

Case Study

Atlas Computer Systems Ltd is a software development company that designs and develops highly functional websites and software applications. It was established in November 2006 by Simon Swords and his business partner Dean North, operating from a garden shed in his parents' rear garden.

In its first year of trading, the company turned over £95,000 and, with low overheads, earned a profit of 30%. The company now has a workforce of seven, three of whom are apprentices and has a turnover of £250,000, maintaining a net profit of 30-35%.

“Apprenticeships are essential in helping small businesses like mine to develop and build our business. They are highly practical and cost effective and the apprentice starts contributing to the business almost from the day they join us.”

Simon Swords Managing Director

Recruitment

The majority of Atlas's employees started as apprentices. This has lowered recruitment and staffing costs considerably, savings that are reinvested in developing the business.

Retention

The majority of apprentices stay in the business, which has in turn had an impact on reducing recruitment costs. Importantly, these team members gain a fundamental and in-depth knowledge of the business, its goals and its mission.

Return on investment

Every company, particularly a small one, needs the whole team to contribute effectively to the business. Because the Apprenticeship programme is tailored to suit the company's needs, apprentices quickly learn the skills required and contribute to the business almost immediately.

Building the business

The company could not have grown organically as quickly without apprentices.

Salaries in this sector are relatively high but by offering a reasonable salary and high quality training, which is heavily subsidised by Government, the company has been able to reduce staffing costs, leaving more to invest in building the business.

Leading the way forward

Atlas is working in partnership with Microsoft and e-Skills to produce a framework for the newly formed Software Developer Apprenticeship that focuses on the skills required to create computer software.

Once finalised, this framework will provide an effective solution to address skills shortages in the industry.

The Apprenticeship offered me an opportunity to learn valuable skills, while earning a salary. I feel that I have a great understanding of my role in the organisation and have learned valuable skills not



just in ICT but also how to be a team player, working with clients in a professional manner.

I've also gained an over-arching knowledge of the company, its objectives and its culture.

Steve Day
Apprentice