



# “Practical simplicity”

## Newsletter

### Autumn 2011



Personnel, Equality, Training and Recruitment

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#### New Accredited Courses

As mentioned in our summer newsletter, we are now an accredited centre with Open College Network North East Region (OCNNER).

Increasingly clients are wanting more value from the training they buy, including accreditation. In the past this has been difficult as we tend to deliver bespoke courses designed to suit client needs. However, through OCNNER we are able to deliver courses which match our content and delivery style but which are also accredited by a recognised body.

We have been working with Stuart our development manager at OCNNER and have developed two programmes made up of units at Level 1 and 2, where each unit can be taken as an independent 1 or 2 day course.

**1. Professional Development Programme** – the units within this programme are designed to help people develop professional skills suitable for a wide range of positions. They include, Preparing for and participating in meetings; Effective minute taking and preparation of agendas; Time management and prioritising effectively; Skills for assertiveness, leadership and conflict resolution; Introduction to equality and diversity in the workplace; Presentation skills; Managing stress; Communicating with people.

#### 2. Management Development Programme

– the units within this programme are designed to help people within a first line manager, team leader or supervisory role gain skills and knowledge to help them carry out their management duties and responsibilities. They include, Developing the team; Leadership and motivation; New to supervisory management; Effective leadership; Supervision – identifying poor performance; Problem solving; Train the trainers.

Participants are required to complete assessments or provide evidence to gain their certificate but these are not onerous and as long as the learning objectives and assessment criteria are met, we can tailor the content and delivery in the same way as our ordinary bespoke courses. Clients can therefore choose if they want the course to include accreditation or not.

For more information contact [lynne@petandr.co.uk](mailto:lynne@petandr.co.uk).

#### A change is as good as a rest

It's not just students who are taking gap years, adults and long term employed people are also doing it. Be it full years or mini career breaks of a month or so, employers are seeing the benefits of employees 'taking a break' and they are no longer viewed with scepticism.

In fact, in these tough economic times many organisations are seeing career breaks as a viable alternative to redundancy as it saves the organisation money, retains valuable expertise and gives the employee the opportunity to learn new skills and re-charge batteries, thereby improving performance.

Breaks can include a simple rest from the rat race, following a hobby/passion or ambition, looking

after elderly relatives or doing voluntary work here or overseas.

Leadership and communication skills are usually the areas to benefit most from a career break, as well as being creative with fewer resources or adapting quickly to change or tricky situations. The organisation also benefits from increased employee loyalty.

It isn't always possible to grant career break requests, a lot depends on the business case put forward for it, what policies the company has and how flexible an organisation can be, but it should never be dismissed out of hand. You need to think carefully about how to deal with requests that may come in.

You need to develop specific career break policies which outline the amount of time off (usually unpaid) that can be taken and when. This is often based on how long the employee has worked there as this kind of thing is often seen as a perk of service.

Timing of a career break for the organisation is crucial to ensure minimal disruption. It could be at the end of a contract, between projects or in a period of down time.

You need to be able to have open dialogue with the employee and work together to develop a step by step plan as to how the break will work and both sides need to be open and flexible and employ good negotiating skills.

For those who have been on a career break tell everyone about it. It shouldn't affect promotion chances and can even enhance career prospects. Put it at the top of your CV as it shows that you are different, aren't afraid of a challenge and have initiative, qualities attractive to any employer.

**Partners:** Peter R. Hammond, BSc (Hons), DipPM, Chartered FCIPD, MBPSS, MInstLM, FITOL, MBILD, and Lynne E Hammond BSc(Hons), MA, MInstLM, MCMI,  
Tel: 01642 576405 Fax: 01642 337562 E-mail: [peter@petandr.co.uk](mailto:peter@petandr.co.uk) Web-site: [www.petandr.co.uk](http://www.petandr.co.uk)  
6 Fen Moor Close, Hemlington, Middlesbrough, TS8 9RQ

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## Employing the Long-term Unemployed

The government has provided a £500m package to help reduce the risk of long term unemployment and give 'Golden Hellos' to employers who recruit and train unemployed people of up to £2,500. But are employers keen to employ the long term unemployed?

Long term unemployment has always carried a powerful stigma and if you have been unemployed for 6 months you are now classed as long term unemployed. This can be for a variety of reasons from redundancy to looking after sick relatives, bringing up children or long term illness.

Traditionally employers favour more recently unemployed because they are perceived to have recent experience, will be more up to date with systems and technologies and have a checkable work record. But all this doesn't always add up to the best person for the job.

People who have been long term unemployed have a lot of talent and are generally more appreciative of getting a job so keener to work and start at a lower level and train their way up.

Employing long term unemployed can result in lower staff turnover and improved customer image as the staff reflect the community more accurately

## Changes to training funding

On 31<sup>st</sup> July the governments flagship training service Train to Gain ended as did the Contribution to Wage Costs scheme which helped employers cover staff costs when they were away from work undertaking training. Both these closures have resulted in a significant change in the type of training available for funding.

The closures were announced in the government's new skill strategy, Skills for Sustainable Growth published in November 2010 and aims to help employers and employees gain the right skills to help the country through an economic recovery and to enhance our competitiveness in the future.

From now funding will be available for the following development areas:

**Apprenticeships** – from intermediate to higher levels with more places being provided.

**Leadership and management programmes** – for internal development and progression

**Training for those made redundant** – to fill skills gaps and overcome barriers to employment

**National skills academies** – for tailored skills support helped by Sector Skills Councils

People aged 19-24 will be able to get 100% funding for basic skills training and their first full Level 2 or 3 qualification as will those who are unemployed on active benefits.

Those over 24 or who already have Level 2 or 3 qualifications will be able to get some funding but will also have to contribute to the cost themselves. This could be through a Lifelong Learning Account run by the Skills Funding Agency and operating like a Student Loan, only being paid back once you reach a certain income threshold.

For leadership and management progression there is the **Leadership & Management Advisory Service**. This provides tailored advice and support to senior leaders within small and medium sized businesses that can clearly demonstrate the potential for high or fast growth. This support can attract a 50% grant payment up to £1000.

In the North East this service is delivered and managed by Northumberland Business Services Ltd (NBSL). For more information visit [www.nbsl.org.uk](http://www.nbsl.org.uk) or e-mail [L&Mreferral@nbsl.org.uk](mailto:L&Mreferral@nbsl.org.uk).

The new system links with the Sector Skills Councils, who will regularly update the national occupational standards to meet changing demands, and the Qualification and Certification Framework which allows individuals and employers to access units of training to meet specific needs.

It is hoped that this new system will be more employer and economy reactive as well as meeting individual needs and wants whilst reducing the amount of public funding involved.

## Forthcoming Open Course

### Team Resilience 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011

With Mental Resilience, we help people to cope with pressure and achieve peak performance. Well now for something completely different – Team Resilience: a way of applying the concepts of mental toughness to teams in transition!

Whether it be through restructure, redundancies, or growth, teams are finding that they have a new set of members with some playing different roles from those that they adopted before. Mental toughness principles can help teams make that shift from the known to the unknown, and deal with baggage and resistance, especially when things need to change quickly.

This course will look at the 4 C's of mental toughness, Control, Challenge, Commitment, Confidence and how these impact on individuals and the team as a whole and how you can use them to build a strong functioning team.

## Courses and Services

HR Consultancy, Research, Advice & Guidance; Recruitment and Selection Testing; Policy & Strategy Development; Management Coaching & Mentoring; IIP Support & Corporate Action Planning.

Leadership, Management, & Supervisory Development; Conflict Resolution, Harassment & Bullying; Customer Care & Interpersonal Skills; Equality & Diversity Training;

Work Team Health Checks and Repair Clinics, Team Toughness, Recruitment Training, Mental Resilience, Assessment Interviewing and Selection Testing.

Public Consultation, Social Research, & Event Management. Sustainable Development and Sustainable Lifestyle Training, Volunteer Development, Retained Advisory Service.

ILM Accredited courses  
OCNNER Accredited courses

*If you would like to know more about our work, please visit the web-site [www.petandr.co.uk](http://www.petandr.co.uk), or contact [lynne@petandr.co.uk](mailto:lynne@petandr.co.uk).*