

## Tips on Employer Engagement Strategies for Bootcamp Providers

This guide provides practical tips to strengthen employer engagement and enhance Bootcamp success, based on insights from Paul Smisson (Zenith People) during the Planning for your Ofsted inspection as a Bootcamp Provider webinar November 2024.

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### 1. Build Strategic Relationships with Employers

- Engage with key decision-makers (e.g., HR managers, production leaders, and senior leadership) to align Bootcamps with business priorities.
- Understand employers' strategic goals, such as cost-saving measures, productivity improvements, or staff upskilling, and tailor your training offer to meet those objectives.

**Tip:** Make your programme outcomes relevant to board-level discussions to secure senior buy-in.

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### 2. Co-Design the Curriculum with Employers

- Collaborate with employers to design programmes that address real business challenges.
- Focus on industry-specific pain points (e.g., customer service skills for field engineers or knowledge of frequently failing equipment).

**Example:** In their White Goods Engineer Bootcamp, Zenith designed modules based on common product breakdowns to ensure learners could handle high-frequency issues.

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### 3. Align Bootcamp Delivery with Business Cycles

- Schedule Bootcamp sessions around employers' peak and low-demand periods to minimize operational disruptions.
- Ensure the Bootcamp timetable works for both the business and learners by offering flexible formats (e.g., intensive two-week programmes).

**Tip:** Gain insights into business planning cycles during early discussions to avoid scheduling conflicts.

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### 4. Establish Clear KPIs and Measurable Outcomes

- Define key performance indicators (KPIs) in collaboration with employers to measure success (e.g., cost savings, improved productivity, reduced downtime).
- Regularly review whether the training meets these goals and adjust as needed.

**Tip:** Use an impact-mapping document to track progress and demonstrate outcomes during follow-ups.

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## 5. Manage Employer Expectations from the Start

- Be transparent about what the Bootcamp can and cannot deliver.
- Clearly outline employer responsibilities, such as learner release time and support during the programme.

**Pro Tip:** Paul Smithson recommends “trying to put employers off” by setting realistic expectations upfront to ensure they’re fully committed.

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## 6. Embed Employer Involvement in Programme Delivery

- Involve employers in practical activities, such as guest talks or co-assessment of learner projects.
- Encourage employers to provide feedback throughout the Bootcamp to ensure relevance and continuous improvement.

**Tip:** Keep the communication channel open for updates on industry trends to ensure the curriculum stays relevant.

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## 7. Prepare Employers and Learners for Day One

- Provide learners with detailed pre-course information to set clear expectations (e.g., schedule, learning outcomes, and key contacts).
- Equip employers with an overview of what learners will gain and how they can support them during the programme.

**Example:** Zenith People identified pre-course preparation as a critical improvement area to ensure learners were fully informed before the Bootcamp began.

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## 8. Support and Train Industry-Specific Trainers

- Recruit trainers from industry and provide them with robust onboarding, including training on safeguarding, British values, and inspection expectations.
- Help trainers feel confident during inspections by familiarizing them with Ofsted terminology and processes.

**Tip:** Observing trainers’ sessions and providing feedback can ensure high-quality delivery and alignment with inspection standards.

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### **9. Offer Tailored, Business-Relevant Bootcamps**

- Focus on delivering training that provides a tangible return on investment for employers (e.g., reduced staff turnover, improved customer satisfaction).
- Highlight real-world scenarios in training sessions to make the learning practical and applicable.

**Example:** Zenith's Bootcamp for white goods engineers included customer service training to address real-life challenges in home visits.

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### **10. Foster a Collaborative, Trust-Based Partnership**

- Build trust by maintaining open, honest communication and working together on programme design and delivery.
- Avoid treating the relationship as transactional—position the Bootcamp as a shared effort to achieve mutual success.

**Pro Tip:** A transparent relationship can help avoid conflicts over overlapping provisions (e.g., apprenticeships vs. Bootcamps) and encourage joint initiatives.

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By implementing these strategies, Bootcamp providers can build stronger partnerships with employers, leading to more successful Bootcamp outcomes.