests, and capstone evaluations), leading to a final certification. In the UK, occupational standards developed by the Institute for Apprenticeships define both the knowledge and behaviors apprentices must demonstrate at each apprenticeship level, which you can find under ‘additional resources’ at the end of this chapter.

» *Once the framework is established, evaluations and metrics can be defined.* »

Once the framework is established, evaluations and metrics can be defined. Combine formative and summative evaluations, embedding clear grading scales, go/no-go decision check points to ensure transparency and consistency, and feedback loops to review performance.

Aside from evaluating the progression of apprentices, the program itself will also need to be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. Tracking the conversion from apprenticeships to permanent roles, along with the progression of former apprentices, is important for communicating milestones and clarifying the value of these programs across company functions. Other metrics that go beyond the traditional measurements of completion, retention, and costs, such as skills attained, percentage of skills adapted to the future of work, employer branding, societal benefits, apprentice engagement, and KPIs directly related to the success of the department where apprentices have been hired, show the longer-term impact that these programs have on the company. Establish how the metrics and KPIs will be tracked over time. As the apprenticeship program progresses, metrics can be adapted to align with shifts in business priorities, providing a wider perspective on the overall value of apprenticeships to the company’s bottom line.

When the apprentice cohort completes the program, it will be time to reflect on how it has evolved and how it can be improved and scaled. Make sure to collect apprentice success stories, as you can leverage these to showcase the value of the program to your company and communities. Phase 5 of this guide will cover in more detail the final aspects of monitoring and evaluation and ensuring continuous improvement through communicating success.



Member Spotlight: Microsoft

Microsoft UK's three-year, degree-level apprenticeship program demonstrates how strategic partnerships and mentorship can transform program design. Delivered in partnership with The Development Manager and Staffordshire University, the program combines full-time employment with accredited learning to provide apprentices with academic qualifications and practical skills. A dual-coach system, with one workplace manager and two academic mentors, creates continuous alignment between learning objectives and real-world application.



Member Spotlight: Accenture

Accenture's Apprenticeship Program is an earn-and-learn model with competitive pay and benefits that provides a pathway to an ongoing full-time career opportunity with Accenture after a typically 12-month-long apprenticeship. The program provides individuals with the training and mentorship needed to develop proficiency in targeted business and technology areas, along with professional skills training to prepare for an ongoing role. Key elements in the program include the following:

- Each apprentice is assigned to a mentor who checks in with them throughout the program.
- Apprentices shadow a team member and are managed by a trained supervisor specific to the role.
- Regular check-ins with the apprentice cohort (by start date).
- Frequent, written, and specific performance feedback.



Checklist for Phase 2

Structure and alignment

- Select the apprenticeship model and training plan that best fit business needs
- Define program duration, job descriptions, expected hours, and competency milestones in line with national qualification frameworks or occupational standards where applicable and available
- Ensure a written apprenticeship agreement covering duration, remuneration, social security, working hours, and qualification to be attained
- Ensure program is tied to long-term roles and clear career pathways within the company
- Secure internal buy-in from HR, managers, and leadership, linking program to strategic priorities

Onboarding and training plan

- Provide apprentices with the same onboarding as other employees
- Create access to digital learning platforms to scale training cost-effectively
- Establish peer networks for support, motivation, and knowledge sharing

Mentorship model

- Select mentors based on technical expertise, coaching ability, and interest, not just tenure
- Train mentors in capacity building and supervision with a mentor handbook stipulating clear responsibilities
- Maintain a recommended mentor-apprentice ratio of 1:3 to 1:5
- Monitor mentor engagement and ensure apprentices receive ongoing feedback and fair treatment

Implementation and resources

- Prepare a detailed program calendar
- Allocate budget for apprentice pay, training materials, and mentor/apprentice time
- Ensure compliance with local labor standards on safe workplaces, fair working hours, and decent remuneration.

Monitoring, evaluation, and progression

- Build a competency framework with defined assessment checkpoints
- Establish transparent grading scales and clear criteria for progression and certification
- Track key KPIs: completion rates, conversion to employment, skills acquired, apprentice engagement, etc.
- Use regular feedback loops to adapt training plans and improve future cohorts
- Document and share apprentice success stories internally and externally to strengthen company reputation and community trust



Additional Resources

- **Create a new program**: The US Department of Labor's (US DOL) 'Create a Program' page offers an interactive builder for defining syllabi, endpoints, and training delivery models.
- **ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships**: An ILO guide on designing apprenticeships.
- **Apprenticeship schemes in European countries**: Chapter 4 of CEDEFOP's cross-nation overview of European apprenticeship schemes discusses different apprenticeship models and their characteristics.
- **AQF qualifications**: The Australian Qualification Framework demonstrates national standards that align learning outcomes with qualifications for apprenticeships.
- **Skills England: Apprenticeship Finder**: A UK-based resource with examples of assessment approaches and grading descriptors to evaluate apprentices' progress.
- **Skills England: Occupational Maps**: Sample occupational frameworks from the UK defining the knowledge and behaviors apprentices should demonstrate at each level of the program.
- **A European quality framework for apprenticeships**: An EU framework to ensure apprenticeship programs are high-quality, transparent, and transferable across borders.
- **Bridging The Gap Between Talent and Opportunity**: The Chicago Apprenticeship Network Playbook for companies on apprenticeships in the US, starting and evolving a program to scale in various regions of the US.
- **Upskilling Playbook: Program Components**: A playbook from The Aspen Institute on designing upskilling programs using a holistic approach that considers various interconnected components



Phase 3: Partnerships and Governance

No quality apprenticeship can be delivered in isolation. They flourish when employers, educators, government, and civil society unite around a common purpose.

Employers can build alliances with educational institutions, credentialing bodies, certified training providers, and intermediaries to secure accredited and industry-recognized curricula, as well as supportive facilities.

» *Multi-stakeholder coalitions can also help companies tap into government incentives, assistance, or co-funding opportunities.* »

Engaging local authorities and industry bodies early ensures that contractual agreements, funding mechanisms, and regulatory registrations are in place before apprentices begin work. Multi-stakeholder coalitions can also help companies tap into government incentives, assistance, or co-funding opportunities.

Step 1: Stakeholder mapping and early engagement

Begin by charting all relevant actors (educational institutions, employer organizations, chambers of commerce, social partners, apprenticeship agencies, group training organizations (GTOs),¹⁹ consortia, intermediaries, civil society, policymakers) and identify avenues of alignment. This exercise will demonstrate key areas in which each stakeholder can help you advance. For example, it can assess an educational institution's capacity or willingness to implement courses matching employer skills needs, or capacity to provide off-the-job training matching working hours; chambers of commerce or industry bodies that can offer mentorship networks; ministries or government bodies that may offer grants, tax breaks, or funding levers; while GTOs, intermediaries, unions and consortiums may provide actual training, recruitment, screening or curriculum development.²⁰

¹⁹ A GTO is a training and employment arrangement specific to Australia. For more information: [What is Group Training](#), Apprenticeship Employment Network (AEN)

²⁰ [The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective](#), Case Western Reserve University and the US Department of Commerce



Partnering with other employers is also an opportunity to learn about industry best practices and insights into workforce trends. Creating alliances with like-minded professionals can help you to identify the skills needed for future roles and can signal to local schools the need to adapt curricula according to specific industry profiles.

» *Companies can gain access to students in partnership with educational institutions, which can lower recruitment costs.* »

Mapping existing curricula provided by educational institutions against skills needs assessment conducted in Phase 1 will determine how programs may need to be adapted or whether new courses and evaluation procedures will need to be created. Companies can gain access to students in partnership with educational institutions, which can lower recruitment costs. Intermediaries can also support end-to-end services, including identifying performance and success metrics, creating and delivering training, recruiting apprentices, conducting outreach, and scaling and replicating models in other regions. Good intermediaries will have specific knowledge of your industry, skills needed, and relational experience with schools, employers, and apprentices. Ensure that you have performed your due diligence and scrutinize the quality of any programs delivered by service providers or intermediaries.

Engage each group in targeted outreach. For example, invite educators to roundtables on curriculum alignments; brief policymakers on the benefits of employer-driven apprenticeships, your program objectives, and seek guidance on compliance requirements; and convene civil society and/or intermediaries (such as local nonprofits or community foundations) to discuss support services like recruitment, career counseling, and pre-apprenticeship bridging courses. If you are looking to scale up your program, some nonprofits may have branches in other cities where you might be interested in collaborating again to support and develop your apprenticeship program.



Step 2: Forming partnerships

Once stakeholders are on board, negotiate clear agreements that specify each party's commitments, whether it is curriculum co-design, training facility use, data-sharing, or cost-sharing arrangements. Hiring costs of apprentices can be lowered through partnerships. Educational institutions, for example, can be sought after for curriculum design or in partnership with other companies or industry groups. Another example is optimizing the elements of required coaching through an online academy, which reduces the cost per apprentice/trainee compared to using staff time.

» *Legal and HR teams should ensure alignment with national laws, policies, and practices.* »

Legal and HR teams should ensure alignment with national laws, policies, and practices, such as the [US DOL's Registered Apprenticeship standards](#) or [Australia's Registered Training Organization \(RTO\) requirements](#), which preserve flexibility for personalization and iterative improvements as the program grows.

Step 3: Governance

Setting up a steering committee with regular meetings (typically quarterly), chaired by a senior executive, is a strategic way to bring together internal colleagues with the external partners identified in the previous step. This type of governance body can monitor KPIs, approve curriculum changes, and advise on emerging policy shifts to ensure that apprenticeships remain both industry-relevant and regulatorily compliant. Meetings can be structured to discuss areas including measuring success, identifying challenges and solutions, and refining strategies.

The more apprenticeship programs and success stories are shared and discussed within your company and community, the more it generates interest and becomes an integral part of your company's long-term talent and business strategy. Executive leaders within your company should act as champions of apprenticeship programs and position them as a long-term business priority.



Step 4: Mobilizing resources and advocacy

With governance in place, leverage relationships with industry bodies, chambers of commerce, employer organizations, and government agencies to unlock funding streams like apprenticeship levies, matching grants, or tax credits. Develop budget proposals, with the finance and public affairs teams, if relevant, to approach potential funding partners and apply for external funding.

» *Raising awareness of the skills needed in highly technical or new fields can create momentum among peers.* »

Raising awareness of the skills needed in highly technical or new fields, such as AI, green sectors, or IT, can create momentum among peers and signal to policymakers and local schools the need for adapting curricula and creating opportunities for apprenticeship programs.

Step 5: Leveraging GAN for best practice and cross-learning

Networks and coalitions can also support and drive changes to curricula development, adaptation, and implementation. Through alliances like GAN, you can launch awareness-raising campaigns, advocate for employer-friendly policies by accessing international fora and national employer organizations where **GAN country networks** are located and showcase the economic and social benefits of earn-and-learn models, positioning your company as an apprenticeship leader.

Finally, plugging into **GAN's global ecosystem**, such as its **Corporate Champions for Apprenticeship (CCA)** initiative, allows for exchange with like-minded companies. GAN's toolkits, benchmarking surveys and maturity profiles, communities of practice, knowledge products, and business-to-business (B2B) events help companies compare lessons, adapt practices, and position themselves as thought-leaders in this space.



THE ADECCO GROUP

Member Spotlight: The Adecco Group

The Adecco Group's Swiss-based model, with strong collaboration between government, education, and employers, demonstrates the importance of partnerships in sustaining apprenticeships. Its programs adhere to federal vocational education and training (VET) guidelines, involving certified in-company trainers, rotating apprentices through six departments over three years. Partnerships with public institutions secure alignment between training and national occupational standards, while collaboration with client companies extends apprenticeship access across various sectors.

The company's ability to combine private-sector agility with public-sector rigor provides a blueprint for an adaptable yet standardized apprentice ecosystem.



UBS

Member Spotlight: UBS

To successfully scale or replicate its apprenticeship programs, UBS emphasizes the importance of strong internal alignment and close collaboration with external stakeholders. Critical enablers include securing buy-in from business units to host apprentices, aligning training content with evolving skill demands, and maintaining robust partnerships with educational institutions and industry bodies. UBS also strives to stay agile to industry and policy changes so that the company's apprenticeship systems grow and operate in alignment with national frameworks and realities.



Checklist for Phase 3

Map and engage stakeholders early

- Identify and chart all relevant actors
- Align apprenticeship needs with existing curricula, training programs, or industry initiatives to avoid duplication
- Conduct due diligence on intermediaries or training providers to ensure program quality and alignment with legal standards
- Hold early roundtables or consultations with schools, universities and government to ensure curriculum alignment and regulatory compliance

Formalize partnerships

- Draft clear agreements specifying roles, responsibilities, and commitments (e.g., cost-sharing, curriculum design, facilities, etc.)
- Ensure legal and HR review for alignment with national laws, regulations, and qualification frameworks
- Build partnerships with universities, training providers, and peer employers to lower cost (e.g., sharing facilities, online academies, joint mentorship programs, etc.)
- Promote partnerships that encourage recognition of qualifications across national, regional, and international levels

Establish governance structures

- Set up a multi-stakeholder steering committee chaired by senior company leadership
- Mobilize resources, advocacy, and awareness
- Work with industry associations, chambers, and government agencies to access levies, grants, tax credits, and other incentives
- Collaborate on advocacy campaigns to highlight skills needs in emerging sectors to influence educational institutions, policymakers, and the general public
- Promote apprenticeships publicly to attract diverse talent and fortify employer branding

Leverage cross-learning

- Engage with GAN Global and national networks for benchmarking, peer learning, and policy advocacy
- Share data and lessons learned with partners to contribute to a collective evidence base
- Participate in GAN's Corporate Champions for Apprenticeship or other communities of practice to exchange innovations and best practices
- Use GAN's global platforms to showcase your company's programs, strengthening visibility as a skills-development leader



Additional resources

- **Steps and tips: Engaging and registering enterprises to provide apprenticeship training:** Practical steps and tips for registering and engaging companies to provide apprenticeship training by the ILO.
- **Building partnerships in apprenticeship programmes:** ILO guidance on structuring partnerships between employers, training providers, and governments for sustainable apprenticeship programs.
- **Bridging The Gap Between Talent and Opportunity:** The Chicago Apprenticeship Network Playbook for companies on apprenticeships in the US, starting and evolving a program to scale in various regions of the US.



Phase 4: Recruitment and Inclusion Strategies

Clear and jargon-free communications about the apprenticeship pathway, including role expectations, training schedules, and progression criteria, further simplify the process and boost confidence among non-traditional applicants.

Competency-based assessments, which focus on skills rather than formal education, can mitigate credential bias and uncover high-potential candidates from non-traditional backgrounds.

While recruitment should align with company practices, special consideration should be given to younger cohorts with no job experience. For apprenticeships, where many applicants may have limited or no prior work experience, soft skills such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving often prove as critical as technical skills.

» *Expanding outreach to underserved groups broadens the talent pool.* »

Incorporating diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as part of the recruitment process can drive both social impact and business performance. Expanding outreach to underserved groups, through nonprofit job-placement agencies, veteran networks, and community organizations, broadens the talent pool, reduces hiring costs, and improves retention rates by leveraging diverse perspectives and motivations. Inclusive recruitment also enables companies to tap into a broader talent pool, helping close the gap between the demand and supply of jobs. Providing reasonable accommodations and clear, accessible communications about apprenticeship pathways ensures that candidates from all backgrounds can compete on an equal footing.

Step 1: Define diversity and inclusion objectives

Begin by benchmarking current demographics against local labor-market data to identify underrepresented groups in your sector (e.g., women in STEM, veterans, people with disabilities). Translate these insights into concrete measurables, such as ‘target 30% of cohort from veteran networks’, and integrate them into your overarching ESG or talent strategy. Document these objectives by tracking application, assessment, and hiring rates by demographic group, ensuring accountability at every recruitment stage.



Step 2: Engage with external partners

Identify nonprofit partners, service organizations, and local community groups that serve specific target demographics, leveraging existing resources to find relevant stakeholders. In the United States, for example, the US DOL has developed a **Universal Outreach Tool** that lists hundreds of such organizations, simplifying partner selection. Reach out with concise partnership pitches, stating program objectives, cohort size, and inclusion targets, and invite partners to co-host information sessions (virtual or in-person) to tap into their trusted candidate networks.

Step 3: Attract and select candidates

At the recruitment phase, look beyond formal qualifications. Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability often predict long-term success better than technical proficiency alone. Selection should be guided by potential rather than just past credentials. This means combining competency-based assessments with structured interviews that evaluate core attributes such as motivation to learn, ability to work in teams, and resilience.

Companies have reported success in integrating scenario-based tasks into their recruitment process to assess problem-solving and learning agility, rather than relying solely on academic background.²¹ Similarly, OECD's 'skills-first' approach recommends skills-based hiring to broaden access to talented non-traditional candidates.²²

» *Many employers source candidates by working directly with schools, vocational institutions, and youth employment programs.* »

Many employers source candidates by working directly with schools, vocational institutions, and youth employment programs, while others partner with NGOs to reach non-traditional talent pools, including immigrants, refugees, and people with disabilities. Posting apprenticeship opportunities on sector-specific job boards, engaging in career fairs, and using targeted social media campaigns can further expand reach and lower hiring costs.

²¹ [Putting Skills First: Opportunities for Building Efficient and Equitable Labour Markets](#), The World Economic Forum

²² [Empowering the Workforce in the Context of a Skills-First Approach](#), OECD



Step 4: Design competency-based assessments

Select or build assessment tools (e.g., work-sample projects, job simulations, or validated AI-driven games) that mirror on-the-job tasks and focus on core competencies rather than credentials. Develop clear scoring rubrics, train assessors on consistent evaluation criteria, and, when possible, use blinded review (e.g., anonymized submissions) to reduce unconscious bias. Pilot your assessments with a small and diverse group to calibrate difficulty, timing, and scoring thresholds before full rollout.

Step 5: Ensure accessibility and accommodations

Conduct an accessibility audit of all online recruitment materials and platforms against national and international standards, fixing issues like low-contrast text or unlabeled form fields. Develop a clear Reasonable Accommodations Policy that explains how applicants can request adjustments like extra testing time, screen-reader compatible documents, or in-person interview support, and designate a single point of contact. Train recruiters and hiring managers on best practices to ensure requests are handled swiftly and sensitively to reduce candidate anxiety.

Step 6: Monitor, report, and improve

Track application metrics (stats, completes), assess pass-rates by demographic, as well as monitor acceptance rates across different groups, and review them frequently to identify friction points. Make sure to solicit anonymous candidate feedback on experience, process clarity, tool usability, and fairness. Use these insights to adjust outreach channels that underperform, refine assessment rubrics, and revise accommodation procedures that cause delays.



Member Spotlight: Bühler

Bühler has increased female participation in mechatronics, a male-dominated field, through targeted interventions such as adapting facilities for women, providing dedicated female trainers and officers, offering mentorships, and providing flexibility to accommodate familial responsibilities. One success story is that of Vijayalakshmi, a young woman from a rural village in Karnataka who, after completing her ITI certification in Electrical Engineering, relocated to Bengaluru for Bühler Academy's Electrician apprenticeship. Despite the challenges of being one of the few women in the cohort, Vijayalakshmi now mentors new female apprentices, advocating for greater inclusivity in technical roles. Her pathway has inspired other young women from her village to pursue similar opportunities, gradually shifting community perceptions.



Member Spotlight: L'Oréal

As part of its L'Oréal for Youth (L4Y) commitment, the company's apprenticeship program in France forges pathways to employment accessible to diverse and underrepresented groups, including refugees and persons with disabilities. Through partnerships with 80 schools and 16 NGOs, L'Oréal actively recruits apprentices who may otherwise face limiting barriers to entry. Apprenticeships not only support employability but also make education more affordable to many students.

L'Oréal's model illustrates how companies can leverage apprenticeships as a bridge between education, work, and empowerment while cultivating loyal and high-performing talent.



Checklist for Phase 4

Set diversity and inclusion objectives

- Review company's ESG/diversity goals and align apprenticeship objective accordingly
- Compare current workforce/apprentice demographics against local labor market data
- Identify underrepresented groups relevant to your sector (e.g., women in STEM)
- Set measurable targets

Attract and select candidates

- Use inclusive job descriptions (jargon-free, skills-focused, and accessible)
- Advertise via sector-specific platforms, career fairs, social media, and partner networks
- Assess candidates for soft skills using structured interviews and/or scenario-based tasks

Drive partner engagement

- Identify potential outreach partners using national or local databases
- Prepare a concise ask with objectives, cohort size, and inclusion targets
- Schedule information sessions with potential partners
- Partner with local schools, vocational training providers, and pre-apprenticeship programs
- Build relationships with NGOs or community organizations serving target groups

Introduce competency-based assessments

- Develop or adapt projects, simulations, or task-based assessments
- Create clear scoring rubrics and train assessors
- Use blinded review methods where possible to reduce bias
- Pilot the assessment with a small group before launch

Accessibility and accommodations

- Create and socialize reasonable accommodations policy
- Train recruiters, hiring managers, and mentors on accommodation practices
- Assign contact point for accommodation requests

Monitor, report, and improve

- Track recruitment metrics (e.g., applications, pass rates, offers, acceptances) by demographic group
- Collect anonymous candidate and apprentice feedback
- Adjust outreach channels, assessments, and processes based on findings
- Address discriminatory practices promptly and efficiently



Additional resources

- **Quality Apprenticeships and people with disabilities**: This ILO guidance provides information on promoting inclusion in apprenticeships
- **Engaging employers in quality apprenticeships – making it happen locally**: OECD guidance on employer engagement in apprenticeships
- **Closing the Skills Gaps: Inclusive Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning**: The GAN/IOE Inclusive Apprenticeships Factsheet offers practical advice for businesses on inclusive apprenticeship models.
- **Quick Guide: Resources for Creating Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning Environments for People with Disabilities**: The US DOL Inclusive Apprenticeships Quick Guide offers strategies for designing and running inclusive apprenticeships.
- **Promoting Diversity and Inclusion Through Workplace Adjustments**: An ILO report explores approaches that ensure equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups.
- **Outreach Tool**: A recruitment and outreach tool by the US DOL for equal employment opportunities in apprenticeships.
- **Empowering the Workforce in the Context of a Skills-First Approach**: This OECD Skills-first report examines trends in moving towards skills-based hiring and their implications for apprenticeship.
- **WCAG 2 Overview**: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for ensuring digital accessibility in recruitment and training platforms.
- **Reasonable accommodation**: EU-based guidance for reasonable accommodations to ensure equal treatment in the workplace.



Phase 5: Measuring Success and Continuous Improvement

Embedding a continuous quality improvement cycle ensures that apprenticeship programs remain responsive, efficient, and aligned with evolving business needs.

To do this, define a set of KPIs, such as completion and conversion rates, time-to-competency, apprentice retention, and post-graduation career progression. Apprenticeship KPIs can also be linked directly to the KPIs of program requirements for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives (see Phase 4), compulsory statutes in some country contexts, and/or KPI performance in the departments where apprentices are hired.

Ideally, data collection on apprenticeship programs should be done on a systematic basis, across all departments and markets where your company has implemented apprenticeship programs. Almost all the companies surveyed for this guide did not yet have systematic data collection for apprenticeship programs in place; however, this is the single most defining factor in your company's success in tracking and communicating the ROI of your program. Calculating the ROI for your program will enable you to improve, scale, and allocate resources to apprenticeships once the value is widely known within your company and the communities where it operates.

Documenting progress, major insights, decisions, and resources allocated at every step should ensure the continued support, improvement, and scalability of your program. This requires data showing outcomes across HR and regional departments, ideally through a systematic reporting and tracking system. Ongoing feedback loops through surveys and regular check-ins with apprentices, managers, and executive leadership will help address challenges and adapt the program as needed.

While data and numbers drive decisions, delivering a narrative and storytelling component of the lives of those positively impacted has an immeasurable effect that can influence company culture, community engagement, and employer branding. With the broader public and newer generations more concerned about how ESG is embedded in company practices, communicating the stories of apprentices skilled in future-ready industries and building individual careers has a multiplier effect for the company and the communities that surround them. This increases the public's perception of the company while adding a competitive advantage. Choosing the metrics that matter will require understanding what is important to your business and senior leadership.



Step 1: Define KPIs

Start by identifying a concise set of four to six indicators that reflect strategic goals and resource constraints. Commonly used, high-impact KPIs or success metrics include:²³

- Completion rate: percentage of apprentices who finish the program
- Conversion rate: share of completers offered permanent roles
- Time-to-competency: average weeks to reach proficiency benchmarks
- Retention at six to 12 months: post-graduation retention rates
- Cost efficiencies from reduced external hiring
- Post-graduation progression: promotions and skill-up trajectories within two years
- Performance rate: can be linked to the department KPIs where apprentices have been hired
- Skills attained and percentage of skills adapted to future-ready job roles
- Client satisfaction rates in the departments where apprentices were trained

Other metrics that are also important for long-term sustainability, improved brand awareness, and overall quality of the apprenticeship program can include:

- Accessibility of the program: intentional and proactive recruitment strategies targeting underrepresented groups in certain geographies and sectors
- Mentorship component: structured and guaranteed guidance throughout the program ensures longer-term relationship building and strengthens company culture and innovation
- Cross-functional, transferable soft skills attained, including adaptability, critical thinking, leadership, and collaboration
- Engagement and satisfaction rates of apprentices
- Collaboration and partnerships with external stakeholders: government bodies, educational and training institutions, intermediaries, industry groups, NGOs
- Contributions to ESG and diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives

Map these metrics against strategic objectives like target pipeline growth or cost savings to secure executive buy-in.

²³ [*Impact of apprenticeships on individuals and firms: Lessons for evaluating Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland*](#), OECD



Step 2: Build a tracking approach

This step focuses on building a system to collect data, monitor, and report. Effective monitoring begins by selecting a tracking method that fits the scale and resources of a company. Dedicated apprenticeship management platforms can be leveraged to automate on-the-job logs, competency assessments, and compliance, reducing administrative load. If budgets are lean, low-cost tools like Google Sheets or Excel can capture progress, completion rates, and mentor feedback through simple tools such as surveys.

Whichever tool is used, a data steward (often the program coordinator or manager) should be appointed to validate entries, resolve gaps, and run simple reports. These routine data insights empower early interventions, and organizations with systemic monitoring report higher apprenticeship success rates.²⁴

Step 3: Collect data routinely

Embed data collection within existing workflows: have mentors record competency milestones in a tracker at the end of weekly check-ins, ask apprentices to self-report progression against skills rubrics during group huddles, and use a brief post-session survey (paper or online) to capture apprentice satisfaction and qualitative feedback on training and mentorship. Some companies collect data and report on apprentice performance as part of their educational requirements with the schools and institutions they partner with. This type of approach avoids the need for complex learning management system integrations while maintaining timely visibility into program health.

Step 4: Performance reviews and improvements

Schedule simple recurring review meetings with the core team (HR, learning and development, trainers), circulating information on trends, bottlenecks, and outliers beforehand. Use a 'balanced scorecard' format: list each KPI, current vs target value, recent changes, and planned actions. Make sure that apprentice reviews are also considered. Document decisions and assign owners in a shared action log.

²⁴ [Module 4: ILO Toolkit for Quality Apprenticeships Volume 2: Guide for Practitioners Organizing apprenticeship training](#), ILO



Step 5: Communicate success and build momentum

Ensuring that your programs are long-term and sustainable requires communicating success stories, which is only possible through KPIs and narrative stories to convince leadership of the program's value to the company and community. When changes are needed to adapt apprenticeship programs to industry transformations, documenting new skill needs and leveraging existing networks and partnerships to signal shifting needs to local policymakers and schools will ensure an ongoing ecosystem more readily adapted to transformations.

Creating internal communication campaigns to increase the visibility and importance of your apprenticeship program will ensure buy-in at several levels of the company. **GAN Global Board Members**, for example, are excellent advocates for apprenticeships both internally and in national and international fora. Engaging senior leaders as advocates within your company will ensure that apprenticeship programs are understood as a strategic business imperative.

Communicating with your external partners on the value of your apprenticeship program will, in addition, increase your company's reputation. A combination of data and figures collected from your program, along with personal narratives, will enhance your brand awareness as a responsible and invested employer.

» *Ensuring that your programs are long-term and sustainable requires communicating success stories.* »



L'ORÉAL

Member Spotlight: L'Oréal

L'Oréal's apprenticeship programs demonstrate how success can be measured not only through retention rates but also by strengthening employer branding and community partnerships. With nearly 1,000 apprentices enrolled in France each year, 80% of the company's entry-level positions are filled by apprentices and trainees, clearly showcasing the impact these programs have on long-term talent pipelines.

Through these programs, L'Oréal reinforces diversity and its reputation as a strong employer. Managers are trained as mentors, ensuring knowledge is passed from one generation to another. This visibility, combined with intergenerational benefits, boosts brand perception, attracts candidates, and signals to external stakeholders and partners the value of investing in apprenticeships and L'Oréal's commitment. In fact, the company has been named one of France's most preferred employers for apprentices.

Structured onboarding, engagement events, and celebratory offboarding moments, publicly showcased on social and traditional media, help communicate success in ways that reinforce both internal and external support for apprenticeships and other work-based learning programs.



Member Spotlight: Adaptive Construction Solutions (ACS)

Operating across the US energy, construction, and manufacturing sectors, ACS reports a return of \$1.44 USD for every dollar invested in its registered apprenticeship programs. Its dual focus on social impact and business performance, with training for over 5,600 apprentices - many of whom are veterans or from disadvantaged backgrounds - demonstrates that impact and profitability are not mutually exclusive. ACS's systematic tracking of completion, retention, and wage progression also provides a model for how businesses can quantify both economic and social ROI through apprenticeships.



Checklist for Phase 5

Define and align core KPIs

- Select a concise set of four to six KPIs linked to business strategy and resources
- Include diversity, equity, and inclusion metrics
- Align apprenticeship KPIs with departmental KPIs, ESG/diversity, equity, and inclusion objectives, and national compliance requirements

Build a tracking approach

- Select a monitoring tool appropriate for company scale
- Build compliance features into tracking system (alerts for working hours, progression milestones)
- Establish data collection across all regions and departments with apprentices to strengthen reporting and ROI calculations
- Ensure tracking captures demographics, outcomes, and satisfaction rates to inform equity and quality

Collect data routinely

- Integrate data collection into weekly mentor check-ins, apprentice self-assessments, and post-training surveys
- Use surveys and feedback loops to monitor apprentices' well-being, inclusion, and satisfaction
- Collect quantitative and qualitative data

Conduct performance review and improvements

- Hold regular review meetings with HR and trainers
- Ensure apprentices' voices are represented in reviews
- Document insights, resource allocations, and action items in a shared system for accountability
- Pilot small-scale program adjustments and assess outcomes before wider roll-out
- Update apprenticeship policies and practices regularly to remain aligned with emerging technologies, business priorities, and evolving labor market needs

Communicate success and build momentum

- Develop internal communication campaigns to secure ongoing buy-in
- Share results and success stories with internal stakeholders, external partners, industry bodies, and policymakers to signal the value of apprenticeships, build company culture, and strengthen external reputation
- Engage senior leaders as visible champions of the program to reinforce apprenticeships as a strategic business priority



Additional resources

- **Impact of apprenticeships on individuals and firms:** An OECD Impact of Apprenticeships Study analyzes how apprenticeships affect individuals' careers and companies' performance.
- **Seven Questions about Apprenticeships:** A key questions and evidence guide on apprenticeship evaluation by the OECD.
- **Tools: Monitoring, assessment and certification:** ILO tools for monitoring progress, assessing apprentices, and certifying outcomes.
- **Vocational Apprenticeship Program Manual:** A US state-level manual with processes for evaluating and managing apprenticeship programs.
- **The WPI Playbook: How Business-Education Partnerships Prepare Tomorrow's Talent:** A Business-Roundtable Playbook on How Business-Education Partnerships Prepare Tomorrow's Talent



3. Calculating the Return on Investment for Apprenticeships



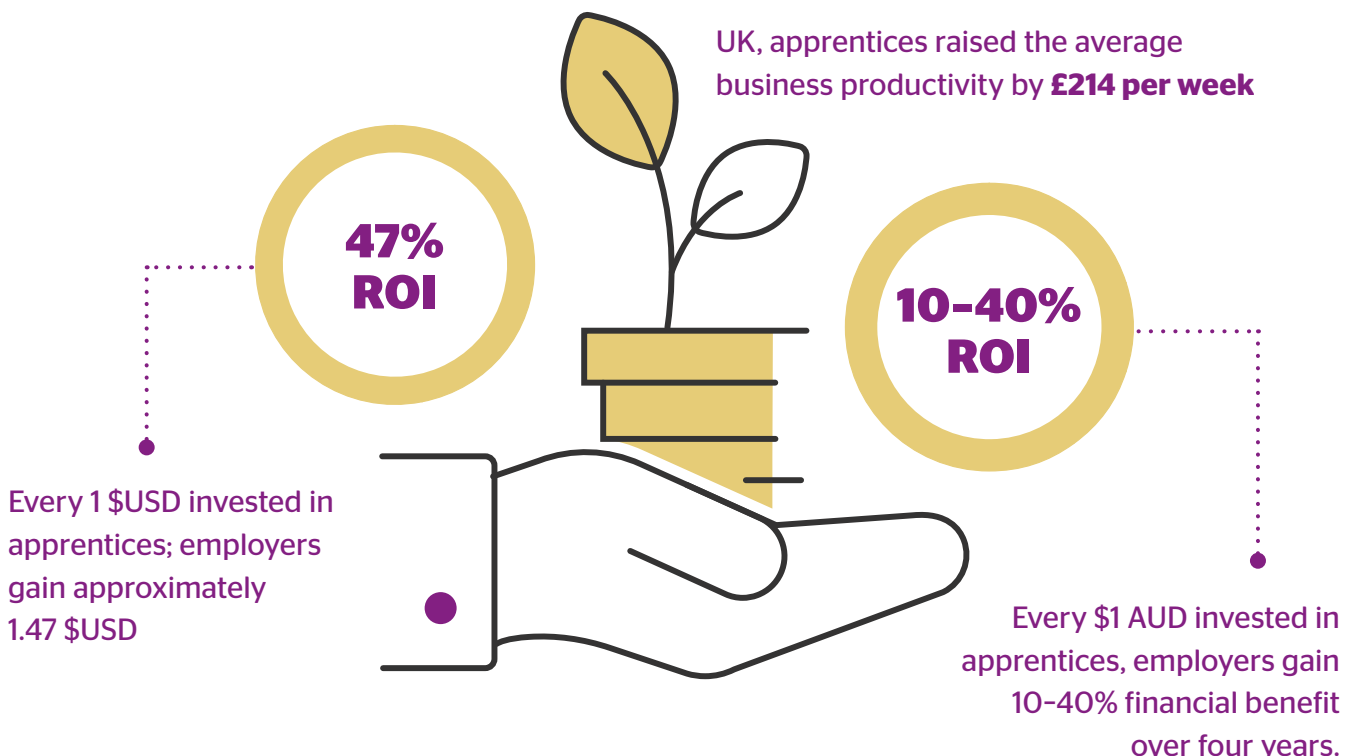


Measuring Return on Investment

For companies, the Return on Investment (ROI) of apprenticeships can effectively demonstrate that they are not just a social good but a strategic business asset.

A well-structured ROI framework provides evidence for leadership buy-in and long-term resource allocation, helps identify which programs deliver the strongest pipeline and productivity impact, and strengthens your company's positioning as an employer of choice and a contributor to ESG and diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.

Globally, apprenticeships consistently show strong ROI. The latest research in the US shows an increasing ROI for employers, with an average return of 47%.²⁵ According to research by GAN Australia, for every \$1 AUD spent on supporting apprentices over four years, the employer receives a financial benefit of between 10% and 40%, and a four-year apprenticeship takes 1.6 to 2.6 years to be financially beneficial to the business.²⁶ In the UK, apprentices raised the average business productivity by £214 per week, leading to higher profits, improved products, and better wages.²⁷ In India, benefits have been shown to outweigh program costs, especially when apprentices are retained.²⁸



²⁵ [Return on Investment \(ROI\) Calculator](#), US Department of Commerce

²⁶ [Apprenticeships Deliver Strong Returns - But Employers Need Greater Early Support](#), GAN Australia

²⁷ [The Impact of Apprenticeships](#), CEBR

²⁸ [Cost-benefit structure of Quality Apprenticeships](#), ILO



Calculating the Return on Investment for Apprenticeships

Of the 11 companies surveyed in 13 different countries for this guide, there are few examples of a straightforward and systematic method of calculating the ROI. Almost all the companies surveyed pointed to challenges in collecting data; however, they justified the programs for their long-term benefits. The last phase of this guide walks you through building a systematic and routine data collection approach, monitoring success metrics and KPIs, and collecting success stories.

» *Many companies use a set of success metrics, which we have outlined in this guide.* »

To effectively calculate the ROI, first, we need to start with systematic and coordinated data collection.²⁹ Although we recognize that apprenticeship programs need to be customized and adapted depending on the country context and industry, especially for large companies, a standardized process in data collection would help to better understand the value of your program across business lines and markets. Many companies use a set of success metrics, which we have outlined in this guide.

This section attempts to capture ROI and leverage success metrics, which for many companies include a combination of societal and employer branding benefits. The value can be immeasurable, yet it provides the company with a competitive advantage in terms of innovation and long-term sustainability.

As noted by Accenture in its 2017 Jobs Now report with GAN Global, the Swiss American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) and ETH Zurich, “Apprenticeships can serve as a trial period for companies. If an apprentice is hired after completion, the employer already knows him/her and knows he/she is fit for the position, which saves additional recruitment costs. Cases where an apprentice might not be retained must not be seen as a failure. Companies and mentors gain value in learning about new technologies and in keeping contact with the next generation.”

Offering apprenticeships has a positive influence on society’s perception of the company and creates other external recruitment opportunities. As Dr. Uschi Backes-Gellner explains, “offering apprenticeships is always a positive way to improve a company’s reputation and is indicative of a positive work culture.”³⁰

²⁹ *A framework to better measure the return on investment from TVET: A UNESCO-UNEVOC and NCVER research project initiative*, Jane Schueler, TeaHQ John Stanwick and Phil Loveder, National Centre for Vocational Education Research

³⁰ *Jobs Now: Swiss-Style Vocational Education and Training, Voices from Companies, Governors and CEOs*, Accenture, the Swiss American Chamber of Commerce, GAN Global and ETH Zurich/KOF Swiss Economic Institute



Before Using the Calculator

This **ROI calculator** was created to adapt to different companies, sizes, job roles, and sector realities. As such, if not applicable, it is not necessary to fill in all fields for all job roles which your apprenticeship programs cover. It is recommended to start with one occupation first.

However, the more data you can collect and input, the more precise the ROI calculation will be. Additionally, this calculator can be used to estimate costs and build a budget for those looking to set up or grow their apprenticeship programs. While it can be used to measure the aggregate ROI of all WBL programs in your company, our corporate members have found that calculating the ROI of each program individually yields better insights. The same applies to the different markets you may operate in.

» *The ROI calculator is designed to consider any national or local level contexts.* »

Due to the thoroughness of the data, this exercise may also require you to collect data from other departments within your company; nonetheless, as mentioned in Phase 5 of our Quality Apprenticeships in Action Guide, working across departments and markets to collect such data and success stories of apprenticeship programs in your company can be crucial to its long-term success and will inform decision-making at the highest levels. Externally, collecting ROI data on apprenticeships can help influence government policies and convince other companies in your industry to adopt apprenticeship programs. It can also be used to plan future apprentice cohort cycles and help you decide which entry-level positions can potentially take on apprentices. The **ROI calculator** is designed to consider any national or local level contexts. In the Benefits worksheet, Row C mentions incentives from government or obligations that may or may not apply to your context.



Simplified ROI Calculation



Step 1: Identify costs (wages, training, administrative expenses, materials)



Step 2: Identify benefits (productivity gains, retention rates, foregone attraction and hiring costs)



Step 3: Build your data collection system and capture qualitative data



Step 4: Use GAN's ROI calculator



Step 5: Report and communicate

Step 1: Identify costs

Break down all direct and indirect costs. Typical categories include:

Fixed costs

These include any costs that do not vary based on the number of apprentices you have, such as curriculum development, overhead, classroom space, etc. This should essentially represent the cost of setting up the program.

Wages and benefits

Salaries paid to apprentices, plus entitlements (vacation, sick leave, insurance, social security, pensions, bonuses, stipends, scholarship opportunities, etc.).

- › **How to measure:** track apprentice payroll records and benefits packages, record gross wages and employer contributions to determine wage and benefits costs per apprentice. Factor in costs that may possibly be offset by the reduction of staff overtime costs. For example, employers have reported that overtime costs from other employees were reduced when apprentices took on the extra work.³¹

³¹ *The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective*, Case Western Reserve University and the US Department of Commerce



Calculating the Return on Investment for Apprenticeships

Training expenses

Tuition or school fees, certification costs, books, uniforms, tools, safety equipment, and software licenses.

- › **How to measure:** Collect invoices from training providers, internal budget lines for training materials, and IT/equipment allocations.

Trainer and mentor time

The proportion of time skilled employees dedicate to coaching, supervising, and assessing apprentices (e.g., Bühler reports 10% of trainer time, ≈ \$7,800 USD/year). It is usually calculated as 5% to 15% of trainer/employee time.

- › **How to measure:** Estimate average hours per week spent monitoring and multiply by mentor's hourly wage. Use time-tracking sheets or supervisor logs to confirm.

Program administration and recruitment

HR and program staff time spent on recruitment, onboarding, compliance, tracking, and reporting.

- › **How to measure:** Track staff hours spent managing the apprenticeship program, then multiply by hourly rates.

Employer branding and outreach

Costs of open houses, school visits, advertising campaigns, community engagement events linked to apprenticeship promotion, platforms used to advertise positions, etc.

- › **How to measure:** Event budgets, marketing expenditure, staff time for outreach activities, etc.



Step 2: Identify Benefits

Productive output

Apprentices contribute to production and services, often becoming net positive from year two to three onwards (according to many of our survey respondents). The value of output can also be attributed to graduate apprentices and a reduction in errors.³²

- › **How to measure:** Compare apprentice productivity (units, service hours, client projects) with wage costs. Estimate the monetary value of their output (e.g., average billing rate x hours worked).

Recruitment and training savings

Reduced reliance on external recruitment and training agencies, shorter hiring times, and known candidate quality.

- › **How to measure:** Compare average recruiting costs for external hires (ads, agency fees, onboarding costs) with the cost of hiring apprentices who transition internally and compute the difference. Compare average training costs for programs that may have been created for apprentice cohorts, e.g., online academies with individual and bespoke training.

Retention and loyalty

Apprentices tend to stay with the company longer than lateral hires, reducing costly turnover.

- › **How to measure:** Track retention rates of apprentices vs non-apprentices over one to three years. Estimate replacement costs saved (typically 20% to 30% of annual salary per employee, but higher in technical roles).

Time-to-competency

Apprentices reach full productivity faster than external hires who lack firm-specific training.

- › **How to measure:** Track average weeks/months to proficiency for former apprentices who transition into full-time positions vs external hires. Consider the reduced training time in cost savings.

³² [The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective](#), Case Western Reserve University and the US Department of Commerce



Calculating the Return on Investment for Apprenticeships

Government incentives and subsidies

Levies, wage subsidies, tax credits, or training grants offered to employers.

› **How to measure:** record all incentive receipts and calculate the net offset.

Compliance

When applicable, meeting statutory apprenticeship and youth employment obligations.

› **How to measure:** Calculate the cost of fines avoided.

Overall, the costs associated with apprenticeships are relatively straightforward to measure using payroll and finance data. Benefits, on the other hand, tend to require a mix of quantitative tracking (productivity, retention, cost savings) and qualitative insights (innovation, branding, diversity, equity and inclusion, ESG, and task distribution optimization, allowing more senior employees to be more efficient once apprentices can take on more responsibility). A strong ROI framework captures all these variables to present a full business case. Below you will find more details on the types of qualitative data you can focus on strengthening your ROI.

» Overall, the costs associated with apprenticeships are relatively straightforward to measure using payroll and finance data. »



Step 3: Collect Data

Start small but be systematic. GAN member companies surveyed noted the lack of routine data collection as the biggest barrier to calculating ROI. Track the following:

- Apprentice entry, completion, conversion to hire
- Wage, benefits, tuition, training material costs
- Mentor/trainer hours
- Apprentice productivity/output data: units, hours, client satisfaction
- Recruitment costs avoided (ads, fees, time-to-fill)
- Incentives received (tax credits, subsidies, grants)

While quantitative data is essential in calculating the ROI of apprenticeships, not all benefits fit into a spreadsheet. Anecdotal and qualitative data complement financial ROI in determining the impact of apprenticeship programs on the company beyond its bottom line. The qualitative benefits that our members reported on include:

- Higher retention rates compared to external hires
- Training optimization (programs specifically for cohorts)
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion and ESG metrics (demographics of cohorts, progression)
- Success stories of apprentices moving into managerial, leadership, and training roles
- Managers offered more leadership opportunities when training apprentices
- Evidence of improved company culture, teamwork, employee loyalty, and mentorship
- Positive employer branding impact (school partnerships, media visibility, etc.)
- Innovation and knowledge transfer through apprentices' fresh perspectives, reverse mentoring, and digital-native skills
- Skills attained that are not provided by the educational system
- Contribution to societal impact: social mobility, youth employment, reduced skills gaps, inclusion of underrepresented groups, and ESG

These impacts can serve to fortify your business case even if they are not fully monetized.



Step 4: Use GAN's ROI Calculator

Through a thorough review of available resources on the ROI of apprenticeships for companies, GAN Global identified the [US Department of Commerce's ROI calculator](#) as the most targeted and practical for business use.³³ This calculator was a follow-up to the 2016 report *The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective*, produced in partnership with Case Western Reserve University.³⁴ The [GAN ROI calculator](#), modified to include elements identified by our member companies as essential for this calculation, aims to help employers estimate the potential ROI from their existing or projected apprenticeship program. The spreadsheets include instructions to help the user calculate the monetary value of apprenticeships within their company. within their company.

Step 5: Report and Communicate

It is crucial to translate your ROI findings by packaging the results for leadership and key stakeholders. This can be done through a one-page summary outlining the ROI in percentage or in relation to the investment made, the payback period, and the net benefit per apprentice. KPI panels, showcasing completion rates, conversion rates, retention, and time-to-competency insights, are also a great way to display key information. Finally, presenting apprentice journeys in storytelling format helps bring the numbers to life.

» *It is crucial to translate your ROI findings by packaging the results for leadership and key stakeholders.* »

³³ [Apprenticeship Return on Investment Calculator](#), US Department of Commerce, 2016

³⁴ [The Benefits and Costs of Apprenticeship: A Business Perspective](#), US Department of Commerce and Case Western Reserve University, 2016



4. Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

The following case studies exemplify how businesses can be transformed when apprenticeship meets quality standards. Aside from demonstrating their commitment towards quality apprenticeships, the examples provided by GAN Global members offer insights into why companies implemented these programs and how they have benefited from them. In addition, the examples show how companies have leveraged partnerships, contributed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and ensured long-term talent pipelines by developing the skills needed to ensure a future-ready workforce.





Accenture

Accenture is a global professional services company with more than 770,000 employees across the Americas, Europe, and Asia Pacific. With expertise spanning strategy, consulting, technology, and operations, Accenture partners with leading organizations worldwide to deliver innovation and transformation at scale. Apprenticeships form a key part of Accenture's workforce strategy. Since launching its US and Canada apprenticeship program in 2016, the company has created more than 2,500 opportunities. The program provides pathways into technology and business careers for individuals without a four-year degree, while advancing inclusion and workforce development in the communities where it operates.

Benefits

- Access to a highly motivated and productive talent pool that demonstrates strong retention compared to traditional sources. In the US, 2,500 apprentices are hired directly into entry-level positions, according to Accenture CEO Julie Sweet.³⁶
- Ability to source talent all year long rather than relying on cyclical university recruitment.
- Stronger alignment of apprentices' skills with business needs.
- Ability to drive workforce development and economic opportunities where we work and live, including reskilling for people whose jobs are disrupted by technology-led innovation.
- Ability to build deeper relationships with clients and the community.

Partnerships

Accenture collaborates with community colleges, certificate programs, nonprofits, and workforce organizations to bring untapped talent through its apprenticeship programs.

In the US, partnerships with organizations such as PeopleShores and Per Scholas have expanded access to tech career opportunities, including the launch of Tech Talent Hubs in Florida, New York, and Washington, D.C.

What works well

Accenture's apprenticeship programs are an earn-and-learn model, typically lasting 12 months, with competitive pay and benefits. Apprentices receive mentorship, shadowing opportunities, and structured feedback, while also being a part of a cohort that provides peer support and helps their integration into Accenture's corporate culture. Cohort-based learning has proven particularly effective, creating a sense of belonging and contributing to retention. Apprentices are employees from day one, with access to the company's training programs and benefits. Since 2016, a majority of apprentices have transitioned into full-time roles after program completion, making apprenticeships an integral part of the company's long-term recruitment system.

³⁶ *AI was supposed to kill consulting. Instead, Julie Sweet has positioned Accenture to cash in.* Fortune



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Equality and diversity

Accenture's apprenticeship programs lead to stronger workforce development and economic opportunities in underserved communities, contributing to local livelihoods and inclusion. These programs allow Accenture to form deeper relationships with clients and communities by demonstrating leadership in inclusive hiring. Apprenticeships expand access to career opportunities by prioritizing skills over formal degrees and removing barriers that often exclude non-traditional candidates.

These apprenticeships provide equitable entry to well-paid jobs with benefits and career progression, particularly for individuals without a four-year degree, as well as those needing reskilling and upskilling after technology-led disruption. From day one, apprentices are Accenture employees with fair pay, benefits, and access to employee resource groups, fostering integration and belonging. These programs also create pathways in underserved communities, such as the Bronx, Tampa, and Washington, D.C.'s Ward 8, advancing social mobility and reinforcing Accenture's commitment to inclusive growth and community empowerment

Skills acquired

- Technology skills in areas including application development, cybersecurity, data engineering, cloud computing, and platform engineering
- Professional and workplace skills, including communication, self-organization, adaptability, and teamwork
- Business skills through exposure to client-facing environments and project-based learning
- Future-ready skills such as problem-solving and continuous learning, reinforced by structured mentorship and performance feedback.





Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Advice to others

- **Align apprenticeship roles with future talent needs** and make sure they are embedded into hiring plans and recruiting practices.
- **Secure C-suite backing** and reinforce it through mentorship, shadowing, and a cohort structure that builds a strong sense of belonging.
- **Collaborate** with educational institutions, nonprofits, and workforce organizations to source high-potential candidates.
- **Provide wraparound support** to fortify your program.
- **Invest in mentorship and feedback** mechanisms to ensure apprentices succeed and remain engaged long-term.
- Removing degree requirements requires **organizational culture change** and dedicated support of hiring managers and employees to adapt to new ways of evaluating talent.



“ At Accenture, we believe one of the most successful early career paths to skills-based hiring is apprenticeships – a combination of structured training, on-the-job learning, and mentorship with a path to an ongoing career. Our apprenticeships have delivered deep impact and countless ripples of change to our own company and to the communities where we live and work. ”

Marc van der Net, Strategic and Consulting Lead, Accenture Gallia



ACS

Adaptive Construction Solutions (ACS) is a US-based intermediary supporting employers in the energy, construction, and manufacturing sectors to expand talent pipelines through registered apprenticeships. It offers one of the largest apprenticeship programs in the US for veterans and other underrepresented groups. As GAN Global's only small- to medium-sized member with a workforce of 110 employees, ACS has placed over 5,600 apprentices since its founding in 2016. Its model leverages both public and private resources to support employers in recruiting, training, and retraining apprentices. By 2029, ACS aims to increase its apprentice count to 10,000.

Partnerships

Aside from training and placing apprentices, ACS also leverages its support and partnerships with the government to arrange workforce funding and manage programs. It partners closely with the US Department of Labor and leverages government resources to co-invest with employers seeking to build and expand apprenticeship programs. Recognizing that one of the main challenges in implementing apprenticeship programs is to convince employers of its value, ACS established employer networks to promote best practices and innovations, as well as demonstrate tangible results.

What works well

ACS' business model first addressed the steel industry in Texas, which faced significant challenges in finding talent to complete projects. By connecting veterans with apprenticeship employment, ACS provides immediate solutions to pressing workforce and social needs. The model has since expanded into energy, telecommunications, and other construction subsectors.

Outcomes are strong, with ACS calculating an ROI of \$1.44 USD for every \$1 USD, and completion and retention rates steadily staying above the national average. Many apprentices progress into certified journey workers, supervisors, and management roles, directly contributing to employers' productivity and long-term talent pipelines. As an intermediary, ACS provides a real service to their clients, including helping companies meet hiring quotas for underserved groups, reducing recruitment costs, improving productivity, and lowering turnover.





Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Equality and diversity

ACS designs its program to include underrepresented groups such as veterans, women, individuals with disabilities, and the homeless population. By addressing systemic barriers to employment, ACS enables access to quality jobs in the construction and energy sectors.

Skills acquired

Through ACS programs, apprentices develop job-specific competencies for the construction and energy sectors. This includes safety expertise, attention to detail, effective communication, and leadership. These skills can equip apprentices to advance to supervisory and management roles.

Advice to Others

Developing an apprenticeship program requires **patience and commitment**, as skills development and mastery do not happen overnight. Employers should invest the **time and resources** to **cultivate specialized talent** to support their business model, thus ensuring that the skills they need, often not common in the marketplace, are met. ACS emphasizes that the investment pays off: apprenticeships empower employers to build sustainable, skilled, and loyal workforces while increasing productivity.



“ Apprenticeships are essential to shaping the future of work. The rise of AI-driven data center roles in automation, energy optimization, and predictive maintenance, for instance, presents a unique chance to expand U.S. apprenticeship programs. By aligning workforce policies with these emerging demands, we can open pathways into high-growth careers while bolstering America’s competitiveness in advanced technology infrastructure. ”

Dr. Mardy Leathers, Vice President, Adaptive Construction Solutions.



The Adecco Group

The Adecco Group is the world's leading talent advisory and solutions company. In Switzerland, its programs in Lausanne are in accordance with federal guidelines. Commercial apprenticeships are a three-year program where apprentices have the opportunity to work in six departments, as well as one branch based at HQ, where they receive on-the-job supervision from their managers. Weekly follow-up and biannual assessments are carried out by the in-company trainer who has received specific certification for this purpose. Some branches also host apprentices directly, training them in temporary and placement activities.

Benefits

- Apprentices contribute directly to business operations and are entrusted with real tasks, becoming fully operational in the departments and branches that host them.
- The Adecco Group's structured pathway across multiple departments (finance, legal, HR, etc.) allows apprentices to refine their career interests and develop versatile skills.
- Access to the company's onboarding program and internal training catalog ensures parity with other employees and accelerates integration.
- Apprentices receive regular monitoring, tailor-made support, and feedback, which strengthens their confidence and productivity.
- Some apprentices demonstrate long-term loyalty. One employee, for example, started as an apprentice over 20 years ago and is now an Area Manager.
- Adecco sees apprenticeship as part of its purpose to "make the future work for everyone," contributing to Switzerland's tradition of dual training while also enhancing employer branding.

Partnerships

Adecco collaborates with the Lausanne Professional Business School and the State's education system to deliver a three-year certified vocational training program (commercial employee apprenticeship). These partnerships make sure apprentices meet national qualification standards and provide support by combining company-based training with formal education.

What works well

Adecco's program stands out for its highly structured training pathway. Apprentices rotate through six departments and one branch, gaining a comprehensive view of the company's operations. A certified in-company trainer carefully monitors progress with regular follow-ups and biannual assessments. Apprentices benefit from access to the same learning and development resources as permanent staff, while also being exposed to Adecco's innovative practices in areas like digitalization and inclusion. This combination makes apprentices quickly operational, prepared for diverse business and administrative jobs, as well as confident about their future career direction.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Equality and diversity

The program primarily targets young people completing their Swiss Federal Certificate of Competence (CFC) qualifications, but by embedding them into different branches and exposing them to varied roles, Adecco broadens apprentices' perspectives on the job market and contributes to the company's wider purpose of creating inclusive opportunities for youth.

Skills acquired

- Finance, legal, HR, and placement activities
- Confidence in performing real tasks and refining career preferences
- Motivation, interpersonal communication, and adaptability are often key selection criteria in the absence of prior work experience
- Exposure to Adecco's innovation in digitalization, inclusion, and workforce solutions, offering apprentices a broader perspective beyond traditional administrative roles

Advice to others

- Establish a **precise and detailed program** for learning.
- **Appoint committed professionals** to ensure apprentices receive regular support, mentoring, and feedback.
- Recognize that selecting apprentices can be challenging since candidates often lack prior professional experience; therefore, consider focusing on **interpersonal skills and motivation** as the key indicators of potential.
- **Prioritize quality over scale** in securing enough time and resources for apprentices to ensure program effectiveness and longevity.



Bühler

After 160 years, Bühler remains a Swiss family enterprise with a remarkable global reach and impact in food processing and advanced materials. It engages around 600 apprentices globally across various countries, including Switzerland, South Africa, India, and the US. The programs are offered in occupations such as mechatronics, manufacturing, mechanical, electrical and food engineering and technology, as well as business.

Benefits

- Deep familiarity and alignment with Bühler's philosophy, learning to navigate and succeed in business with the company's signature approach.
- Motivated and engaged workforce with company specific knowledge and strong connections through a robust network.
- Great outreach and integration in the local community, leading to increased brand recognition and direct access to youth from local schools
- Sustainable talent pipeline for future career advancement
- Apprentices benefit from a robust network, facilitating strong connections throughout the company.

Partnerships

Bühler's apprenticeship programs are fortified through active partnerships with local high schools and educational institutions, bringing technical education closer to the community and raising awareness about career opportunities in advanced manufacturing. The company takes a hands-on approach to outreach by participating in career fairs, webinars, and workforce development events to highlight the value of apprenticeships to students, parents, and educators.

Bühler Minneapolis, for example, regularly hosts open houses, inviting students, teachers, and career counselors to experience its facilities, be exposed to advanced technology, and understand the meaningful work apprentices contribute to. Within the Swiss system, Bühler partners with the Association of the Swiss Mechanical and Electrical Engineering industries (Swissmem), several government bodies at the federal level

(e.g., State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation), and training and vocational institutions at the cantonal level. The blend of strategic partnerships, community engagement, and real-life models helps challenge outdated perceptions and attract the next generation of skilled workers.

What works well

One of the most effective aspects of Bühler's apprenticeship program is that apprentices gain a solid understanding of organizational structure and operations, both regionally and globally. They become well-versed in the company's core values - Trust, Ownership, and Passion - which are deeply embedded in the corporate culture. Apprentices become immersed in real projects and daily tasks from the very beginning of their experience, allowing them to learn by doing and build confidence as they tackle challenges head-on.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

A clear curriculum, combined with regular reviews and milestones, keeps apprentices on track while blending theoretical education with practical applications. Mentorship is another cornerstone of the program. Apprentices are paired with experienced colleagues who provide guidance, coaching, and encouragement. This mentorship system helps apprentices develop a strong and diverse network of colleagues across departments and locations, fostering collaboration and long-term connections.

Apprentices consistently express high appreciation for Bühler's investment in their growth, which strengthens their motivation and commitment to building a career within the company. Many apprentices secure permanent positions at the end of their program, emphasizing Bühler's strong career pipeline. Apprentices leave the program with technical skills, leadership qualities, and a clear sense of belonging, ready to contribute to Bühler's future and the broader economy.

Bühler's experience around the world highlights a key lesson: when the skills you need are not available in the labor market, apprenticeships can provide a sustainable solution by building talent internally. In the US, the program was launched to address shortages in customer and field service roles that require a rare blend of technical expertise and hands-on experience. Similarly, in India, an ambitious business plan and rapid growth in tech created a demand for specialized talent that the local market could not supply. By drawing on more than 100 years of apprenticeship experience, Bühler was able to develop tailored pipelines of skilled workers who are prepared to grow with the company.

Equality and diversity

Apprenticeship programs allow Bühler to proactively recruit and develop talent from underrepresented groups, such as women in engineering or youth from marginalized communities, aligning with corporate diversity and inclusion targets. In South Africa, half of the apprentice cohort are females in a traditionally male-dominated sector. In India, more efforts have been made to attract female candidates and apprentices from rural and economically disadvantaged communities.

In Switzerland, beyond providing training and employment opportunities to school leavers and youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET), Bühler's apprenticeship programs support adults seeking to retrain, upskill, or gain formal qualifications through shortened or adapted pathways. Recently, Bühler Switzerland welcomed Ukrainian refugees through an apprenticeship program designed to facilitate integration and provide them with valuable skills for the local job market.

Skills acquired

Bühler's apprenticeship programs are designed to build both the technical expertise and professional competencies needed to thrive in advanced manufacturing. Apprentices gain hands-on skills in machining, assembly, and maintenance of complex industrial systems, along with specialized knowledge in mechatronics, automation, electrical systems, and mechanical engineering. Training includes proficiency in CAD/CAM software, data analysis, lean manufacturing, and quality assurance, ensuring graduates can optimize processes and maintain the company's highest standards.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Beyond technical mastery, apprentices develop key workplace competencies such as teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and effective communication. They also strengthen leadership skills, customer relations, and time management.

Through these programs, Bühler addresses critical skills needs in automation, digitalization, technical maintenance, and data literacy while advancing diversity in engineering and technology roles. The company seeks to equip problem solvers and innovators who can adapt to emerging challenges and drive ongoing improvements in its products and processes.

Advice to others

- **Have a clear vision:** Link your apprenticeship activities to your company's broader strategy, so the program builds capabilities that directly support growth.
- **Start small, scale steadily:** Begin with a manageable number of apprentices and refine your approach using feedback from apprentices, trainers, and managers.
- **Ensure sustainability:** Invest in structures and resources that allow the program to grow over time without overburdening the business.
- **Motivate and support:** create incentives for both apprentices and trainers, ensuring they feel valued and engaged throughout the process.
- **Provide a clear pathway:** Show apprentices how training can translate into long-term opportunities within the company, reinforcing commitment and retention.
- **Build partnerships:** Collaborate with local high schools, training providers, and industry peers to strengthen recruitment pipelines and share best practices.
- **Dedicate leadership:** Assign a point person or team to manage the program, ensuring it receives the coordination and attention needed to succeed.



“Apprenticeships are a strategic investment in our future workforce. At Bühler, apprenticeship has been the backbone of our industry's success and innovation for over 110 years. It is pivotal worldwide, enabling us to build critical capabilities internally where labor markets fall short, sustain a future-ready talent pipeline, and advance diversity in engineering and technology roles. The more we in different industries pull together and foster apprenticeship schemes, the better it is for each individual, for business, and for the world.”

Irene Mark-Eisenring, Chief Human Resources Officer, Bühler Group



dsm-firmenich

dsm firmenich is a global leader in nutrition, health, and beauty, creating vital nutrients, flavors, and fragrances. It runs apprenticeship and work-based learning programs across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Notably, it offers a three-year laboratory technician apprenticeship in Switzerland, active for nearly 70 years, and a two-year training program in Brazil that prepares talents to become Junior Analysts, building a strong pipeline of future specialists across different areas. Student and early-career programs are available globally across various functions, with each learning path tailored to the specific program.

Benefits

- Supports the development of the next generation of professionals.
- Strengthens diversity in its talent pipeline.
- Reinforces employer brand as a company committed to opportunities and positive change.
- Programs are closely linked to operational activities and skills needs, ensuring apprentices are quickly operational and contributing to day-to-day business.
- Structured frameworks allow for the transmission of technical know-how, addressing skill shortages that are difficult to fill through the external labor market.
- Apprentices often progress into long-term careers in Science and Research and other areas, with opportunities ranging from technical expert roles to management.

Partnerships

In Brazil, dsm-firmenich has a strong collaboration with the local network of universities and educational partners. In Switzerland, the company collaborates with professional associations and local educational offices to secure resources in advance, including time, space, and trainers for apprenticeship programs. These partners provide guidance on program milestones and support recruitment through national tools such as the federal apprenticeship job board. Events organized by the educational office also help attract diverse candidates and secure a steady pipeline of talent for the company.

What works well

At dsm-firmenich, apprenticeships are designed not only to meet talent needs but also to create equal opportunities for diverse candidates and support the company's commitment to training future generations. A key strength of these programs is the active involvement of professionals and managers, who oversee the process, provide daily training, and take pride in nurturing new talent. By aligning apprenticeships with operational demands and skill development, dsm-firmenich cultivates a robust pipeline of versatile professionals who make meaningful contributions from an early stage of their careers.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

In Brazil, for example, clear guidelines on roles and responsibilities have been introduced to set transparent expectations and ensure skills development. Learners follow a structured journey that includes onboarding and feedback plans, metrics, and learning goals that are similar to what is in place for permanent employees. Towards the end of the program, recommendations are provided to help apprentices find new internal opportunities beyond their initial department, a practice that has already improved retention and motivation.

Apprenticeships not only fill skills gaps in technical areas that are hard to recruit for externally but also help strengthen dsm-firmenich diversity goals by providing opportunities to individuals from a wide range of social, ethnic, and generational backgrounds. Many apprentices remain with the company after graduation, progressing into both technical and managerial roles, thus making the program a vital pipeline for future talent and leaders.

Equality and diversity

dsm-firmenich integrates diversity and inclusion goals directly into its apprenticeship programs. In Brazil, entry-level positions, such as Junior Analysts, act as a strong gateway for diverse talents. The company is also working to improve the representation of older individuals in entry-level roles and is committed to promoting apprenticeship opportunities for people from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Apprenticeships, therefore, contribute not only to filling talent needs but also to strengthening the company's broader equality and diversity objectives.

Skills acquired

- Apprentices at dsm-firmenich gain a combination of technical, operational, and professional competencies that prepare them for diverse career paths, including:
- Technical and scientific skills: apprentices are trained in laboratory techniques, chemical engineering basics, and process optimization, addressing critical competency gaps not always addressed in standard school curricula.
- Operational and business skills: apprentices contribute directly to ongoing projects, learning how to align their work with business priorities and operational needs.
- Soft skills and professional development: emphasis is placed on adaptability, teamwork, and willingness to learn, which dsm-firmenich recognizes as high-value qualities across the company.
- Innovation and future-readiness: by being exposed to up-to-date tools and practices through training, apprentices bring new thinking into the company, supporting digital transformation and continuous improvement.





Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Advice to others

- **Leverage support from different stakeholders:** draw on the expertise of peers, educational institutions, professional associations, and chambers of commerce to build a strong ecosystem that enables success.
- **Allocate sufficient resources:** secure time, budget, and committed trainers who are genuinely motivated to develop talent.
- **Understand local legislation:** review laws governing apprenticeship contracts, including duration and training requirements, before designing the program.
- **Engage local HR teams:** involve HR in budgeting, especially to account for additional training costs such as language courses or development programs.
- **Structure implementation carefully:** hold alignment meetings, create clear guides and manuals, and set up dedicated channels to answer questions about the programs.
- **Adapt to local contexts:** while the program was expanded to all business units in Brazil, replication elsewhere should consider local organizational structures, recruitment cycles based on contract regulations, and specific training needs.
- **Use a wave-based recruitment process** instead of ad-hoc hiring to improve planning and coordination across departments, ensure consistent training, and enable more effective talent allocation and forecasting.



“ Apprenticeship is an exceptional program, tailored to the company’s needs and values, and built on a structured framework. It enables apprentices to enter the workforce upon completing their training, demonstrating strong employability aligned with both company and economic demands. Moreover, apprenticeship is a springboard for a career rooted in continuous learning, opening opportunities across all job levels.”

François Rohrbach, President Switzerland, VP HR BP COO, dsm-firmenich



L'Oréal

L'Oréal is a leader in the beauty industry offering a diverse range of job opportunities, from marketing to finance, human resources to research and innovation. With over 90,000 employees around the world, L'Oréal currently has over 1,200 apprentices, of which 1,000 are enrolled annually in France, where it is headquartered. The L'Oréal apprenticeship program is an opportunity for young talents to boost their careers during a one-to-two-year period.

Launched in the 1990s, the program was modified in 2025 for a complete end-to-end experience. This includes training managers to mentor apprentices; an onboarding event to welcome them; engagement opportunities to meet inspirational figures within the company; an assessment phase that determines retention; and an offboarding experience recognizing apprentices' achievements and allowing them to give feedback.

Partnerships

L'Oréal France works with 80 schools and 16 NGOs for recruitment, providing the company with access to diverse talent pools, including underrepresented youth, and ensuring that apprenticeships are accessible to students from various education levels. This is part of a commitment to the L'Oréal For Youth program, where the company offers globally more than 25,000 professional opportunities for young people under 30 years old. Through partnerships with schools and NGOs, L'Oréal can guarantee a strong and sustainable talent pipeline while allowing students to earn a salary, study, and gain work experience.

What works well

Apprenticeships represent a central pillar of L'Oréal's early career hiring strategy, with 80% of entry-level positions filled by apprentices and trainees. Apprentices and trainees are often referred to internally as 'L'Oréal babies', reflecting their strong integration, pride in their work, and high performance, especially in follow-up programs such as the L'Oréal SeedZ Management Trainee (graduate program) and VIE (International Corporate Volunteering). They show pride in their work and are good ambassadors for L'Oréal.

The onboarding experience has proven particularly effective in engaging apprentices, while training managers have helped fortify their role as tutors. This provides apprentices with the right support to balance professional, personal, and academic responsibilities. From 2026, L'Oréal France is set to reinforce this approach through a new training plan and tutor masterclass, alongside onboarding improvements.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Equality and diversity

As part of the L'Oréal for Youth commitment, the apprenticeship programs help make studies and career opportunities more accessible for underrepresented youth. It has also been leveraged to create entry points for young people with disabilities and refugees, reinforcing L'Oréal's focus on diversity and inclusion.

Skills acquired

The program focuses on developing five core dimensions of potential: ambition, resilience, judgment, empathy, and lifelong agility. Apprentices are encouraged to apply creativity and bring fresh perspectives and ideas, supporting L'Oréal's culture of innovation.

Advice to others

Managers play a critical role in shaping the experience for apprentices. Welcoming them is a huge responsibility that should not be taken lightly, as they are the future of talent. **Strong onboarding and dedicated support** throughout the program are key to ensuring apprentices succeed both at the company and at school.



“ At L'Oréal France, apprenticeships represent a strategic, long-standing investment since 1990, forming a central pillar of our early career hiring strategy. Continuously evolving, our program, redesigned in 2025, emphasizes work-based learning, enabling young talent to gain invaluable practical experience and skills. With almost 1,000 apprentices in France today, they are vital to strengthening our talent pipeline, embodying innovation, ambition, resilience, and agility. By fostering diverse talents, we are actively building future leaders who will shape the beauty industry. ”

Celine Beaudisson, HR Director, L'Oréal France



Microsoft

Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and every organization to achieve more. With operations in 190 countries and approximately 126,000 employees worldwide, the company believes technology can and should be a force for good, and that meaningful innovation can create opportunities for all. Its UK apprenticeship program, for example, is a three-year degree-level initiative that exemplifies this philosophy by developing future-ready digital talent for an AI-driven economy.

Delivered in partnership with The Development Manager (TDM), a local tech and digital apprenticeships provider, and Staffordshire University, the program combines academic learning with full-time work. Apprentices gain hands-on experience in roles across business, engineering, and technology while working towards nationally recognized qualifications.

Partnerships

Aligned with the UK's national skills policies, Microsoft collaborates closely with government agencies, local schools, and its apprenticeship delivery partner to keep curricula at the cutting edge. The training content is continually refreshed to integrate the latest in AI, cloud computing, data analysis, and digital transformation. Cohorts are deliberately kept small to maintain a high-quality and personalized experience for every apprentice. These partnerships guarantee that apprentices learn skills that are both academically rigorous and directly applicable to real business challenges.

What works well

Microsoft's programs' strengths lie in their structured support systems and practical business integrations. Each apprentice is paired only with a dedicated manager and two coaches, providing continuous mentorship, feedback, technical guidance, career advice, or even a sounding board for new ideas. Regular six-weekly check-ins between apprentices, their managers, and training providers ensure that learning objectives remain aligned with work responsibilities.

Apprentices are fully embedded within Microsoft teams from day one, contributing to real projects by designing solutions, supporting customers, and driving innovation. By integrating apprentices into the heart of its operations, they feel valued as team members and, as a result, frequently exceed expectations. Their contributions, whether developing new software features, resolving customer IT issues, or driving process improvements, make a tangible impact on business objectives.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Equality and diversity

The company's apprenticeship program is a key driver of social mobility and inclusion in the tech industry. In the UK, for example, participation from the bottom 20% of the most deprived areas is 6% higher than the national average for IT apprenticeships. Many participants are the first in their families to enter the tech industry, with 70% reporting that the program has raised their long-term career aspirations. Microsoft UK also leverages its excess levy to fund apprenticeships in its supply chain, helping small and medium enterprises access high-quality apprentice talent.

An impact study found that 10% of Microsoft's 2021-22 UK apprentice cohort would likely not have been employed without this opportunity, rising to 25% among those from the most disadvantaged areas of the country. Microsoft UK estimates a social ROI of 395%, reflecting major returns in lifetime earnings, productivity, and reduced welfare dependency.

Skills acquired

Designed to build both technical and human-centric skills essential for the AI era, the programs allow apprentices to develop expertise in cloud computing, cybersecurity, data analysis, and machine learning, using Microsoft Azure, Power BI, and other AI engineering tools. At the same time, they cultivate meta-skills such as critical thinking, collaboration, adaptability, and ethical reasoning, which ensure long-term employability in fast-evolving industries. This blend of technical proficiency and social awareness reflects Microsoft's belief that future-ready talent must be both digitally skilled and values-driven.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Advice to others

Successful apprenticeship programs begin with a clear strategic intent. At Microsoft, apprenticeships are part of a broader talent and inclusion strategy, designed to fill critical skills gaps, strengthen workforce diversity, and build a sustainable talent pipeline. Companies should aim to move beyond compliance and design programs that integrate genuine business experience with structured learning and progression pathways.

Investing in manager readiness is crucial: apprentices thrive when supported by mentors equipped to coach and challenge them. Provide managers with onboarding guides, training, and checklists on how to support apprentices effectively. Microsoft UK uses a structured manager readiness framework to ensure apprentices are integrated, supported, and developed from day one.

Microsoft's experience demonstrates that apprenticeships are not just about meeting immediate hiring needs, but also about **driving cultural change**. The program promotes inclusion, closes digital divides, and future-proofs the workforce by testing innovations - from new rotations to AI skilling modules - before scaling.

Apprentices' success depends on connection. Microsoft runs weekly cohort check-ins, buddy systems, and community events to foster belonging and peer support. Continuous measurement, through retention rates, progression data, and social impact indicators, ensures programs stay relevant and effective. Celebrating apprentice achievements helps build pride, strengthen employer branding, and sustain momentum across current and future cohorts.



“ Apprenticeships are part of the broader talent and workforce development commitments aligned to Microsoft Elevate, designed to address critical skills gaps, strengthen workforce diversity, and build a sustainable talent pipeline with technical and human-centric skills essential for the AI era. ”

Naria Santa Lucia, General Manager, Microsoft Elevate.



Nestlé

Nestlé's purpose is to unlock the power of food to enhance quality of life for everyone, with its presence extending to almost 185 countries. Currently, over 3,000 apprentices are employed globally, including in Portugal, Switzerland, Chile, Mexico, Australia, South Africa, Nigeria, Malaysia, and India, amongst others. Apprenticeship programs are offered in a range of areas, including operations (factories), manufacturing, mechanical, electrical, automation engineering and maintenance, laboratory, commerce, confection, construction, and hospitality. In Switzerland, Nestlé offers 19 professions and onboards 100 new apprentices every year with approximately 300 trainers and a 31% retention rate.

Benefits

- High completion rates at 90% and over 60% retention rates globally, with apprentices showing strong work discipline and safety compliance, making them valuable long-term employees.
- Many apprentices become productive by their second or third year of training, reducing onboarding friction and sustaining high performance over time.
- Apprenticeships feed directly into supervisory and managerial roles, ensuring continuity in critical functions.
- Use of government portals and vocational channels, in some jurisdictions, minimizes recruitment expenses and vacancy cycle times.
- Close collaboration with schools and vocational institutions strengthens Nestlé's social license to operate. For example, apprenticeships in South Africa provide production artisans to manufacturing sites, improving livelihoods in a country facing high unemployment, while in Portugal, apprenticeships have brought industrial skilling opportunities to the Avanca community, where access to higher education opportunities is limited.
- In Switzerland, apprenticeships provide technical expertise in 19 professions, including food technologists, machine operators, and automation technicians, all central to factory operations and innovation.
- Meets apprenticeship obligations in countries where mandates exist.
- Apprentices bring fresh ideas by applying classroom knowledge directly in the workplace, reinforcing a culture of innovation and professional growth.

Partnerships

Nestlé collaborates with governments, vocational schools, and community institutions to recruit apprentices and fortify training quality. In Nigeria, partnerships with educational institutions help secure skilled trainers, while in South Africa, collaboration with government

bodies provides access to grants and funding. In Mexico, Nestlé works with government and legal teams to streamline apprenticeship agreements, while also engaging industry leaders to improve buy-in. These partnerships allow the company to balance business needs with broader social impact goals.



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

What works well

Nestlé's success with apprenticeship programs is due to the linkages between classroom learning and professional practice, enabling apprentices to contribute meaningfully while they train. Apprenticeship programs are embedded within factory operations, ensuring apprentices quickly become productive members of the workforce. Programs are tailored to local labor market conditions. Apprenticeships in Switzerland, for example, fill highly technical manufacturing roles, while in Chile they address youth unemployment and social mobility.

The company's strong focus on mentorship and supervision helps apprentices progress and stay engaged. Factory leadership and line managers are often directly involved in training, which enables apprentices to learn the exact skills needed on the job. Nestlé also invests in adapting programs to diverse contexts, such as addressing gender bias in India through sensitization initiatives or maintaining apprentice motivation in Portugal through personalized follow-up and activities.

Equality and diversity

Nestlé leverages apprenticeships to actively promote social inclusion and equal opportunity. Programs intentionally engage underrepresented groups such as women in non-traditional roles, NEET youth, refugees, and individuals with disabilities. In India, gender inclusion is promoted by challenging stereotypes and placing women in shop-floor roles. In Chile, apprenticeships act as vehicles of social mobility for low-income youth, offering structured pathways to higher education and stable employment. Apprenticeships, therefore, serve as both a business solution to talent shortages and a social responsibility tool to empower vulnerable communities.

Skills acquired

- **Technical skills:** food technology, machinery operation, automation, and compliance with safety standards.
- **Operational skills:** hands-on experience in shift operations and production processes, ensuring strong productivity from early stages.
- **Soft skills:** workplace discipline, adaptability, and familiarity with Nestlé's culture and values.
- **Innovation and problem-solving:** apprentices apply academic knowledge directly to workplace challenges, generating new solutions, and supporting continuous improvement.





Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Advice to others

- **Embed apprenticeships into workforce strategy:** align training with long-term business needs to secure leadership support.
- **Invest in mentorship and supervision:** involve factory leaders and supervisors to ensure apprentices receive quality guidance and are appropriately prepared.
- **Foster inclusion:** actively engage women, vulnerable groups, and disadvantaged youth to diversify talent pipelines and play a positive role in the broader community.
- **Leverage partnerships:** collaborate with schools, government bodies, and associations to access funding, streamline recruitment, and secure skilled trainers.
- **Start local and adapt globally:** tailor apprenticeships to local labor markets while maintaining a consistent global framework that is aligned with company needs.
- **Address challenges proactively:** anticipate barriers such as budget constraints, motivation, or gender bias to design context-specific solutions that can be rapidly deployed.
- **Track long-term value:** focus not only on completion and retention rates, but also on apprentices' progression and performance in supervisory, technical, or managerial roles.



“ At Nestlé, we believe that high-quality apprenticeships nurture the curiosity and entrepreneurial mindset needed to drive innovation.”

Martha Uribe, Human Resources Vice President Brazil and Global Youth Lead



SAP

As a global leader in enterprise applications and business AI, SAP stands at the nexus of business and technology. With approximately 110,000 employees worldwide, SAP enrolls 1,500 apprentices, with 660 enrolled in Germany, where it is headquartered. Through its Global Student Rotation and Training Program (STAR), which is equivalent to vocational training and apprenticeship, 759 students were new hires in 2024 (more than 70% conversion) across 15 countries (17 as of 2026). The program launched in 1979 with 230 students in Germany onboarded. The program has since expanded to China, India, Brazil, the USA, Ireland, Hungary, Switzerland, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea, Australia, and New Zealand. The five core elements of the program include the dual system, rotating practical phases, building trust with students, demand-oriented based on business needs, and quality.

Partnerships

A sizable portion of the students enrolled in SAP's STAR program are in Germany, where the program was first launched. With the company headquartered in the country, the company was also able to leverage a strong system grounded in dual education unique to the national context, with partnerships established with state and technical universities.

What works well

In Germany, the completion rate of the STAR program is over 90%, with conversion of around 80%. An overwhelming majority of the graduates are fast-track, or top performers, 1.5 times more in comparison to all employees.

With the history of the program starting in Germany, the global goal remains the same, which is to recruit, train, develop, and convert high-performing, self-motivated students to fulfill immediate, mid- and long-term strategic business objectives.

The duration of the program lasts anywhere from 1.5 to four years, depending on the location. The reported benefits for the company include:

- Qualified employees
- Potential future employees
- Productivity of students during the practical phases
- Sound SAP knowledge and transfer between departments
- No charge of costs for rotations
- Leadership experience for mentors

Equality and diversity

Diversity is built into the STAR program across all 15 countries. Females constitute 36% of graduates overall, with an increase in retention across all locations. Currently, women outnumber men in retention rates across all locations.

Skills acquired

- Artificial intelligence, cloud skills, and development skills for graduates
- Leadership skills for mentors



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

Advice to others

These are the five core elements of what makes the STAR program successful:

- **Dual System** - a combination of theory and practice, providing real-life opportunities to execute theoretical knowledge
- **Demand-Oriented** - based on the business case, long-term aims for conversion, with a centrally organized training plan and individual training
- **Rotating Practical Phases** - students are broadly exposed to a variety of business functions and opportunities for collaboration. This gives the student flexibility in terms of deciding where they would like to be placed after graduation.
- **Building relationships** - developing students early on in their careers supports retention, ensures a higher ROI, and sustainable workforce planning
- **Quality Checks** - these are performed during the recruitment and feedback cycles, which feed into the decision upon completion of the program to convert to a full-time employee role.



“ At SAP, vocational training is a strategic, long-term investment in both people and future skills. Our STAR program creates a direct pipeline of motivated early talent, allowing us to recruit, train, and quickly convert high-potential individuals into full-time contributors while embedding the practical skills and mindset needed for innovation. By aligning hands-on learning with business priorities, vocational training shortens time-to-productivity, strengthens workforce resilience, and ensures we have the right capabilities to meet today’s needs and tomorrow’s challenges. For trainees, the program provides real-world experience, mentorship, and a clear career pathway that accelerates professional growth and long-term employability. ”

Soledad Alvarado Ganzhorn, Head of SAP Next Gen, SAP



UBS

UBS is the world's largest and only truly global wealth manager, providing first-class financial advice and solutions to institutional and corporate clients worldwide, as well as private clients in Switzerland. It offers more than 1,100 apprenticeships in Switzerland and around 120 in the UK. Whether through its Graduate Talent Program (GTP) or entry-level roles, UBS is one of the largest private providers of vocational training and education in Switzerland, as well as an attractive and trusted destination for young professionals globally.

Benefits

- Employees who are well-prepared for future challenges due to practical experience and future skills training
- Early productivity from talent already immersed in the company's culture and workflows
- High retention rates and employee loyalty from long-term talent development
- Reduced recruitment costs and lower turnover
- Addresses skills gaps, especially in early and mid-career talent
- Early productivity from talent already immersed in the company's culture and workflows
- Employees who are well-prepared for future challenges due to practical experience and future skills training
- Targeted training that translates into clear career pathways within a changing labor market

What works well

The commercial apprenticeship program at UBS is particularly effective due to its strong integration of hands-on banking experience with a modern and future-oriented curriculum. Apprentices gain early exposure to real banking environments and develop in-demand competencies such as digital literacy, client advisory skills, and 'future skills' such as responsible AI use. Training is complemented by personalized mentorship, coaching, and opportunities for internal mobility, ensuring that the program meets the expectations of newer generations while aligning with evolving workforce needs.

UBS views apprenticeship programs as a strategic investment in long-term talent development, fostering inclusion and proactively addressing

skills gaps in banking, digital, and client-facing roles. Beyond business value, the program supports social responsibility goals by offering structured entry paths for diverse youth. With retention rates of 70% to 80% after graduation, apprentices not only secure strong entry roles but also continue to grow through development programs, mentoring, and rotational opportunities.

Equality and diversity

UBS' apprenticeship programs contribute to social impact by offering inclusive, future-oriented training that supports long-term employability and workforce integration. It aligns training with evolving business needs, such as digitalization and client advisory skills, and offers flexible pathways that accommodate diverse learner profiles. One example is UBS' support for dual



Case Studies from GAN Corporate Champions

careers for athletes through its partnership with the United School of Sports, offering flexible training paths and practical placements.

In the UK, UBS' apprenticeship program is designed specifically for school leavers from 18 years old. This program is positioned as a viable alternative to university and attracts a diverse, yet high-quality pool of candidates.³⁵ From Switzerland to the UK, these efforts promote integration, equal opportunity, and improved career prospects for diverse youth groups.

Skills acquired

These programs address evolving skills needs, particularly in banking, digital, and client-facing roles, by combining hands-on experience with targeted training. Apprentices develop competencies such as digital literacy, client advisory skills, and 'future skills' including self-organization, communication, and responsible AI use, while also strengthening methodical, social, and personal capabilities.

Advice to others

- **Embed apprenticeships into workforce strategy:** position apprenticeship programs as a core element of long-term talent development, ensuring they align with future business and skills needs.
- **Offer structured and inclusive pathways:** design programs that attract diverse candidates (e.g., for athletes or older students) by providing transparent entry routes and equal opportunities for advancement, as well as by meeting the expectations of newer generations.
- **Collaborate with education providers:** build strong partnerships with schools, universities, and training institutions to ensure curricula remain relevant and future oriented.
- **Invest in mentorship and coaching:** provide apprentices with experienced mentors and role models who can guide their professional growth and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Use apprenticeships to position the company as an employer of choice** that values inclusion, development, and future-readiness.



“ At UBS, we view apprenticeships as a strategic investment for the future of our workforce. Our commercial apprenticeship program has been a cornerstone of UBS' talent development strategy for decades, offering young people a structured, inclusive, and future-oriented pathway into the financial sector. Apprentices play a vital role in strengthening our internal talent pipeline, contributing to sustainable growth and innovation from the outset. ”

Sandra Aubert de la Rüe, Head HR Personal and Corporate Banking and Region Switzerland

³⁵ GAN Global Annual Report 2018-2019, GAN Global



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About Us

GAN Global

GAN Global is a unique business-driven, multi-sector alliance convening and connecting businesses, governments, and international organizations to promote apprenticeship and work-based learning (WBL). Our vision is a world in which all individuals and businesses have the skills and talent they need to thrive and contribute to society. Our mission is to champion Quality Apprenticeships as a key driver for workforce development, social mobility, and economic growth.

Together with our member companies, country networks, and partner organizations, we deliver projects, share best practices, and build knowledge about how to design quality apprenticeships and WBL.

Our Board Members are executive leaders from some of the world's leading companies and policymakers from prominent international organizations. Together, we commit to ensuring that apprenticeships and WBL empower people and businesses to meet the rapidly evolving demands of today's labor market.

Global Alliance for YOUTh

The Global Alliance for YOUTh is a business-driven movement of like-minded organizations passionate about working together to help young people around the globe get the necessary skills to thrive in the world of work, today and tomorrow.

We are convinced that by mobilizing the business community through a Global Alliance, we can help young people on a larger scale and have a bigger impact than we can individually.

Together, we are committed to providing a better future for younger generations. We want to create bridges between today's context and tomorrow's skills needs. To ensure that all youth are future ready.

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