Trading up - your future, their future, our future?



Whatever industry you're in, presenting the opportunity to 'move onwards and upwards' gets attention. Earning a higher salary, taking on a new challenge or finding a better fit with your lifestyle are all good reasons for targeting professional progression.

According to the American Bureau of Labour Statistics, the average worker currently holds 10 different jobs before the age of 40, and this number is projected to grow. Just think, some of your future co-workers are out there doing something they don't particularly enjoy and that doesn't fit with their unique skillset, and they're looking for something else.

As business owners and directors, this could be an opportunity missed, when you could perhaps attract them into your organisation by offering to support and develop them in their role. And it's not always about attracting externally, you may have your next protégée in the team already, just in the wrong role to fulfill their potential – and worryingly they could be one of those currently looking for something else.

The NAJ is interested in attracting people into the jewellery industry, driving their professionalism, enhancing their skills and knowledge and enabling creativity and initiative to flourish. When this happens, there is a greater good that occurs and the whole industry benefits. We want to get more people buying jewellery, more often. If a member of your team has been able to educate a customer to start a life-long love affair with jewellery, that's great – the passion and enthusiasm that they spread among friends, family and work colleagues (not forgetting Instagram followers) is exactly the type of word of mouth promotion we need. You do not have to look far to find knowledge and skills development opportunities that will enable a jeweller to educate customers in a meaningful way. It's no secret... supporting new and existing employees through development activities pays dividends in terms of knowledge, confidence, and ultimately performance, both for the individual and the organisation (and the industry) – hence the title of this article.

Apprenticeships represent an entry route into the jewellery world that are among the most efficient ways of training staff, both financially (because of Government support) and in terms of the quality of learning and development on offer. The Government this year launched its 'Fire It Up' campaign, which aims to highlight the benefits of apprenticeships to the apprentice and employer community.

Talking about the campaign, Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

"We are seeing the apprenticeship system in this country come of age, with leading employers waking up to the benefits apprenticeships can bring. The sad truth is that outdated and snobbish attitudes are still putting people off apprenticeships, which means they're missing out on great jobs and higher salaries – many of them in the sorts of firms graduates look to land jobs with after university."

Strong figures back up the claims of these 'new style' apprenticeship benefits:

Employee

71% of apprentices agreed the chances of earning a higher wage in the future had increased

Of those who completed an apprenticeship **90%** secured a job or went onto further learning, with **88%** in sustained employment

Employer

Improved productivity (**78%**), improved product or service quality (**74%**) plus new ideas apprenticeships bring to their organisation (**65%**)

83% of employers would recommend apprenticeships to other businesses

Jewellery industry apprenticeships are nothing new. But these new style apprenticeships are certainly appropriate for businesses of all shapes and sizes.

The take-away message is that opening up entry into businesses and enabling individuals to develop within their roles, benefits you the jeweller, the individual and the wider industry.

More information on apprenticeships? Visit **naj.co.uk/apprenticeships.**

We hope you enjoyed the 'How to be a Valuer' in the last issue. We should clarify that a valuer wishing to take CAT does not need to have been in the trade for five years, plus have gemmology and diamond qualifications. Those are pre-requisites for IRV membership (along with passing CAT). Anyone can enrol on CAT at any time. Apologies for any confusion caused.