



Canadian Apprenticeship Forum  
Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage

# Recruiting and Retaining Apprentices: A Summary of Employers' and Apprentices' Perspectives



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recruiting and retention issues are of vital importance to employers. The failure to approach these issues effectively can be expensive and time consuming. “Getting it right,” on the other hand, can give employers the edge they need to increase profits and to grow their businesses. Given the importance of these HR issues, CAF-FCA did surveys and interviews with employers and apprentices to better understand recruitment and retention practices in apprenticeship. The overall findings indicate that apprenticeship is an effective recruiting strategy. Employers who have apprentices are running profitable businesses with high sales revenues. The employers who receive these benefits are investing the time to make apprenticeship work for their business. Allowing the apprentice to envision a career path, regularly scheduled meetings with apprentices, and the presence of a training plan were all important activities to ensuring an apprenticeship program’s success. Quality training from a journey person is a feature that attracts apprentices to a company and motivates them to stay. Both employers and apprentices agreed that a positive work environment is crucial to retention.

## Research Highlights

### Employers who have Apprentices run Profitable Businesses

Having apprentices does not impair overall business performance as some employers have speculated. The statistical analysis of employer survey data and information from InfoCanada revealed that even though those employers that hire apprentices have higher payroll and total expenses, they also have higher sales revenues and greater profits compared to those who do not have apprentices.

### The Value of Apprenticeship Training for Employers

In addition to the survey analysis, employers were interviewed to gain a better understanding of their opinions and experiences. Employers provided their top five reasons for participating in apprenticeship programs:

1. It is a tried and true method of getting the skilled workers needed.
2. It provides a way to recruit top talent.
3. It is a way of retaining talent.
4. The employer was also an apprentice.
5. It improves the bottom line.

## **Making Apprenticeship Training Successful**

Employers were asked what, in their opinion, makes their apprenticeship training programs successful. They provided the following reasons:

- Enabling the apprentice to see a career path
- Scheduling regular meetings with apprentices
- Creating a training plan
- Having an interview and orientation process
- Topping up EI during technical training
- Training for mentors
- Providing free tutoring to apprentices
- Offering other incentives

## **What attracts and attaches Apprentices to an Employer?**

Due to skills shortages, employers will be in competition for the best and brightest. Learning about what apprentices look for in an employer is important HR intelligence for those who want top talent working for their organization. To obtain their viewpoints, apprentices from across the country were surveyed online. More so than employers did in the interviews, apprentices emphasized the importance of quality training from the journeyperson as a feature that attracts them to an employer. On the issue of retention, a positive work environment was indicated as the most important by both employers and apprentices.

## **Moving Forward**

Apprenticeship can help employers overcome the negative impacts of skills shortages and is a valuable HR strategy. As a part of its Employer Engagement Strategy, CAF-FCA remains committed to helping employers implement effective apprenticeship programs that help them meet their HR needs. CAF-FCA already offers to employers many practical and useful resources such as its return on training investment research, its employer webpage and toolkit. It is hoped the findings in this report will further assist employers to establish or adjust their apprenticeship programs in ways that will enhance their ability to attract and retain valuable employees.

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding effective recruiting and retention practices will be increasingly important as skills shortages threaten business productivity and competition for top talent becomes more intense. This report explores the opinions of both employers and apprentices about what works when it comes to recruiting and retention based on surveys and interviews. It is hoped that employers can strengthen their apprenticeship programs and their businesses by learning more about the experiences of their colleagues and the perspectives of apprentices.

## ABOUT CAF-FCA

Established in 2000, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum –Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF- FCA) has played a major role in apprenticeship and labour market research in Canada. CAF-FCA's mission is to:

- Influence pan-Canadian apprenticeship strategies through research, discussion and collaboration with the apprenticeship community;
- Promote apprenticeship as an effective model for training and education; and
- Contribute to the development of a skilled, productive, inclusive and mobile labour force.

CAF-FCA is a federally chartered not-for-profit, multi-partite organization. To fulfill its mission, CAF-FCA is guided by a Board of Directors comprised of more than 40 industry leaders and stakeholders from across Canada, representing every aspect of the apprenticeship community. The Board includes representatives from business, labour, the Interprovincial Alliance of Apprenticeship Board Chairs (IPA), educators, equity groups, the provincial/territorial apprenticeship authorities, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

By definition, CAF-FCA's activities are pan-Canadian in scope and impact a wide range of occupations and trade areas.

This report is part of a larger effort on CAF-FCA's part to share promising practices related to apprenticeship and to encourage employers to invest in apprenticeship. Over the past five years, CAF-FCA has implemented an Employer Engagement Strategy. As a part of this strategy, CAF-FCA has listened to employers across the country, learning about their business realities and their information needs. In addition to engaging employers in a dialogue, CAF-FCA promoted the business case for apprenticeship, created practical tools for employers, and centralized information about apprenticeship into an employer-focused website called "Apprenticeship Pays: Just Ask Us." In the future, CAF-FCA intends to strengthen its networks and outreach so more employers are informed about the value of apprenticeship.

## OBJECTIVE

To better understand effective HR practices around recruitment and retention in apprenticeship and to help employers make more informed decisions about their HR strategies.

## WHY?

Benefitting from the experience of their colleagues is crucial for employers who are thinking about setting up an apprenticeship program. Employers are more likely to value information from their colleagues than from other sources. Evidence indicates employers who have apprentices are running companies with a strong overall business performance, further proving that there is a business case for incorporating apprenticeship into employer HR practices.

Understanding apprentice perspectives and sharing their views with employers is also important. With impending skills shortages looming due to baby boomer retirements, employers will be looking for skilled workers. In an environment of skills shortages, employers cannot afford to ignore the needs of the future workforce, which will be in the position to pick and choose for whom they want to work. If employers want to recruit top talent to their organizations, they need to understand what apprentices value in order to create attractive workplace apprenticeship programs. To avoid the costs associated with high turnover, employers also have to be aware of what it takes to retain apprentices at their businesses.

## METHODOLOGY

All information in this study focuses on employers and apprentices in the skilled trades. The industries included were those most likely to hire tradespeople, including construction, manufacturing, mining, service and transportation.

The sources used in this study include:

- Statistical analysis based on a 2011 telephone survey with over 1,000 employers and InfoCanada statistics
- Seventeen employer interviews
- A 2010 online survey with more than 400 apprentices

Methods were chosen with the intention of maximizing the number of survey respondents. Based on past experience, telephone surveys were deemed to work better with employers, whereas an online survey was perceived to be more convenient for apprentices. Some apprentices filled in the surveys in class and their instructors mailed CAF-FCA the results. All results were typed into the online survey system. Employers and apprentices were able to provide additional qualitative comments as a part of both surveys.

More detailed information about each of the data sources is provided below.

## 2011 Employer Survey Data

To explore the effectiveness of apprenticeship as a recruiting strategy in terms of overall business performance, statistical analysis was done using an existing CAF-FCA employer survey data set and information from InfoCanada. Efforts were made to look at additional survey results from Statistics Canada, but relevant surveys on business performance did not ask respondents whether they hired apprentices. For a description of the sources examined, see *Appendix A*.

The employer survey data set is based on a statistically significant sample which was collected through an employer telephone survey in February 2011. Respondents were from the employer population in the skilled trades, including the construction, manufacturing, mining, service/retail, and transportation sectors. Most of the employers in the sample ran small businesses. Industry Canada's definition of "small business" is firms that have fewer than 100 employees. This definition was applied here.<sup>1</sup> Every region was represented in the survey. Most of the employers were from Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec.

Companies were selected based on their Standard Industrial Classification code and region. A representative sample of 9,568 businesses were selected. The sample obtained was representative of the overall trades industry universe of 597,031 employers. Sample management processes were utilized to ensure that the final sample was representative of each industry sector and geographic region in Canada. The sample included both employers who employ apprentices, as well as those who do not employ apprentices. To ensure survey validity, a target of 1,000 telephone/online interviews were required with business owners, managers or HR managers within the sample group. A total of 1,051 completed surveys were obtained, which provides an overall margin of error of  $\pm 3.0$  per cent at the 95 per cent confidence interval and a response rate of 15 per cent. The valid response rate (the percentage of those who completed the survey from those who completed or refused to participate) was 63 per cent. Margins of error were also calculated based on employers who employ apprentices and those who do not. See Table 1.

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<sup>1</sup>For a further definition of small business see Industry Canada, Small Business Branch, Key Small Business Statistics July 2011. Ottawa: Public Works and Government of Canada Services, 2011.  
[http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/sbrp-rppe.nsf/vwapj/KSBS-PSRPE\\_July-Juillet2011\\_eng.pdf/\\$FILE/KSBS-PSRPE\\_July-Juillet2011\\_eng.pdf](http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/sbrp-rppe.nsf/vwapj/KSBS-PSRPE_July-Juillet2011_eng.pdf/$FILE/KSBS-PSRPE_July-Juillet2011_eng.pdf).



**Table 1. Margin of Error by Employer Subgroup**

Employer Subgroup	Completed Surveys	Margin of Error*
Employers who employ apprentices	259	$\pm 6.1$ per cent
Employers who do not employ apprentices	788	$\pm 3.4$ per cent

\* At the 95 per cent confidence interval

For more detailed information on the methodology used in the survey, readers should see the CAF-FCA “Employers and Apprenticeship in Canada” report.<sup>2</sup>

## InfoCanada

Additional data was obtained from InfoCanada related to employer expenses and profits.

## Employer Interviews

As a part of the project, CAF-FCA also interviewed 17 employers to gather qualitative feedback. Employers were asked to provide their own personal opinions and experiences. Most of the employers interviewed were in the construction industry, followed by service, transportation and manufacturing. Most of the employers were from Ontario and Manitoba. Fewer employers were from Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Nova Scotia. All employers who were interviewed ran small businesses.

The interview process provided the opportunity to ask additional questions not originally included on the employer survey. A copy of the employer interview guide is attached in *Appendix B*. Due to the small sample size, readers should be cautious not to extrapolate and apply these findings to all employers.

## Online Survey with over 400 Apprentices

An online survey with apprentices was implemented from May to July 2010. Apprentices from across the country were asked how they find employers, what attracts them to a particular employer’s apprenticeship program and what makes them want to stay. To review survey questions, see *Appendix C*.

The survey was completed by 414 apprentices. This number is statistically significant at a national level. The sampling error/margin of error is 4.8 per cent at a 95 per cent confidence interval. The sample was not large enough to accommodate regional breakdowns.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on this survey see CAF-FCA, “Employers and Apprenticeship in Canada” report at [http://www.caf-fca.org/en/reports/pdf/Employers\\_and\\_Apprenticeship\\_in\\_Canada.pdf](http://www.caf-fca.org/en/reports/pdf/Employers_and_Apprenticeship_in_Canada.pdf).

To obtain the responses, an online survey link was distributed to CAF-FCA's network in English and French. A mixture of apprentices from the CAF-FCA database, colleges and unions completed the survey. In the instructions, only registered apprentices were asked to fill in the survey.

Apprentices from the transportation, service, construction and manufacturing sectors completed the survey, with the highest representation from the construction sector followed by service, transportation and manufacturing.

Although apprentices in all the provinces and territories responded to the survey, the majority of apprentices who filled in the survey were from Ontario and British Columbia.

Most of the apprentices who filled in the survey were English-speaking, male and of European descent.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### SECTION A: EMPLOYERS

This section contains statistical analysis and interview findings. The statistical findings indicate that those companies that invest in apprentices are running profitable companies. Employers who were interviewed shared their promising practices around recruiting and retention of apprentices.

#### Statistical Analysis based on 2011 Employer Survey and InfoCanada data

There are many factors that lead to a company's success. Investments in the latest technology, productive workplace practices, access to other sources of labour and trade relationships all are contributing factors. Some have argued that given all the possibilities, spending time and money training apprentices is not worthwhile and, in fact, impairs overall business performance. CAF-FCA wanted to test this hypothesis by examining company longevity, number of employers expenses and revenues. The findings associated with those who hire apprentices and those who do not were compared.

#### Longevity

This analysis suggests there is no link between the longevity of businesses and apprenticeship. The average number of years a company has been in operation varies only slightly between employers who employ apprentices and those who do not. Employers who hire apprentices have been in business an average of 27 years and employers who do not hire apprentices have been in business 25. (See Table 1).



**Table 1. Number of Years in Business**

Years In Business	Employ Apprentices (n=259)	Do not Employ Apprentices (n=356)
<= 10	22 per cent	23 per cent
11 - 20	19 per cent	27 per cent
21 - 30	29 per cent	23 per cent
31 - 40	17 per cent	14 per cent
41 - 50	5 per cent	6 per cent
51+	10 per cent	7 per cent
Average number of years in business	27	25

### Number of Employees

Companies that employ apprentices have, on average, more employees than those that do not employ apprentices. Employers who hire apprentices have an average of 23 employees compared to 12 for those who do not. (See Table 2).

**Table 2. Number of Employees**

Number Of Employees	Employ Apprentices (n=259)	Do not Employ Apprentices (n=788)
<= 10	62 per cent	79 per cent
11 - 20	14 per cent	12 per cent
21 - 30	8 per cent	4 per cent
31 - 40	4 per cent	1 per cent
41 - 50	3 per cent	1 per cent
51+	9 per cent	4 per cent
Average number of employees per employer	23	12

## Financial

The analysis shows that employers who hire apprentices have higher payroll and total expenses, but they also have higher sales revenue and profits. (See Table 3).

**Table 3. Sales, Expense, and Profit<sup>3</sup>**

	Employ Apprentices (n=233)	Do not Employ Apprentices (n=650)
Average Sales (Revenue) (\$)	7,511,803	4,371,154
Average Payroll Expense (\$)	1,463,627	862,962
Average Total Expense (\$)	1,738,868	1,032,255
Average Profit (\$)	5,772,935	3,338,899

Employers who employ apprentices have a higher sales volume. Sixty-seven per cent of employers who hire apprentices have an annual sales revenue of over \$1,000,000. The percentage for those who do not employ apprentices was lower, at 51 per cent. (See Table 4).

**Table 4. Sales Volume**

Sales Volume (\$)	Employ Apprentices (n=239)	Do not Employ Apprentices (n=703)
<= 250,000	8 per cent	14 per cent
250,001 – 500,000	11 per cent	18 per cent
500,001 – 750,000	8 per cent	11 per cent
750,001 – 1,000,000	5 per cent	7 per cent
1,000,001+	67 per cent	51 per cent

The assumption that a company cannot be high-performing if it has apprentices is not supported by this statistical analysis. In fact, this analysis shows that companies that hire apprentices had higher sales revenue and higher profits.

<sup>3</sup> Readers should note that InfoCanada provides ranges for each financial variable such as sales volume and payroll expenses. As such, data extrapolated from InfoCanada was based on the mid-point values of each category range. This method derives an integer value for each field. For example, the range of \$5 to \$10 million sales volume was set to the sales volume of \$7.5 million. This approach was required in order for any descriptive analysis to be implemented.



## Employer Interviews

To gain additional insights into specific apprenticeship programs, CAF-FCA talked to 17 employers. Employers answered questions based on their own opinions and experiences. It is recognized that these results are not representative and a statistical study would have to be done to confirm whether the patterns observed apply to the general employer population in the skilled trades. Employer insights, although not statistically significant, could be useful to others considering starting apprenticeship programs of their own.

### Background of Employers Interviewed

For context, some general information about the employers was gathered.

The companies were started by the employers themselves or were a part of family businesses. Most of the companies had been in business more than 25 years and had trained apprentices throughout that time.

About half of the employers used the tax credits available to them.

Most of the employers reported it was easy to work with the local apprenticeship branches.

Employers noted that they did not have any formal human resource training or a formal overall HR strategy. Most employers did have a designated person to help them run their apprenticeship programs.

### The Value of Apprenticeship for Employers

The employers interviewed said that apprenticeship had value as an HR strategy. They listed their reasons for participating in apprenticeship programs:

- It is a tried and true method of getting the skilled workers needed.
- It provides a way to recruit top talent.
- It is a way of retaining talent.
- The employer was also an apprentice.
- It improves the bottom line.

Employers said that fellow employers who did not invest in apprenticeship were doing their business a disservice, saying it was a “grave mistake” or “missing the boat” not to consider apprenticeship as a part of their HR strategy. In their own words, employers encouraged their colleagues to make the investment in apprenticeship.

## **Key Recruitment Strategy**

“It’s the key ingredient to success in our trade.”

“If I don’t bring on apprentices, there is nobody to hire. To keep the company going forward, I have to keep on training the talent.”

## **Creating Highly Skilled Employees**

“We believe in the apprentice’s skills. Apprentices are very eager.”

“It gives an opportunity for others to learn and it’s good for the business.”

“Apprenticeship is a chance to shape and mold employees when they start. They are a better fit with the culture of the organization when you have homegrown talent. There are major economic drivers for apprenticeship and good economic returns for hiring.”

“Apprenticeship has value because it is the preferred and only method for training journeypersons. The industry is going through a lot of change and apprentices are more flexible and willing to adapt to the changing environment. For our industry to be sustainable, we need to ensure that we have access to the best skilled tradespeople available and our experience has been that there is no better way of ensuring this then to develop an individual through the apprenticeship program.”

## **Loyal Employees**

“When you get a good apprentice they will stay a long time.”

“I have a lower level of retention from outside hires. I have better success rates with apprentices.”

“If you get them from day one, they will stick with you and be loyal to you. It's a great way to hire staff. Most [employees] have been here 10-15 years and started from day one.”

## **Replacing an Aging Workforce**

"You'll fall flat if you don't keep training. Everybody gets older and younger people are needed to do the work."

"It's the right thing to do, it's key to securing a workforce in preparation for the baby boom retirement. It's necessary."

"Our industry is an aging industry and we need to revitalize the workforce."

"If you don't train the youth who will do it when you retire? Over 50 per cent of transmission mechanics are over 50 years old. There are so few apprentices in the trade that the new guys will demand \$90 an hour because no one else can do the work."

"I would suggest that the future of any industry depends on apprenticeship because I know in our trade one of our problems is a lack of trained tradespeople. We've fallen behind in training apprentices and have an aging workforce."

Employers provided the following advice to those employers thinking about starting an apprenticeship program:

"Hire lots of apprentices with the knowledge that they will branch into other parts of your organizational base. It helps develop your organization."

"You want to have an investment on both sides. It's important to have long term employees that you can rely on and that can rely on you."

"When you look at the workforce it's older so it's more important now than ever to drive home the important role of the trades. We need the people left in the industry to be grade A performers."

## **Recruiting**

Most of the employers who were interviewed were directly involved in the hiring of apprentices.

Word of mouth and colleges were the most popular methods of finding apprentices. Youth Apprenticeship Programs, ads, union halls and online were methods used less frequently.

Most of the employers had company websites, but they did not have descriptions of their apprenticeship programs on their websites, suggesting the sites are not being used as a way to recruit apprentices.

## Employer Apprenticeship Programs

Employers were asked about how they set up and run their apprenticeship programs. Almost all had an orientation process for apprentices where they were introduced to company. The time devoted to the sessions ranged from a couple of hours to a few days. Below is a list of the topics covered at the sessions:

- Safety
  - Dealing with chemicals
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Standards
  - Hazards
  - Enforcement
- Performance Expectations
- Processes
- Duties
- Physical Requirements
- Tool Requirements
- Attire
- Company History
- Corporate Mission
- HR presentation
- Review of Apprenticeship Policies
- Apprenticeship Provincial/Territorial Guidelines
- Insurance
- Mentoring Program

The majority of the employers did performance planning with each employee and had a special process for their apprentices.

About half of the employers said they provided training to the journeypersons who mentor apprentices. Generally, this training was delivered in one day. Employers indicated key topics covered in the training:

- Facilitation
- Leadership
- Communication
- Motivation
- New Technology
- Human Rights
- Rules of Trade



Employers identified features of their apprenticeship programs that, in their opinion, made their apprenticeship programs successful. Helping apprentices envision a career path was most important, followed by regularly scheduled meetings and the presence of a training plan. Having an interview and orientation process and topping up EI during technical training were also considered important. (See Table 5).

**Table 5. Features that make Apprenticeship Programs Successful**

	Feature
1	Seeing a career path
2	Regularly scheduled meetings with apprentice
3	Presence of a training plan
4	Having an interview and orientation process
5	Topping up EI during technical training
6	Training for mentors
7	Free tutoring to apprentices
8	Offering other incentives

Employers offered their own personal comments about their approach to training apprentices:

“We say there is no failing. We are always on-the-site with the apprentice, but we also give [him/her] some rope so [he/she] can learn and make mistakes. We try to create a relaxed work environment for [him/her].”

“We encourage our apprentice to be confident in what [he/she] knows and to ask lots of questions. There is no shame in asking lots of questions and to say if you don't think something is working or is wrong.”

“Inspire apprentices to take classes. It is an always evolving industry where constant education is needed for formal training, leadership, First Aid, and learning to motivate different individuals.”

“Employers need to ensure employees have a high level of training and ongoing training to ensure both safety and professionalism of staff. Training and professionalism are critical to success.”

## Retaining Apprentices

Employers were asked to estimate, based on their experiences, their company's retention of apprentices. Employers estimated 50 per cent or more of their apprentices started and completed the programs with them. They further estimated over 50 per cent of their apprentices stayed at the company and worked as journeypersons. Six employers said about three-quarters of their apprentices became journeypersons who worked at their companies.

A positive work environment was indicated as the most important of effective ways to retain apprentices. Competitive wages, a safe work environment, a training plan, and a future career path were additional retention measures employers identified. Also mentioned by employers were consistent work, giving apprentices a chance to share their ideas, and the fit between the mentor and the apprentice. In their own words, keys to retention for employers included:

- Respect
- Understanding the company's values
- Being a part of a team
- Good two-way communication
- Providing a variety of work
- Emphasizing lifelong learning
- Covering the costs for further education
- Giving them a chance to develop their skills
- Showing them how they can advance their careers
- Lots of hands-on training opportunities
- Different tasks and assignments

Once the apprentice had completed their training with the employer, the amount of time that it took for the journeyperson to become a leader on the worksite varied. Employers estimated it most often takes from three to five years. According to employers, it takes five to ten years for the journeyperson to become a mentor to apprentices.

## SECTION B APPRENTICES

This section summarizes the findings from the apprentice surveys. Apprentices were asked what attracts and attaches them to an employer. This is important information for employers who want to create an environment that encourages apprentices to stay with their company. In total, 414 apprentices completed the survey. These results are statistically significant at a national level.

### Survey Results

#### How do Apprentices find Employers?

When asked how they find employers, apprentices identified a variety of methods, with family and friends being the most popular:

- Family and friends (36 per cent)
- Union Halls (33 per cent)
- Job Bank website (33 per cent)
- Word of mouth (31 per cent)
- Newspapers (27 per cent)
- Company websites (24 per cent)
- Cold calling (17 per cent)
- Local employment office (11 per cent)
- Matching services that connect employers and apprentices (11 per cent)
- All of the above (9 per cent)
- Other (5 per cent). The reasons provided in the “other” category did not provide new information, but elaborated on reasons already on the list such as using the Job Bank and matching services.

#### Attracting Apprentices

Apprentices were asked what employers should do if they want to attract potential apprentices to their companies. More than 30 per cent of respondents ranked the following as good ways to connect with apprentices:

- putting advertisements on Job Bank websites or other similar websites (34 per cent )
- advertising in newspapers (31 per cent)

Over 25 per cent of apprentices identified these additional reasons:

- all of the methods should be pursued (28 per cent)
- going to high schools to talk to students (28 per cent)
- going to union halls (27 per cent)
- going to career fairs (26 per cent)

Less than a quarter of respondents thought the methods below would be useful ways to attract apprentices:

- designing a company website (23 per cent)
- connecting with technical trainers (21 per cent)
- use internet matching services that connect employers and apprentices (19 per cent)
- putting job ads on Facebook/YouTube/Twitter (12 per cent)

### **Important Characteristics of Employers' Apprenticeship Programs**

Apprentices were asked to identify the top three most important features in an employer's apprenticeship program. According to the apprentices that were surveyed, these were the top characteristics:

- a journeyperson who has the willingness to teach me (69 per cent)
- provides opportunities for potential career advancement (55 per cent)
- a positive work environment (50 per cent)
- offers a wide variety of work experiences (43 per cent)

Fewer apprentices (less than 15 per cent) identified opportunities to work with state-of-the-art technology and equipment, opportunities to provide feedback and contribute their ideas, flexible work schedule, or free tutoring as the most important features. Only six per cent of respondents indicated "other." The comments in this section highlighted the importance of journeyperson training to apprentices.

### **Apprentice Retention**

Apprentices were also asked, other than offering competitive wages and consistent work, what would encourage them to stay with an employer. They identified the following:

- a positive work environment (42 per cent)
- quality training from journeypersons (41 per cent)
- wide variety of work experiences (36 per cent)
- all of the factors (33 per cent)
- seeing a career path in the company (32 per cent)

Fewer apprentices identified opportunities to share ideas on work processes (23 per cent), having the employer listen to their feedback (21 per cent) and working on the latest equipment and technology (16 per cent) as features that would encourage them to stay with an employer.

Six per cent of apprentices said free tutoring would encourage them to stay.

Four per cent identified "other." "Other" included reasons such as money for tools, washroom facilities, more training for individuals after they become journeypersons, more flexible hours, benefits, and working for employers who set an example and follow the rules.



## **Apprentice Comments**

Respondents were encouraged to share comments on the survey to enhance the results through their personal opinions and insights. Most of the comments spoke to the importance of being patient and giving apprentices the time and the opportunity to learn various aspects of the trade.

## **Attracting Apprentices**

"If they run a good company that provides excellent training (not just an afterthought) and [if they] understand the needs and pressures on younger generations, then word of mouth is all they need to find excellent employees."

"Lead your company based on a goal, vision, or mission statement. Then you attract people who are a good fit to your goals."

"Offer competitive wages and be very upfront with their intentions and goals in the apprenticeship program...Being able to ask your employer apprenticeship questions and getting a correct answer upfront is huge. The employer needs to be up-to-date on all apprenticeship criteria. This includes schooling, scheduling, EI applications, tracking hours, various government grants, etc."

"Young people have personal networks. Try to use these networks in your workplace. People who work with others that they like, get along with each other and share information are probably going to stick around. Don't just hire people who look the part. Be prepared to hire people with points of view that can be different, give them training, but also employ them to find new solutions to old problems, new ideas and opportunities."

"Employers should be upfront with their expectations of an apprentice..."

## **Listening**

"Provide an environment that is conducive to learning, reasonable wages during training, positive feedback, and listen to what your apprentice is saying."

"I would make sure that journeypersons are willing to listen and teach apprentices and I would make sure that I let potential apprentices know what they are getting into, so they can make an informed decision about whether they want to enter the field."

## **Involving Apprentices in the Process**

"Involve the apprentice in all aspects of the process [to provide] a clear understanding. Let the apprentice make guided decisions."

"Let us share ideas on things and have positive working environment where journeypersons will not do every task and expect the apprentice to watch all the time."

## **On-the-Job Training**

“Ensure that the apprentice is given the opportunity to learn properly, rather than just being told to figure it out for themselves.”

“Offer more challenging tasks to apprentices, so they can apply their technical training to the job site.”

“I enjoy working for employers that recognize both my strengths and weaknesses. Ones that give praise after a hard day’s work, as well as offer ideas on how to improve. It is great to be given a chance to improve in areas that need work, so that I can become a more well-rounded tradesperson—not just stuck in the areas that are my strengths. I believe that a little work in a problem area can make me more efficient in the long run.”

“Recognize that everyone starts out knowing nothing in the trade. Apprentices will not learn unless they are allowed to do a variety of work. I was fortunate enough to get on with a smaller company with fantastic journeypersons who gave me a lot of responsibility and taught me how to troubleshoot and perform tasks. Their interest in developing me is what keeps me interested in working for them.”

“If you are going to hire an apprentice, make sure you are willing to teach them. The reason a lot of apprentice are where they are is for the constant learning experience.”

“Have a plan in place to expose apprentices to a variety of situations.”

“Don’t be afraid to train them or give them new opportunities. Apprentices can be like sponges, absorbing information. Show the commitment to them and it will be reciprocated.”

“Ensure that the apprentices get matched with a journeyperson that can handle the task of passing knowledge along and help the apprentice gain valuable experience.”

## **Retaining Apprentices**

“If they take the time to cultivate a positive work environment, they will be able to retain quality people.”

“Keep an open door and an environment where they feel comfortable bringing up their individual concerns rather than just getting fed up and quitting.”

“To retain apprentices, treat them with respect, acknowledge their opinions and ideas, but guide them as much as necessary. Plenty of coaching followed by earned independence makes for happy apprentices.”

## CONCLUSION

This report shares with employers valuable information on recruiting and retaining top talent. The findings confirm that there is business case for apprenticeship as an HR strategy. Employers who hire apprentices run profitable companies with high sales revenues. To make apprenticeship work, the results indicate that commitment is required by employers, journeypersons and apprentices. Employers say that running a successful apprenticeship program takes organization and diligence. Journeypersons who have an interest in actively training apprentices is important to apprentices. All parties have to work together to create a positive work environment which is so crucial to retention. Making this commitment is well worth it given the valuable benefits apprenticeship can make to a company's business performance.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **DATA SEARCH SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **Overview**

In November 2010, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) retained the services of R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. ('the Consultant'). The primary objective of this research was to determine the availability of data that links the hiring of apprentices to overall business performance. To achieve this, the Consultant was required to include a detailed listing of locations where data was searched, and to provide a description of why the data found was or was not usable for the purposes of the study. Where data was found, the Consultant was required to suggest methods of obtaining the required data sets and provide a short analysis that highlights the links between apprenticeship and enhanced business performance.

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the Consultant completed a literature review and data search for relevant statistical data sets.

#### **Methodology**

The Consultant searched for relevant statistical data sets at the national and provincial/territorial level. The methods employed for this study included a combination of standard internet Boolean searches, website-specific searches, and telephone/electronic-mail correspondence with select organizations and agencies.

Searches were conducted from December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010 to February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

#### **Internet Data Search**

The Consultant used available online resources, multiple search engines (e.g., Google and Yahoo!), and a variety of key search terms and phrases in an attempt to find relevant data sets. The following are examples of key phrases and terms used in the data search:

- National Apprenticeship Survey;
- Registered Apprenticeship Information System;
- Labour force historical review;
- Apprentice effects on profit;
- Business profiles apprenticeships;
- Canadian Corporate Tax Data; and
- Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit.



Site-specific searches were employed on websites heavily populated with statistical and financial data (e.g., Statistics Canada, Canada Revenue Agency). These searches were augmented with the review of multiple survey instruments (e.g., National Apprenticeship Survey, Labour Force Survey, and Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours) to determine the availability of any data relevant to the study.

The Consultant also conducted an exhaustive search for information available from various apprenticeship programs (e.g., Red Seal Certification) and incentive programs available for organizations that hire apprentices (e.g., the Canada Revenue Agency Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit (AJCTC)).

In addition, the Consultant explored non-conventional data sources for financial information (e.g., Google Finance, Yahoo! Finance, MSN Money, and Daily Finance) in order to establish an understanding of information available that may be useful for further research on the links between apprenticeship and enhanced business performance.

### **Telephone and E-mail Correspondence**

In addition to the Boolean searches and the website-specific searches, the Consultant also directly contacted two of Canada's largest repositories of apprenticeship-related information, including Statistics Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency. This contact occurred by telephone and/or e-mail.

### **Internet Data Search Results**

Throughout the data search no data or information that clearly delineated the links between apprenticeship and enhanced business performance were found.

The Consultant was able to find basic information on the characteristics of apprentices and relevant financial information on companies/organizations. The information available included the following:

- The number of apprentices working in different industries across Canada;
- A profile of apprentices;
- Financial information for companies listed on the Sedar website ([www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com));
- Financial statements for publically-traded companies and companies that are comparable in their nature of work; and
- Corporate tax data.

Although the Consultant conducted an extensive search for data using typical sources (e.g., Statistics Canada), an alternative approach was also applied to determine the availability of financial information for companies. The Consultant found financial statements (e.g., balance sheets, income statements, etc.) and other financial information that are available for publicly traded companies through Google Finance, Yahoo! Finance, MSN Money and Daily Finance. Additionally, the Sedar website was also found to provide financial information for public

companies, but the database is limited to those companies who volunteered to provide information. While conducting the data search, the Consultant found corporate tax data held by CRA. These data sets provide information on a range of corporate income tax statistics for industries in Canada and provide estimates of gross revenue and number of tax filers by industry and size.

### Telephone and E-mail Correspondence Results

Communication was established with an Account Executive for Advisory Services within Statistics Canada and the Consultant described the objective of acquiring relevant data sets of employers who hire apprentices. Unfortunately, the representative of Statistics Canada indicated that no such data were available.

### Review of Existing Survey Instruments

The Consultant reviewed three key survey instruments to determine if the results of the surveys could be used to help analyze the links between apprenticeship and business performance.

The survey instruments included the National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS), the Labour Force Survey (LFS), and the Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours (SEPH). An overview of the information available in the surveys is presented in the table below.

Survey	Information Provided
National Apprenticeship Survey	Factors affecting apprentices' completion and certification and measuring the transition to the labour market of apprentices who completed and/or certified or dropout of their apprenticeship program.
Labour Force Survey	Provides estimates of employment and unemployment.
Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours	Presents statistics on salaries and number of employees by employment type (salary, hourly, or contract-based).

As shown above, the data available in the aforementioned surveys does not provide any useful data which may be used for the purposes of this study.

## Conclusions

Through an in-depth search, there is no existing data set that provides any information on the links between apprenticeship and business performance. As a result of this search, it was decided to additional analysis on the CAF-FCA 2011 Employer Perceptions and Attitudes data set to see if some of the required information could be found. This analysis was done and was included in the report.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EMPLOYERS

- The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum is a non-for-profit organization that promotes apprenticeship training across Canada through research, discussion, and collaboration. Our goal is to enhance participation in apprenticeship training so industries across Canada can benefit from a pool of fully certified journeypersons who are highly skilled and productive. Share your views with us and have a chance to influence your colleagues' human resource practices!
- You must have **officially registered apprentices** with your province or territory to participate in this questionnaire.
- This telephone questionnaire should take approximately **20 minutes** of your time. You should have received the questions in advance by email along with the letter of introduction about this project.
- The information gathered from these forms will be summarized into a **one page profile** which will be shared directly with you. If you approve of the profile, it will be used in communication materials that will be publicly available off the CAF-FCA website. Potential apprentices and non-participating employers will see these profiles.
- If you do not want your name and company's name used, we can remove these from the profile.



**SECTION A: Please answer the following questions.**

A1. General Trade Area:

- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Service
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Other (please specify):

A2. Can you briefly describe what your company does?

A3. What province or territory are you located in:

A4. Size of Business:

- ☐ less than 5 employees
- ☐ 6-10 employees
- ☐ 10-19 employees
- ☐ 20-39 employees
- ☐ more than 40 employees

A5. Number of Apprentices:

- ☐ less than 5 employees
- ☐ 6-9 employees
- ☐ 10-19 employees
- ☐ 20-39 employees
- ☐ more than 40 employees

A6. Approximately, how many years has your company been in business? \_\_\_\_

A7. Approximately, how many years has your company been training apprentices? \_\_\_\_

A8. Do you have an overall human resource strategy for your company?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A9. Do you personally have any human resource training?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A10. Do you do performance planning with your each of your staff?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



A11. Do you have a special process for doing performance planning with your apprentices?

☐ Yes

☐ No

A12. Which statement applies to your company?

☐ I started this company myself

☐ This is a family business that goes back two or more generations

☐ It is a provincial/territorial company

☐ It is multi-provincial/territorial company

☐ It is a national company

☐ It is a multi-national corporation

A13. What made you believe in the value of apprenticeship?

☐ I was an apprentice myself so I always believed in its value

☐ My bottom line was improved so I kept doing it

☐ It lowers my wage rate

☐ I know it is a tried and true tested method of getting the skilled workers I need

☐ It gives me a way to recruit top talent to my company

☐ I use it as a way to retain talent

☐ It is compulsory in my trade

☐ I wanted to benefit from the government incentives

☐ Provincial/territorial officials convinced me it would benefit my business

☐ All of the above

☐ Other:

A14. Do you use any of the tax credits available?

☐ Yes

☐ No

A15. Does your company have a website?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, does it have a specific section that describes your apprenticeship program?

☐ Yes

☐ No



A16. Who does the hiring of apprentices at your company?

- ☐ I do the hiring
- ☐ I have an HR person do it
- ☐ I have a manger do it
- ☐ I have a journeyperson do it
- ☐ Multiple people are involved
- ☐ Other

A17. Do you have a specific person designated to run your apprenticeship program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A18. Does your company provide an orientation day or orientation information for new apprentices?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

What do you cover in this session?

How long is this session?

A19. Does your company provide any kind of training for journeypersons who are going to be mentors?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, what do you cover in this training?

How long is this training session?

A20. Estimate how many apprentices start and complete their programs all within your company?

- ☐ less than a quarter
- ☐ about a quarter (25per cent)
- ☐ about half (50per cent)
- ☐ about three quarters (75per cent)
- ☐ all (100per cent)
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

A21. How many of your apprentices end up working for you when they become journeypersons?

- ☐ less than a quarter
- ☐ about a quarter (25per cent)
- ☐ about half (50per cent)
- ☐ about three quarters (75per cent)
- ☐ all (100per cent)
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

A22. How long does it generally take your journeypersons who used to be apprentices to become leaders on the work site or running jobs?

- ☐ less than a year
- ☐ a couple of years
- ☐ five years
- ☐ ten years
- ☐ totally depends on the individual
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

A23. How long does it generally take your journeypersons who used to be apprentices to become mentors to other apprentices?

- ☐ less than a year
- ☐ a couple of years
- ☐ five years
- ☐ ten years
- ☐ totally depends on the individual
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

A24. What is your best method for finding potential apprentices?  
[Please check one box only]

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family and friends           | <input type="checkbox"/> Ads on Job Bank websites or other similar websites                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Union Halls                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth through networking and contacts                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My company website           | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet matching services specifically set up to connect employers to apprentices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper ads                | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth apprenticeship programs  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Colleges                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Community organizations  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Fairs                 |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other method please specify: |   |

A25. In addition to following the required provincial or territorial apprenticeship regulations, what are some features of your apprenticeship training program that you feel make it successful:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have regularly scheduled meetings with my apprentices to see how they are doing and to gather their feedback.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I ensure I pick motivated journeypersons to be mentors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I provide training for my mentors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I offer free tutoring if my apprentices need it.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I top up EI when apprentices are doing their technical training and/or pay for tuition and books.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I ensure there is a training plan for the apprentice and that they are given a variety of tasks to do.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I make sure the apprentice sees a career path in my company.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All of the above would apply to my company's apprenticeship program.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I have a thorough interview and orientation process.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> I offer incentives such as time off to apprentices if they achieve key goals and milestones.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|
- ☐ Please tell us about additional features that were not covered in this list:

A26. Other than offering competitive wages and consistent work, in your opinion, what would be the most effective thing employers could do to help retain their apprentices?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give apprentices a chance to share their ideas on work processes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the mentor and apprentice are a good fit</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a positive work environment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work on your training plan and make sure the apprentice can progress and has a variety of work experiences</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Show the apprentice a potential future career path</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a safe workplace</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Please tell us about other effective things that can be done to retain apprentices: \_\_\_\_\_

- A 27. What is it like working with your local apprenticeship branch? (How easy is it to get information? Do the paperwork? Use the system? etc)
- A 28. What is it like dealing with the technical training institutes such as colleges? (Easy to work with? Good communication?)
- A 29. What would you say to employers who claim that they don't want to start an apprenticeship program?
- A30. Why do you feel apprenticeship training is important for your industry?
- A31. Any final advice for employers out there thinking about starting an apprenticeship program?
- A32. Any additional thoughts you would like to share?



## APPENDIX C

### SURVEY FOR REGISTERED APPRENTICES

- The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum is a non-for-profit organization that promotes apprenticeship training across Canada through research, discussion, and collaboration. We care about what you think and want to hear from you! Share your views with us and have a chance to influence industry leaders.
- This questionnaire should take approximately **5 to 10 minutes** to fill in.
- All information collected will be **completely anonymous**.
- You must be an **officially registered apprentice** with your province or territory to fill in this questionnaire
- Your input will make a difference! The information gathered from these forms will be generally summarized into a report which will be shared with industry leaders from across the country.

**SECTION A: Please answer the following questions.**

A1. General Trade Area:

- ☐ Transportation    ☐ Service    ☐ Construction    ☐ Manufacturing  
☐ Other please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

A2. Currently living in:

- ☐ Nova Scotia    ☐ Quebec    ☐ Ontario    ☐ Manitoba  
☐ Newfoundland    ☐ NWT    ☐ Yukon    ☐ Nunavut  
☐ New Brunswick    ☐ Prince Edward Island    ☐ BC    ☐ Alberta  
☐ Saskatchewan

A3. What is your **main method** for finding employers?

- ☐ Family and friends    ☐ Internet matching services specifically set up to connect employers to apprentices  
☐ Union Halls    ☐ Cold calling and knocking on doors  
☐ Company websites    ☐ Local employment office or employment centre  
☐ Newspaper    ☐ Aboriginal Employment Service  
☐ Job Bank website or other similar websites    ☐ All of the above  
☐ Word of mouth through networking and contacts  
☐ Other method please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

A4. What methods should employers use if they want to attract you and your friends to their company?

- ☐ Go to Union Halls    ☐ Go to Career Fairs  
☐ Put job ads on Facebook/YouTube/Twitter    ☐ Use internet employee/employer matching services  
☐ Design a company website    ☐ Advertise in newspapers  
☐ Connect with technical trainers    ☐ Go to high schools and talk to students  
☐ Put advertisements on Job Bank website or other similar websites    ☐ All of the above  
☐ Other methods please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

A5. In your opinion, what are the **top three** most important features in an employer's apprenticeship program?

- a. Provides opportunities for potential career advancement.
- b. A journeyperson who has the willingness to teach me.
- c. Opportunities for me to provide feedback and to contribute my ideas.
- d. A chance to work with state of the art technology and equipment.
- e. A positive work environment
- f. Free tutoring
- g. Offers a wide variety of work experiences
- h. Flexible work schedule
- i. Other

Please share any other factors that are important to you that we may have missed

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A6. Other than offering competitive wages and consistent work, in your opinion, what would encourage you to stay with an employer?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to share ideas on work processes.                | <input type="checkbox"/> Latest technology and equipment                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Free tutoring  | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to me throughout the process and listen to my feedback |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wide variety of work experiences                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Career path in the company                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quality training from journeypersons                         | <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain a positive work environment for everyone on the job |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other method please specify: _____                           |  |

A7. What advice would you give to employers interested in hiring and retaining apprentices?